WHAT THIS GUIDE IS ABOUT

This guide is a quick reference that explains how you can fulfill the duties of the Local OHS Liaison position at AUPE.

Using this workbook will help you meet the minimum requirements. It also makes suggestions on how you can go beyond the basics. You can help the Union mobilize its members to hold employers accountable to their legal health and safety obligations.

Whether you are new to the role of OHS Liaison, want to brush up on how to communicate about health and safety, take action as an OHS activist, or find some handy resources, this booklet will help you.

AUPE encourages all members to access the educational courses offered. OHS Liaisons are encouraged to take the Occupational Health and Safety education through AUPE to familiarize themselves with OHS on the worksite including: the rights of workers, legislation, and the functions of a Health and Safety Committee. AUPE offers 3 OHS courses; Introduction to OHS, Occupational Health and Safety for Union Activists, and Advanced Occupation Health and Safety.

For more information on these courses visit www.aupe.org/training
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHECKLIST / TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
<th>PAGE NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUPE Occupational Health and Safety Education</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUPE’s OHS Committee and the Local OHS Liaison Position</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duties of the Liaison</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the Legislation</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know Your Health and Safety Rights</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to Legislation – Bill 47</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety Committees</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have one-on-one conversations about health and safety</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brush up on the A.E.I.O.U.s of organizing</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect on your goals and what matters to the workers</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Importance of a Well-Organized Worksite</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worksite maping</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map hazards in the workplace</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor an Up and Coming OHS Advocate</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take workplace actions</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHS Activism 101 – Suggested health and safety actions</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk union. Talk safety. What do the terms mean?</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Recommended Resources</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use index cards for your health and safety talks</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“The fights against mandatory overtime, increased workloads, downsizing, and privatization are all fights for the health and safety of our members.”
– Nancy Lessin, Health and Safety Coordinator of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO
OHS LIAISON QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

AUPE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY EDUCATION

Since offering its first OHS course in 1977, AUPE has trained thousands of members about workplace hazards and how to hold their employers accountable under the law. Starting in 1985, AUPE began observing an annual “Day of Mourning” ceremony for workers killed or injured on the job. The Union lobbied the government to officially recognize the April 28 ceremony, which it did in 1989.

SOMEONE BY DENNIS MIKALSEN

Someone died the other day,
An accident is what they say
The boom went up and hit the line
The medics came but not in time
How could it happen we stare and say
We practice safety every day
We grieve with the family and do our best
To help each other through this test
Suddenly emerged from unseen forts
Inspectors chastise and make reports

Where were they before the day
A safety hazard took a life away
In a hurry running late
Do it now or it can wait
But the works important
Priority one, we can do it, if we run
Need more training, that’s “OK”
But it can wait for another day
What? Staff unhappy all will be well
When we hear from personnel

Safety’s important, it’s not a game
That was the line before the budget came
Reduce your workload that’s not what we meant
When we cut staff by ten percent
The more we do the more needs done
Building empires is really fun
Do your work and really care

The more you do the better I fare
The death of our brother was tragic and wrong
But he cared and our memories will be cherished and long
With his passing, our brother left something to do
The torch has been passed to me and to you
AUPE’S OHS COMMITTEE AND THE LOCAL OHS LIAISON POSITION

An important goal of AUPE’s standing OHS committee is to inform and educate members about OHS. This is a challenging task. AUPE has a large number of members working in diverse occupations. They are spread out across the province in 33 different Locals.

To help meet its goals, the OHS Committee relies on an elected member from each Local to regularly communicate, both up the chain to the Union’s central committee, and down the chain to rank and file members and frontline workers. As the word “liaison” implies, the purpose of this position is to foster communication, cooperation, and closer relationships between regular AUPE members and the OHS standing committee.

Beginning in 2011, the AUPE OHS Standing Committee chaired at the time by former Vice-President Erez Raz attempted to amend AUPE’s Constitution to create this new component position. They felt there was a need for Locals to have a dedicated member elected to focus on OHS issues.

Their Resolution 1-3 to create the OHS Liaison position was defeated at Convention 2011. Steadfast, the OHS Committee was determined to try again. Renumbered as 1-10, the resolution was presented the following year, but it failed to reach the floor. It was left as unfinished business at the next two annual conventions.

Finally, at Convention 2014, they succeeded. Article 18 of AUPE’s Constitution was changed to create the new position. But the goal of communicating with members remains a challenge. Liaisons require support to fulfill their role.

In November 2018, AUPE’s OHS committee and former Chair and then Vice-President James Hart brought the OHS Liaisons together for the first time for a dedicated training session. Liaisons often also attend AUPE’s Day of Mourning ceremony. At the 2019 ceremony they participated in special training workshop.

