



JOINT HEALTH AND
SAFETY COMMITTEES



Joint Health and Safety Committees

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About This Guide

This guide provides Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) members and their employers with information on the committee's legal functions and powers. It provides practical guidelines to help committees establish procedures and activities. Because the needs of JHSCs will vary from company to company, this guide is designed to help committees identify their own priorities, so they can respond to concerns in their own workplaces.

Revised May 2009

Introduction

A JHSC is a group of worker and employer representatives working together to identify and solve health and safety problems at the workplace.

The committee is an important communication link between workers and management. Active, involved employees can create and maintain interest in health and safety and establish positive attitudes throughout the workforce. An effective JHSC can help reduce losses resulting from accidents and occupational illness.

Every committee member should become familiar with the *New Brunswick Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act* and regulations. These documents describe the responsibilities and organization of an effective JHSC.

Two co-chairpersons (co-chairs) share the chair equally, and alternate chairing the JHSC meetings. The employer representatives and worker representatives each select a co-chair.

A successful committee operates in a co-operative, non-adversarial atmosphere. Members should bear in mind that their committee is not a policy-making body and cannot violate the normal levels of authority at the workplace. Recommendations and suggestions are expected from the committee and management must carefully consider each concern.

Many health and safety concerns can be resolved immediately in the course of daily work. Those that are not resolved should be dealt with by the JHSC. By posting the minutes of each meeting at the workplace, the committee can ensure that every problem, and its resolution, is communicated to all employees.

Committees and Health & Safety Representatives

What is a JHSC?

Composed of people who represent the employees and the employer, the committee is dedicated to improving health and safety conditions in the workplace.

Committees identify potential health and safety problems and bring them to the employer's attention. Members must also stay informed about health and safety developments at the workplace.

Why are JHSCs necessary?

Committees are necessary to provide greater protection against workplace injury and illness. Concerns that might not otherwise be raised can be vetted through the committee. Greater protection means reduced work-related injuries, illnesses and deaths. To ensure that everything possible is done to prevent health and safety hazards, committees should involve people from all levels of an organization.

What are the JHSC's goals?

A committee works most effectively when its role is clearly defined and accepted. It is an advisory body that helps to stimulate safety awareness, and recognize and deal with workplace risks. To achieve its goal, the committee holds regular meetings, conducts regular workplace inspections, investigates health and safety-related complaints, and investigates the cause of workplace accidents. The committee can serve as a communication link between management and workers.

Because of the members' differing viewpoints, committees are well equipped to help develop, implement and monitor the workplace's health and safety program.

What are some of the JHSC's principal functions?

- ◆ Identify potential or hazardous situations in the workplace through activities such as workplace inspections, accident investigations and information analysis.
- ◆ Evaluate these potential hazards and situations, giving particular attention to employee concerns, complaints and recommendations.
- ◆ Recommend corrective plans by participating in the development of assessment and control programs, discussing problems, recommending solutions, and providing input into existing and proposed health and safety programs.
- ◆ Follow up on implemented recommendations, maintain records and do statistical analysis.

Other duties and powers

Workplace inspections: Regular or scheduled inspections help identify hazards. Employers must ensure that health and safety inspections are conducted monthly, and that a plan for these inspections is developed in conjunction with the JHSC. Results of these monthly health and safety inspections must be shared with the JHSC.

Accident investigation: Some committee members should be designated and trained to investigate accidents, especially those resulting in fatalities or critical injuries. The findings should be reported to the committee.

Right to refuse investigations: Trained committee members must be available to promptly investigate a right to refuse situation, and recommend appropriate remedial action.

Which workplaces need JHSCs?

- ◆ Any workplace that regularly employs 20 or more employees.
- ◆ “Medium” project sites on which 30 to 499 or more workers are regularly employed, with a project duration of more than 90 days.
- ◆ “Large” project sites with more than 500 employees working at any time.

What size should a JHSC be?

The *OHS Act* requires a minimum of two members on the JHSC, and most require an equal number of workers and managers. On construction sites, the JHSC does not require equal membership as long as the number of employee representatives equals or exceeds the number of employer representatives. Whenever possible, committees should represent the health and safety concerns of the entire workplace. For example, if a workplace has a plant, office, laboratory and warehouse, each of these areas should be represented on the committee. Various workshifts should also be represented.

