

Inspecting Your Workplace

Inspections are an excellent way of communicating with workers to find and correct hazards before they cause harm.

A workplace inspection program starts with a clear policy and management commitment to provide a healthy and safety workplace. Inspecting the workplace is one of the key duties of the WS&H committee. The committee should work out the inspection schedule with the employer.

An inspection is a planned walk through or examination of selected work areas or particular hazards by the WS&H committee (or at least one management and worker rep from the committee). The inspection team should examine all types of hazards in the workplace. See diagram for an overview of different types of hazards to investigate.

Training about finding and correcting hazards is an important part of thorough inspections.

The inspection team should try to identify the root causes of hazards (such as policies, orientation, training, layout, work design) and help the employer resolve them.

Prepare

Before an inspection, the inspection team should review concerns identified by employees, accident reports, results of

previous inspections, WS&H committee minutes, government inspection reports, and any other information that may help them identify hazards during the inspection.

Consider these tools:

interview - Plan to talk to workers and supervisors about the work activities. Workers know best about their work and many of the hazards. They often have good ideas on how to make the work safer.

floor plan - A diagram of the workplace layout helps the inspection team find their way around. Mark equipment, work activities, hazards and control measures on the floor plan (or outside map).

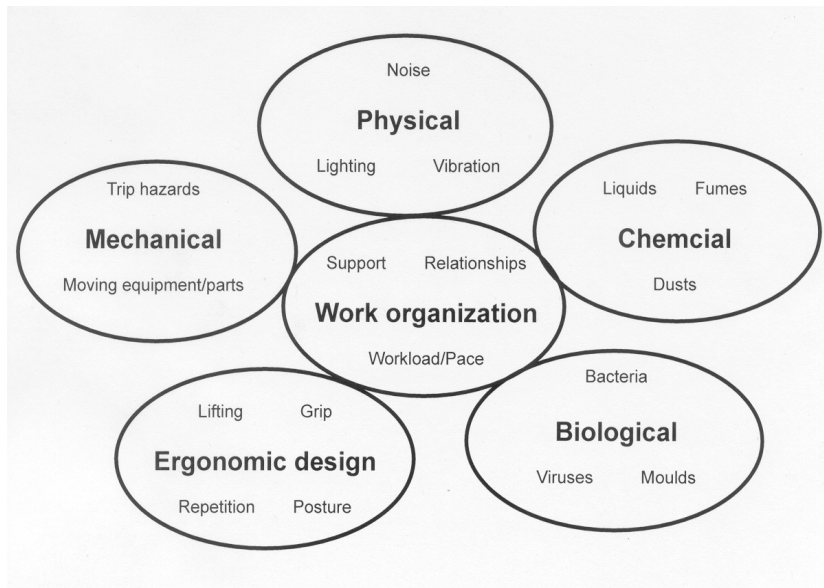
checklist - The best checklist is one made specifically for your workplace.

pictures - Sketch or photograph the work activities to help you recall the details later.

personal protective equipment (PPE) - You may need the proper PPE - (respirators, safety shoes, safety glasses and hearing protection) to enter different work areas.

Inspect

- ✓ Plan enough time to do a thorough job and make sure that workers and supervisors have time to participate.



Adapted from: New Eyes Project, SafeWork Manitoba, 2008

- ✓ Remember that many workplace injuries can be attributed to hazards and risks that people in the workplace have come to consider routine or unimportant.
- ✓ Observe the work process. Ask workers to demonstrate their tools/machinery equipment and tell you about the hazards and how to do the work more safely. Minimize any work disruption so that you do not miss something important. Consider what happens when you are not there. Come back if the equipment is shut down.
- ✓ Attend to any immediate dangers. If the problem cannot be fixed, then the operation needs to be stopped.
- ✓ Look around. Check the floor and overhead.
- ✓ Check routine, non-routine and maintenance activities.
- ✓ You may need another visit to include different shifts.
- ✓ Include offices and parking lots.
- ✓ Record information as you go. Take time to make clear legible notes and diagrams.
- ✓ Record if additional inspecting is needed.

Follow Up

The inspection team should meet after the inspection to:

- ✓ compare notes and find out if more information is needed.
- ✓ inform the supervisor about any problems that need to be fixed promptly.
- ✓ identify areas with serious hazards or frequent problems. These should be given special attention.
- ✓ rank the hazards in order of importance to fix
- ✓ suggest solutions. Sometimes a single solution may be found for several related problems.

Write the report after collecting all the information. The report includes:

- ✓ new problems and proposed solutions
- ✓ steps needed to investigate a current problem further
- ✓ problems fixed since the last inspection
- ✓ progress on problems identified on earlier inspections
- ✓ reasons why old problems have not been fixed

Give the completed report to WS&H committee members and designated supervisors/management.

When a workplace safety and health committee brings a problem or concern to the attention of an employer, the employer is required to resolve the problem or address the concern. If that cannot be done, the employer is required to give the committee a written reason within 30 days for not resolving the problem or addressing the concern.

Over time, inspection reports can show trends, track ongoing problems, identify the need for additional training and help to monitor the successes and shortcomings of the workplace health and safety program.

Resources

Workplace Safety and Health, Manitoba Labour 945-3446 or www.gov.mb.ca/labour/safety

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety 1-800-282-8069 or www.ccohs.ca

WCB Seeing Workplace Hazards with New Eyes 945-4335 or www.wcb.mb.ca

If you need more information contact the

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 Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 4M6
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