Stay up-to-date with AUPE’s OHS Committee. Find valuable resources posted on the Committee’s microsite. To access meeting minutes, contact the chairperson.

https://www.aupe.org/about/committees/occupational-health-safety-committee
DUTIES OF THE LIAISON

The duties of Local OHS Liaisons are described in AUPE’s Constitution, and in the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the position.

AUPE’s Constitution is the text that establishes the foundational principals and composition of the Union. The Local OHS Liaisons are described at section 18.03 c. Access the Constitution at https://www.aupe.org/about/constitution.

AUPE’s OHS Committee developed the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Local OHS Liaisons in 2018. They further define the purpose and scope of the position. This is an on-going process. Increased scope for the liaisons and expansion of the TOR’s is being redefined by the Liaisons during training sessions annually. Access the Terms of Reference letter at https://bit.ly/3beuB6z.

As the Local OHS Liaison, your basic duties are to:
1. Attend the meetings of the Local Occupational Health and Safety sub-committee, if such exists;
2. Report in writing at least once per year to the Occupational Health and Safety Standing Committee, the health and safety concerns of the Local;
3. Report in writing at least three (3) times yearly to the members of the Local Council on the execution of your duties;
4. Represent the interest of all members of the Union; and
5. Be a worksite contact

In reality, your specific duties are very narrow. You can accomplish them by attending your Local Council meetings and staying in regular contact with AUPE’s Standing OHS Committee. You can submit your reports in writing using e-mail.

To maintain communication with AUPE’s Standing OHS Committee, each member of the committee is assigned roughly three or four of the Local OHS Liaisons to stay in contact with. Try to talk periodically on the phone with the person assigned to you. A reporting form has been developed by the OHS Committee to assist Liaisons with their reporting. A copy of the OHS Liaisons Annual Reporting Form can be accessed at https://bit.ly/3u401bR.

Perhaps the real challenge in fulfilling your duties as Local OHS Liaison lies in answering the question, “What should we communicate about?”

Your duty to “represent the interest of all union members” is very broad and wide. It gives you the opportunity to take the actions that will be most meaningful to you and your co-workers.
To achieve these goals the Local OHS Liaison can:

- Attending meetings of the Local Occupational Health and Safety sub-committee, if such exists
- Reporting in writing at least once per year to the OHS Standing Committee the OHS concerns of your Local – There is a reporting form to do this as outlined on page 7. To access this page, visit https://bit.ly/3u401bR
- Report in writing, at least three times per year to the Local Council on the execution of their duties
- Communicate Local OHS issues, education needs, and resource requirements to the OHS Standing Committee – Since 2019, OHS Liaisons have been invited to join the OHS Standing Committee meetings. We encourage all of you to attend the meetings to stay current on what the OHS Committee is working on.
- Identify OHS worksite advocates/contacts – Page 19 refers to organizing your worksites for Occupational Health and Safety. Part of that includes having one-on-one conversations with fellow workers and identifying advocates and contacts that can help spread the message around workplace safety.
- Identify existing worksite OHS committees and contact information – It can be difficult to know where to start. Here is a Local OHS subcommittee meeting agenda to help understand what a subcommittee meeting might look like. If your Local does not have a sub-committee, you may want to start one. Here is a Sample Terms of Reference from Local 003
- Promote OHS education by communicating to the Locals available courses, seminars, conferences, and literature available – All of this information can be found on AUPE’s OHS website at https://www.aupe.org/about/committees/occupational-health-safety-committee
- Circulate OHS posters and brochures to the membership – AUPE has a variety of posters and brochures that you can access by calling the Member Resource Centre, contacting your MSO, or simply visiting the Occupational Health and Safety Committee page on AUPE.org
- Represent the interests of all members of the Union – By having one-to-one conversations, you will begin to understand the important interests and issues of your fellow members.
- Be a worksite contact. – Share OHS and Union information (bargaining updates, events, etc.) with your fellow members. It can be as simple as posting the information you receive on your union board.

The rest of this booklet describes how to grow as a union activist in general and as an OHS activist in particular. There are many ways you can organize union members and supporters, build solidarity, and defend our rights. At the end of the day, your goal should be to prepare yourself and others to stand up and fight back.

“Our children must be made to realize that their forefathers labored under pitiful and dangerous conditions and finally raised up to shed oppression and gain their dignity. These children are the beneficiaries of these struggles.”

– Fred Kaltenstein, APWU.
UNDERSTAND THE LEGISLATION

Legislation is a web of rules limiting your employer’s right to manage. Those rules are found in your collective agreement and in labour legislation. Knowing the rules helps you to hold your employer accountable. It is one tool in the toolkit of every OHS activist.

Historically, these rules were developed as governments acknowledged the unequal power relationship between workers and their employers. The rules are intended to create a greater degree of balance and to protect workers. In Canada, governments have passed OHS laws since the time of Ontario’s Factory Act of 1884. OHS legislation is meant of course, to reduce workplace injuries by recognizing rights and imposing duties upon both workers and employers.