The employees and employer must agree on the JHSC's size, taking into account health and safety risks and hazards, the operations and processes involved, the number of employees at the workplace, and the geographic locations of the workers.

What if there is a dispute about the establishment of a committee, its size or function?

A WorkSafeNB health and safety officer should be informed of any disagreement about the establishment, function or composition of a committee. Upon investigation, the health and safety officer may issue an order to an employer to establish or to improve the committee's function.

WorkSafeNB may also establish the committee's size, if there is no agreement.

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What is a project site JHSC? When is one required?

Construction projects expected to last three months or longer and employing from 30 to 499 or more workers (medium project sites), and project sites employing 500 or more workers (large project sites), regardless of the project length, must establish a JHSC.

The JHSCs must have both employer and employee representatives, with at least half designated by employees (minimum of two is mandatory) and at least one employer representative designated by the contractor.

If a contractor has six or more employees working at a medium project site, the contractor's employees must designate a person to serve on the committee as an employee representative. The employer may choose to designate a person to serve on the committee as an employer representative, but it is not mandatory. Employees of one contractor may designate an employee working for another contractor as an employee representative.

Where there are one or more contractors engaged in work on a large project site and the employees of those contractors are working in the same trade, the employees working in that trade must designate a person to serve on the committee as an employee representative. Employees who work in one trade may designate a person who works in another trade to serve as an employee representative. Similarly, employers who provide services in one trade may designate an employer from another trade to serve as an employer representative.

The committee's primary responsibility is to identify, discuss and make recommendations to the principal contractor, owner or employer on any health and safety concern of the trade workers.

What is a health and safety representative?

Workplaces with more than five but fewer than 20 employees may have a health and safety representative.

Where there are fewer than 20 employees but the activities performed have high risks, WorkSafeNB may require the employer to have a health and safety representative. Project sites (small project sites) with six to 29 employees regardless of project length, or with 30 to 499 employees on projects expected to last 90 days or less, must have a health and safety representative, chosen by both the contractor and the workers. There must be at least one health and safety representative for a site with up to 50 employees (with additional representatives mandatory for every additional 50 workers at the site). For example, a site with 150 employees on a 30-day project must have at least three health and safety representatives.

Like JHSC members, the representative is committed to improving health and safety at the workplace.

Other than at project sites, employees must select the health and safety representative. The representative requires special training and, like committee members, the representative's name must be posted at the workplace so it is known by the employer and workers.

Members

How are committee members selected?

At least half the committee members must be non-supervisory employees at the workplace. They must be selected in a way that includes all employees at the workplace.

The employer also chooses members (employer members). It is recommended that the employer select representatives based on their knowledge of operations and their duties and responsibilities relating to work procedures and safety.

Ex-officio members are not recommended. However, when dealing with a specific issue, the committee may invite persons with specialized knowledge or experience to attend as advisers or observers. Alternates may be elected to maintain a quorum at monthly meetings, or for assuming some of the responsibilities of absent members. Alternates are especially

important if a workplace has shift work or other conditions that may prevent members from attending every meeting.

While it is not a requirement, it is recommended that JHSC members be different from representatives sitting on bargaining/negotiating committees. This avoids the possibility of having the adversarial environment of contract negotiations contaminate the health and safety process. It also ensures that contractual issues don't become mixed up with health and safety issues.

Do committee members need special training?

At least two committee members – one representing the employer and one representing workers – must be chosen for special training as co-chairs. With specific authority and responsibilities under the *OHS Act*, JHSC co-chairs play a key role.

Recent amendments to the *OHS Act* made training mandatory for all new JHSC members. WorkSafeNB provides a free, three-day JHSC training course. The employer is responsible for granting JHSC members the necessary leave for this training, and for paying the members' wages and any other benefits they are entitled to for the time spent taking the training.

How long is a committee member's term of office?

The suggested term of office is three to five years. Where there is more than one worker member and one employer member, terms should be staggered for continuity, and vacancies should be filled as quickly as possible.

Do committee members get paid for their time?