In Alberta, the provincial government regulates most workplaces and covers most workers with the Occupational Health and Safety Act. About 10% of Alberta’s workforce is, however, covered instead by the OHS provisions in the federal government’s Canada Labour Code. This includes employees of the federal government and workers in interprovincial industries like banking, telecommunications, cross-border transport, and uranium mining.

Legislation is constantly changing; you must always be working with the most current legislation. Also, remember that workers and their unions will remain in struggle – and you should continue to demand improvements to legislation, rights, and workplace protections.

Alberta’s OHS legislation is organized in three levels, according to who has authority to make changes and what the content covers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority to Change</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>Legislature (Parliament is Canada’s legislature, the federal institution with the power to make laws, to raise taxes, and to authorize government spending.) Defines obligations and rights of different parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulations</td>
<td>Cabinet (The cabinet is also referred to as the Canadian Ministry. It is the body of ministerial advisors that set the federal government’s policies and priorities for the country.) Describes broad provisions for most Alberta workplaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Minister of Labour (The minister in the cabinet who is responsible for the labour portfolio of Employment and Social Development.) Provides technical requirements, often for specific kinds of work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You can answer many questions about workplace health and safety using a blue OHS Handbook from the Queen’s Printer. The OHS handbook is a compilation of the Act, Regulations, and Code. It’s a helpful resource to bring with you to safety meetings. It shows the employer you mean business and know your stuff!

At first, the legislation might seem intimidating or overwhelming. But like anything, the more you explore it and practice using it, the easier it gets.

One advantage of accessing the legislation electronically is that you can quickly keyword search it. Use your device to download the law from these links.

**Queen’s Printer**


**Alberta Labour**


**Canada Labour Code (only for Federally-regulated workers)**


Then follow these keystrokes to search a PDF or HTML text.

- **PC**, press [Ctrl + F]
- **Mac**, press [Command + F]
- **Android phone or tablet**, touch the [Action Menu / vertical ellipsis / three vertical dots], and then touch [Find in page]
- **On iPhone or iPad Safari browser**, touch the [Share] icon, then the [Find in page] icon

**Type in your search term**, like “First Aid,” for example.

Whether you use a hard copy like the blue OHS handbook from the Queen’s Printer or electronic files, make sure you’re using the most up-to-date version available of the legislation.

**Additional Legislation**

For legislation and information regarding Worker’s Compensation, visit [https://www.wcb.ab.ca/](https://www.wcb.ab.ca/) or download the **WCB app**.

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) is also a helpful resource for Occupational Health and Safety. Visit [https://www.ccohs.ca/](https://www.ccohs.ca/). CCOHS also offers a helpful app that offers a variety of fact sheets called **OHS Answers**.
KNOW YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY RIGHTS

Health and safety activists educate their fellow workers about our safety rights. Workers and unions fought for and won these safety rights. Often, we refer to only the first three rights (“three Rs”) because they were the one’s workers demanded and won first. The fourth right is like a bonus, so we can also refer to four rights (“four Rs”). A reference to the applicable section of Alberta’s Occupational Health and Safety Act is written in brackets beneath each right.

1. **RIGHT TO KNOW** – Workers have a right to know about the hazards they face in their workplaces and the means to eliminate or control those hazards. While some hazards are obvious, others like biological, chemical, and psychological hazards often are not. Your employer must provide you training, a hazard assessment for your job, and make available material safety data sheets.

   [OHS Act, sections 2(d i), 3(2), 4(a,b)] Code Part 2 section 7, 8

2. **RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE** – Workers have the right to meaningfully participate in workplace health and safety activities. You can express concerns and should have a say in decisions that affect their health and safety. You can participate in a Joint Work Site Health and Safety Committees (JWHSC) and be involved in hazard identification, assessment, and control (HIAC).

   [OHS Act, section 2(d)(ii)] Code Part 2, section 8, Part 13

3. **RIGHT TO REFUSE** – have the right to refuse dangerous work. Due to new legislation, workers can now only refuse unsafe work when it poses “undue hazard.” The hazard must be serious and an immediate threat to the health and safety of the worker. It represents one of the few instances when workers can disobey their employer. When a worker refuses unsafe work, the employer must investigate and remedy the problem. If an employer fails to remedy a problem, workers should report the problem to the government and to their Union.

   [OHS Act section 2(d)(iii) and Part 3, section 17]

4. **RIGHT TO BE FREE FROM REPRISAL** – Workers have the right to exercise their safety rights without being subject to disciplinary action. The changes made to legislation have changed this right significantly. While workers used to be free from any reprisal for refusing unsafe work, Bill 47 now leaves workers open to discrimination but safe from disciplinary acts. The first three safety rights are only meaningful if workers do not feel afraid, they will be fired, lose pay, or be withheld from promotion.