Members are entitled to take time to attend committee meetings, inspections and investigations, and to accompany WorkSafeNB inspectors (when required) investigating an accident, potential hazard or a work refusal. When engaged in committee meetings, committee members will be paid at

their rate and will receive other benefits for the time periods during which the meetings are held.

How often should the JHSC meet?

Committee members should meet at the workplace at least once every month. More frequent meetings may be necessary in industries where hazardous substances or high-risk procedures are involved. Meetings may be held less frequently when the risk at the workplace is low, and the committee has obtained approval from WorkSafeNB.

Who chairs the meeting?

Worker representatives choose one co-chair, and employer representatives select the other. It is good practice to alternate the chairing of each meeting between the co-chairs.

Meetings

How is an agenda prepared?

The agenda sets out the meeting plan in advance and ensures that all members are aware of and prepared for the meeting. It should be compiled and approved by the co-chairs and distributed to all members, preferably at least one week before the meeting.

Some important information on the agenda includes:

- ◆ Date, time and place of meeting.
- ◆ Agenda items, including:
 - Minutes of last meeting.
 - Review of unfinished business (follow-up from previous meeting, business carried forward).
 - Regular reports (workplace inspections, accident investigations).
 - Special reports (sub-committees, training, education).
 - Responses and follow-up (committee inquiries, recommendations, employer responses).

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- Education session (if this committee has adopted this practice).
- New business (all employees—managers, supervisors and workers should be encouraged to submit items for possible inclusion on the agenda).

Note: Committee members who want items added to the agenda should give the person chairing the meeting sufficient notice.

How are committee members informed of upcoming meetings?

Meeting dates should be established on a pre-set schedule (for example, first Wednesday or second Thursday) or at the conclusion of each meeting. This date will be recorded in the minutes, which should be distributed to members a few days after the meeting. The dates of upcoming meetings should also be posted along with its agenda (see Appendix A).

Is a quorum needed to hold a meeting?

Every meeting must have members present who represent both the employees and the employer. Otherwise, the committee should determine its own rules for the quorum requirement at meetings.

Is it necessary to record the minutes? What should the minutes include?

The minutes of each meeting must be recorded and made available for review by a WorkSafeNB health and safety officer. Minutes should contain details of all matters discussed, as well as a full description of problems and their resolution, or any action deemed necessary.

Minutes must be signed by the co-chairs and should be posted in a prominent place (or places) at the workplace within one week of the meeting. A copy must be sent to WorkSafeNB, through your regional WorkSafeNB office.

Preparation

The co-chairs should ensure that every member receives an agenda before the day of the meeting, that an appropriate meeting room is made available, and that each member has arranged to attend.

Meeting agendas are essential to the committee's success, and provide the following assurances:

- ◆ Members know the time and place of the meeting.
- ◆ Every item the committee considers serious will be discussed.
- ◆ Business will not be sidetracked into maintenance problems or non-safety matters, at least until all pre-selected concerns have been dealt with.
- ◆ Everyone receiving the agenda ahead of the meeting has a chance to study the more difficult problems needing attention.

To ensure business is conducted effectively, the meeting should be free from intrusions and excessive noise. Members should be seated together as a group. The secretary, chairperson, and, if possible, all other members, should have a table.

Copies of the previous minutes, inspection reports and all accident reports should be provided for each member, whenever practical.

The only other requirement to make meetings more effective is good attendance. Anyone who wants to can usually find an emergency that will prevent attendance, and anyone who is determined to attend can usually arrange that nothing will interfere. Unless a meeting is held outside the member's working hours, failure to attend is almost always a personal choice, however well disguised as "unavoidable." If a member stays away because of a feeling that the committee is unsuccessful, such action will only aggravate the failure. The best solution is for the member to increase participation in the committee's activities, and determine the real reasons for its lack of success. A less desirable solution is to replace members who do not participate.

Minutes

The minutes should be entered on a form (supplied by WorkSafeNB) item by item as the meeting progresses (see Appendix B). Do not take notes and prepare the minutes after the meeting.

A great deal of discipline is required to deal with each safety concern effectively, and to keep a firm grip on following the progress of items from meeting to meeting. The most efficient way to achieve this is to enter each item in the minutes as it arises. By writing down each concern, the secretary must have a clear statement of each problem for the co-chair. This ensures that all members understand what is being discussed. In the same way, because the recommended action must be written down, all members clearly understand what they are recommending.

To save time and confusion, assign a different number to every concern (also assign the date when the issue was first raised) at every meeting. For example, if there are eight concerns discussed at the first meeting, new business at the next meeting should start with number nine.

Copies of the completed minutes should be circulated to all committee members and management, and posted on notice boards on-site. Although you are only legally required to post one month's minutes at a time, it is recommended that minutes of at least two consecutive meetings remain posted to ensure that the workforce can easily follow progress.

Review of previous business

Review any concerns resolved and concerns in progress, although it is not necessary to take minutes of their discussion. For each recommendation past target date, carefully re-examine the problem, and, discuss the recommended action and target date. Enter these in the minutes. Do the same with each recommendation where the action was completed but did not completely solve the original concern.

From the previous minutes, check off all items where the original concern has been resolved, and show them as items complete on the current minutes. Then check off items where the target date still lies in the future, listing them as "in progress." These usually cause some discussion, but it is usually not necessary to convey this in the minutes.

This leaves items that did not receive action. It also leaves items that received action but did not solve the original concern. This happens frequently with difficult health and safety problems where the real nature of the problem cannot initially be proven without testing, or where none of the suggested solutions can be proven successful until tried.

In both these cases, enter each item in the minutes with its original number, and then restate the problem after careful re-examination. Quite often, a recommended action is not carried out because the real problem was not properly identified. Where the problem is unchanged, and the recommended action was never carried out, the committee must decide whether to refer the concern to WorkSafeNB for assistance. On the other hand, where the problem appears different after review, a different recommended solution is probably required. Where there is a new recommendation, assign a new target date.

WorkSafeNB's help should only be sought after every reasonable effort has been made to resolve the problem at the committee level. If absolutely no progress can be made, contact WorkSafeNB at 1 800 222-9775.

Because it can be difficult during the meeting for a secretary to keep track of every item from the previous minutes, the co-chair should see that every old item has been checked off before proceeding to new business.

New concerns

Ensure each new concern is a valid health or safety matter, and that the problem is properly identified. Ensure the recommendation is a specific action that can be completed within a definite time. Assign a realistic target date and delegate a committee member to follow through or monitor the concern.

Validating the concern

Only valid health or safety problems should be acted upon. For example, the JHSC should not be dealing with matters such as labour-management relations. Occasionally a concern may be raised that is both a labour relations matter and a safety matter. Give the labour relations process a chance to solve the problem first. If that fails to produce a solution, the committee may then discuss the matter. Their task is to judge whether there is in fact a hazard, but not to recommend corrective steps. That is for the labour relations outlet to decide.

The problem

Be careful of concerns expressed as a “need,” such as “guardrail needed on hopper platform.” Until you find out why the item is needed, the real problem may be hidden. Ask what the danger is. Ask what is wrong with leaving things as they are. In the example of the guardrail, you might find there is no danger because nobody goes up there. Or you might find that, rather than a guardrail, a remote control on the hopper gates should be installed so that the platform is not needed. Unless the committee questions every “need” before it is discussed, the result can be argument, bad decisions, or lack of action.

Inspection review

Inspections serve to identify hazards and their corrective action, so it is imperative that JHSCs use this pro-active approach to accident prevention. When done properly, the safety inspection can be the safety program’s best tool to prevent accidents and injuries. Part of the inspection

process is the JHSC’s review of the inspection reports and recommendations, which should become part of the meeting and be included in the minutes.

Accident review

Concerns arising from accident reviews can each be treated as an additional item under “New Concerns.” It is up to the co-chair to control the discussion.

Common problems are:

- ◆ **Nobody speaks.** The co-chair should always have an idea for a solution. If nobody has any suggestions, the co-chair’s suggestion usually gets things done.
- ◆ **Everybody tries to speak.** The co-chair should note briefly on paper every new idea offered to solve the concern, while deferring discussion of any one idea until all members have made their suggestions. Working down the list, the co-chair should then have each suggestion discussed in turn. The most popular solution should be accepted unless there is a member in strong disagreement.
- ◆ **There is strong disagreement.** Usually this occurs because a member does not agree that there is a real hazard involved. In this case, check with the regulations under the *OHS Act* – it may provide the answer. If disagreement persists, compromise by making a recommendation that will partially solve the problem or provide a better understanding of it.
- ◆ **Personal involvement.** The other common reason for strong disagreement is a member’s personal involvement. If a member happens to be the supervisor of an area where a concern has arisen, they might feel a strong motivation to prove they know the answer. The strong response

by maintenance people to maintenance problems, and by superintendents to production problems, gives the impression they are dominating the meeting. (Members seeing this problem in others should recognize it as natural, and not feel offended or unable to express their own thoughts. It is important to recognize the wisdom of letting others speak first.)

The target date

A recommended action cannot be followed up unless a target date is set for its completion. Without a target date, lack of action can mean the item is always “in progress.”

- ◆ If nobody at the meeting knows how long the action should take, estimate a reasonable date. It may turn out to be unrealistic, but in any event those in charge of the work will determine the actual date, so use your own estimate as the target date.
- ◆ If it seems impossible to attach any target date at all, it is usually because the recommendation contains no specific action. In such cases, the recommendation itself should be changed to include action.
- ◆ Sometimes the corrective action is urgent, but arguments arise as to the practical difficulties or expense of an early target date. Expense, being entirely a matter for management, should not affect the recommended target date. Practical difficulties have to be allowed for, and the target date must be one that is attainable. Where the earliest attainable date fails to remove the danger soon enough, the committee should add a temporary solution, such as roping off the dangerous area. There would then be two recommendations and two different target dates.

The recommendation

It is important that every recommendation contain a specific action, monitored by the JHSC.

Failure to state an action causes three general problems. For example, “loaders must ensure pallets are stacked safely” is a typically poor recommendation. First, it cannot be followed up: who can say whether it is completed or not?

Secondly, it has all the characteristics of a supervisor’s authority to direct workers, thereby implying the supervisor can forget the problem because the committee is the new boss. Both valid and useful would be either a toolbox meeting to discuss stacking problems, or creating a written job procedure.

Failure to limit the action to company employees makes follow-up difficult. If a lift truck problem seems to require dual wheels, action should be “order dual wheels.” Only maintenance and purchasing staff are involved. To recommend “install dual wheels” would be a mistake. Action is then in the hands of the manufacturer and common carrier. How can there be a target date? Who is accountable if the action fails to take place?

Finally, remember many problems cannot be solved without experimenting. Trying to obtain longer trailers or remove bumps in the yard may solve the lift truck’s instability better than dual wheels. Recommendations for partial solutions, temporary solutions, studies, and reports are all valid. They can be followed up with further action once more information is known.

Monitoring the corrective action plan

Monitoring is the employer’s responsibility. The JHSC should assign the task of auditing or monitoring to ensure that the corrective action recommended is effective and not creating other problems. This is a very important JHSC responsibility, one that can largely determine the committee’s credibility and effectiveness in the workplace. Each concern and

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recommendation entered in the minutes should have a person assigned to monitor the concern. This person should be identified in the minutes in the “Action by Whom” column.

Training and education

Training is mandatory for all new JHSC members. WorkSafeNB provides a free, three-day JHSC training course. The employer is responsible for granting JHSC members the necessary leave for training, and for paying the members’ wages and any other benefits they are entitled to for the time spent taking the training.

A program of toolbox meetings, job procedure training, and job education has a major, beneficial effect on work habits. The committee should make every effort to establish and maintain such a program.

The first requirement for training and education is allocating time. The first way of using this time is simply for workers and supervisors to discuss any work-related problem. This is the “toolbox talk.” The committee should promote allocating 10 minutes or so to every crew, two or three times a month. Each supervisor should make a daily note of any work habit or equipment problem noticed, and make one of these the opening subject of the next toolbox meeting. Where the activity involves construction, a brief safety walk of the site by the supervisor and a worker to assess safety hazards associated with the day’s activities, is a good way to keep on top of a constantly changing environment. It provides the opportunity to reinforce with the workers the precautionary measures and procedures they are expected to follow.

The second way to use time should be to develop written job procedures. The steps required to start, run and deal with emergencies on each job should be written in the form of three separate procedures for every important or difficult job. Each step should have a parallel comment, drawing attention to any danger that could occur during that step. Time is required for operators and supervisors to meet and finalize the wording of these procedures. Further guidance is available from WorkSafeNB.

Thirdly, time is needed for supervisors to train new employees, with the help of written procedures where possible.

Finally, time is needed for job education – an hour or so for operators and supervisors to learn, with the help of outsiders, new facts concerning the jobs they perform. Meetings can be arranged using resource people, such as mobile equipment dealers, wire-rope or grinding wheel salespeople, or WorkSafeNB staff.

Films and slide programs can be borrowed. Employees can attend training courses at the workplace or in training institutions.

Several studies show that workplaces with better trained committee members tend to have good health and safety records.

Roles

WorkSafeNB’s role

One of the roles of WorkSafeNB’s health and safety officers is to help workers and employers establish and maintain their committees. WorkSafeNB does not intend to impose rigid rules for operating the committees. Procedures may vary from industry to industry and plant to plant, with the mutual consent of the committee members.

The co-chairs’ role

With the primary responsibility for running meetings, the co-chairs play a key role in the committee. They should consult with each other to plan meetings and review minutes. The person actually chairing the meeting is responsible for starting it on time, keeping it on track, bringing all issues to a conclusion, and ensuring that all members have the chance to contribute. The meeting’s success depends upon the quality of the contributions from all members.

Planning meetings

Good meetings don't just happen – they require careful planning. The co-chairs can ensure that meetings are effective by:

- ◆ Scheduling meetings – arranging the dates, times, and a suitable location.
- ◆ Preparing notices of meetings and agenda items in advance, and ensuring that necessary information on agenda items is available.
- ◆ Ensuring that meetings start and end on time.

Conducting meetings

The co-chairs play a key role in ensuring that meetings are conducted successfully. Some factors that make for successful committee meetings are:

- ◆ The committee must agree on the problem and only then consider solutions. Solutions also require agreement by consensus.
- ◆ It is important that each member share any relevant facts and opinions with the committee.
- ◆ It is better to listen than attempt to out-talk others. The co-chair conducting the meeting should ensure that all committee members have a chance to express their views, and that no individual monopolizes the meeting.
- ◆ Joint decision-making is preferable to decisions made with the support of only part of the committee. The co-chair can facilitate this by ensuring that all views are heard and discussed, and that decisions are reached by consensus.

Follow-up

The co-chairs should ensure that committee recommendations are presented to the employer in writing, and that the committee is informed of the employer's response.

The secretary's role

The secretary's most important task is to record the minutes of the meeting and keep records of all the committee's activities (minutes are discussed earlier on pages 7-8).

The secretary's responsibilities may also include:

- ◆ Creating the agenda as set by the co-chairs.
- ◆ Notifying committee members of meeting times and locations.
- ◆ Notifying the co-chairs when there will not be a quorum for a meeting.
- ◆ Ensuring that the minutes are agreed to by the co-chairs before they are distributed, and that the committee has the opportunity to point out any errors or omissions before or at the start of the next meeting.
- ◆ Circulating minutes, reports, and information to committee members promptly.
- ◆ Pointing out those items recorded in past minutes that require discussion and follow-up by the committee.
- ◆ When necessary during meetings, clarifying with the committee whatever decisions have been reached.

The members' role

Every committee member plays a role in ensuring that the committee meets its objectives. In general, all members should:

- ◆ Attend meetings (members who cannot attend a meeting should notify the secretary in advance).
- ◆ Contribute their experience and ideas to committee discussions.
- ◆ Obtain information, if assigned to do so by the committee.

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- ◆ Listen to concerns and suggestions made by managers or employees outside the committee, and ensure these are referred to supervisors or to the committee, as appropriate.
- ◆ Learn about health and safety in the workplace.

In addition, individual members may have specific responsibilities from time to time. These may include:

- ◆ Conducting workplace inspections.
- ◆ Undertaking special tasks for the committee.
- ◆ Attending refusal to work situations.
- ◆ Conducting accident investigations.
- ◆ Accompanying a health and safety officer on inspections.
- ◆ Attending the beginning of a safety or industrial hygiene test.

Members with special responsibilities should ensure that the committee is kept informed of their work and findings.

Responsibilities

The JHSC's responsibilities

No worker, supervisor, manager, employer or government agency can hold the committee responsible for unsafe or unhealthy situations. The committee is responsible for recommending how health and safety problems might be solved, not for carrying out the necessary changes.

A frequent problem for JHSCs is a tendency for others to expect to shift all responsibility for health and safety onto their shoulders. This must not be done. Under the *OHS Act*, every worker is held personally responsible to work with regard for their own health and safety and that of others. Every supervisor and manager is obligated to take reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of their workers. Every employer must do the same.

While management has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the necessary precautions for health and safety at the workplace, it may delegate authority to the JHSC.

The *OHS Act* enables the committee to undertake the following activities at the workplace:

1. Identify health and safety concerns.
2. Make recommendations to correct health and safety concerns.
3. Monitor the corrective action taken.
4. Create awareness of the importance of health and safety to all employees.
5. Ensure that health and safety education training programs are established and maintained.
6. Help resolve questions arising from the right to refuse dangerous work.
7. Investigate the causes of accidents to prevent re-occurrence.
8. Become familiar with the *OHS Act* and regulations.
9. Maintain a positive and enthusiastic attitude toward the practice of health and safety.
10. Undertake any activities prescribed by legislation.

Employer's responsibilities

An employer's legal responsibilities to the committee include:

- ◆ Co-operating with a committee, where such a committee has been established, a health and safety representative, where such a representative has been elected, and with any person responsible for enforcing the *OHS Act* and regulations.
- ◆ Providing whatever assistance is necessary for the committee to carry out its role.
- ◆ Responding to the committee's recommendations. The response should include an implementation timetable, as well as reasons for disagreement, if any, with any of the recommendations.

- ◆ Providing the committee with a copy of the most recent inventory of hazardous materials and hazardous physical agents, along with the unexpired material safety data sheets (MSDSs) and suppliers' information on things, devices, etc., that emit the hazardous physical agents.
- ◆ Providing the committee with copies of any required assessments of biological and chemical agents produced and used in the workplace, to determine if they are hazardous.
- ◆ Ensuring the names and work locations of committee members are prominently posted (see Appendix B for a suggested format).
- ◆ Ensuring the minutes of the most recent committee meeting are prominently posted.
- ◆ Granting JHSC members the necessary leave to be trained in the duties and responsibilities of a committee member, with no loss of wages or benefits.

Confidentiality

In the course of conducting committee business, confidential company and personal information may be disclosed. Committee members are obligated to keep such information confidential.

Conclusion

Effectiveness

The laws that require a joint health and safety committee in workplaces cannot make them effective. To ensure effectiveness, a committee needs organizational support, comprehensive terms of reference, and a means of self-assessment. These should be developed by each committee, be part of a set of written procedures made available to all committee members, and used as an orientation tool for new members.

Communication

Good communication between management and the committee, and between the committee and other employees is essential. Committee members must be open to concerns, complaints and suggestions, and must be able to discuss problems and recommend solutions. A committee with expertise becomes an advisory body in the workplace.

Training

Effective committees are those whose members have the knowledge and skills needed to carry out their duties and activities. Proper training on how to work effectively as part of a committee, and on the principles of health and safety, is essential for each committee.

Appendix A

Joint Health and Safety Committee Meeting Sample Agenda

ABC Company Joint Health & Safety Committee Meeting

Date _____ Time _____ Place _____

Item	Presenter	Approx. Time (in minutes)
1. Minutes of last meeting	Secretary	5
2. Unfinished business		
* Results of noise survey	Joe Smith	10
* Company response to recommendation No. 7: lighting at loading dock	Jean Sims	10
* Report on training courses and suggestions for more training	Mary Smith (co-chairperson)	10
3. Regular reports		
* Workplace inspections and recommendations	Jack Harrod	25
* Update on accidents and first aid	Joe Smith	10
4. Employer response to past recommendation No. 6	Harry Brown (co-chairperson)	5
5. New business		
* Preview film on back injuries	Jean Sims	20
6. Next meeting		
* Date and agenda item		

Appendix B

Joint Health & Safety Committee Sample Minutes Form

Minutes of Joint Health & Safety Committee

Name of Employer / Nom de l'employeur

Location / Lieu de travail

Date of Meeting / Date de la réunion

Date of Last Meeting / Date de la dernière réunion

Name of Co-Chairperson / Nom du (de la) coprésident-e

Name of Secretary / Nom du (de la) secrétaire

Members Present / Membres présents

BUSINESS CARRIED FORWARD / AFFAIRES REPORTÉES DE LA DERNIÈRE RÉUNION

Origin / Source	Concern / Inquiétude	Target Date / Date d'exécution	Action & By Whom / Mesures prises et par qui

NEW BUSINESS / AFFAIRES NOUVELLES

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Co-Chairperson / Coprésident-e

Date of Next Meeting / Date de la prochaine réunion

Appendix C: Workplace Inspection Form

Item(s) Inspected	Hazard Discovered	Class	Corrective Action To Be Taken	Target Date for Completion
1. Atmospheric Conditions: dusts, gases, fumes, sprays and illumination				
2. Buildings and Structure: windows, doors, floors, exits, stairs, aisles, ramps, guardrails, garbage removal/storage, roofs, walls				
3. Containers: scrap bins, disposal receptacles, barrels, gas cylinders, solvent cans				
4. Elevators, Escalators, and Man Lifts: cables, controls, safety devices				
5. Firefighting Equipment: extinguishers, hoses, hydrants, sprinkler systems, alarms				
6. Furniture: designed chairs, sharp edges, desks, cabinets				
7. Hand Tools: bars, sledges, wrenches, hammers, power hand tools				
8. Hazardous Supplies and Materials: flammables, explosives, gases, acids, caustics, toxic chemicals labels, MSDSs, wastes				
9. Material Handling Equipment: conveyors, cranes, hoists, forklifts				
10. Personal Protective Equipment: hard hats, safety glasses, respirators, gas masks, gloves, shoes				

Appendix C: Workplace Inspection Form

Item(s) Inspected	Hazard Discovered	Class	Corrective Action To Be Taken	Target Date for Completion
11. Pressurized Equipment: boilers, vats, tanks, piping, hosing				
12. Production and Related Equipment: any equipment that processes materials into more finished products, such as mills, shapers, cutters, borers, presses, lathes				
13. Personal Supporting Equipment: ladders, scaffolding, high platforms, catwalks, sling chairs, staging				
14. Power Source Equipment: gas engines, steam engines, air compressors, electrical motors				
15. Structural Openings: shafts, pits, sumps, floor openings, (including those usually kept covered)				
16. Storage Facilities and Areas: racks, bins, cabinets, shelves, tanks, closets, yard and floor storage				
17. Transportation Equipment: automobiles, trucks, railroad cars, motorized carts, buggies				
18. Walkways and Roadways: aisles, ramps, docks, walkways, vehicle ways				
19. Warning and Signaling Devices: crossing lights, blinker lights, sirens, warning signs				
20. Miscellaneous: housekeeping, training, all items that do not fall into any of the above categories				

Appendix C: Workplace Inspection Form

Additional Comments / Notes:

Note: When a tool, machine, structure or item of equipment is inspected, attention should be directed at those parts that could result in a substandard or an unhealthy condition. Therefore, the next step is to decide exactly what critical parts of an item should be inspected regularly.

Inspector(s): _____

Date of Inspection: _____

HAZARD CLASSIFICATIONS

Class A (Major):

Likely to cause permanent disability, loss of life, and/or extensive loss of structure, equipment or material. Repairs should be done immediately.

Class B (Serious):

Likely to cause serious injury, temporary disability, or disruptive property damage. Repairs should be done within days.

Class C (Minor):

Likely to cause minor, non-disabling injury, or non-disruptive property damage. Repairs are planned on a longer-term basis, within weeks to months.