   [OHS Act, section 2(d)(iv) and Part 3, section 18]
CHANGES TO LEGISLATION – BILL 47

In 2017, the New Democratic Party introduced Bill 30: An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans. The changes made to Occupational Health and Safety and Worker’s Compensation caught Alberta up with the rest of the countries OHS legislation.

On December 9, 2020, the last day of the Alberta legislature’s fall sitting, the UCP ran the legislature until 3 o’clock in the morning and used its majority powers to shut down debate. That night, the UCP passed Bill 47 into law.

This bill made significant changes to two laws: the Occupational Health & Safety Act and the Workers’ Compensation Act moving Alberta back behind the rest of the country.

The changes to OHS legislation have been outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview and description</td>
<td>First comprehensive update to WCB and OHS since 1976 decent, caught Alberta up to other provinces, but did not make cutting-edge reforms or lead-the-country improvements mandated joint HSCs in all workplaces for the first time in Alberta included harassment and violence under OHS for first time strengthen workers’ right to refuse unsafe work increase enforcement of rules</td>
<td>Rolled back many of the improvements made in the previous period, and the changes move Alberta out of step with the Canadian norm allows non-union employers to make joint committees ineffective and even useless, substantially weakens workers’ participation rights makes workers more vulnerable by reducing their ability to remedy or resist unsafe working conditions increase the risk to workers of employer retaliation for acting to make workplaces safer reduce enforcement of rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint worker / employer health and safety committees (HSCs)</td>
<td>mandatory joint HSCs for employers with more than 20 workers, at every worksite with 20 workers or more. Workers elect their representatives. Create ten duties for joint HSCs, including: detailed rules about co-chairs, procedures, quorum, schedules, public posting of membership, and training requirements.</td>
<td>HSCs for employers with more than 20 workers, only for overall employer, not at worksites. Employers appoint who sits on committees (unless a union contract stipulates other process). Reduce list of joint HSCs duties to four including: receive worker health and safety concerns, participate in employer hazard assessments, make recommendation to the employer regarding health and safety, and review the employer’s work site inspection documentation. Remove from the OHS Act all rules about co-chairs, procedures, quorum, schedules, public posting of membership, and training requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Period & Government | 2017 – 2020  
New Democratic Party | 2020 – present  
United Conservative Party |
<p>| Right to refuse dangerous work | workers can refuse unsafe work if they believe there is a “dangerous condition” at the worksite or the work constitutes a danger to self or others | replace “dangerous condition” with narrower term “undue hazards” that poses serious and immediate threat - workers facing hazards that take time to result in injury (chemical, vibration, noise, biological, etc.) may be unable to refuse unsafe work |
| Protection from retaliation | prohibit any employer from retaliating against workers for exercising their rights; defined in broad an encompassing way (and by listing examples) as “discriminatory action.” For example, employer cannot reassign a worker who previously refused unsafe work to permanent night shift. | expand the ways employers can legally retaliate against workers for exercising their rights; defined narrowly as “disciplinary action.” For example, employer can reassign a worker who previously refused unsafe work to permanent night shift - this is discriminatory but not disciplinary, and is allowed. |
| Worksite inspections | inspecting the worksite regularly (quarterly) is a mandatory duty of joint HSCs and therefore means workers participate directly in inspections | workers not required to participate in worksite inspections, obligation to inspect regularly removed from the OHS Act |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investigation of incidents</th>
<th>investigating serious injuries and incidents is a mandatory duty of joint HSCs and therefore means workers participate directly in investigations</th>
<th>workers not required to participate in investigation of injuries or serious incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workers’ Compensation</td>
<td>set rate benefit - injured workers eligible to receive benefits of 90% of any lost net income (Removes a cap on maximum insurable earnings. Previously, any lost wages over $98,700 were uncompensated) permanent wage loss indexed to AB consumer price index remove compensation ceiling committee struck to periodically review medical evidence and recommend changes to list for deemed diseases compensation for psychological injury unless injury proven not to arise and occur from work mandatory worker reinstatement after injury - employers obligated to re-employ injured workers when able to return to duties, employers can be fined for failing to do so establish a Fair Practices Office to create distance between WCB and internal appeal bodies and help workers with appeals</td>
<td>remove rate benefit - WCB allowed to lower compensation rate allow WCB to set annual inflationary adjustment for permanent wage loss below inflation allow WCB to set compensation ceiling disband committee and charge minister with review every 10 years of deemed diseases compensation for psychological injury only if injury proven to arise and occur from work remove obligation on employers to re-employ injured workers, unlike other provinces replace Fair Practices Office with an officer / advisor and largely scrap processes for workers - tighten timelines for workers to appeal decisions and allow WCB option to suspend benefits while appeal is underway create new “Heros Fund” to further compensate dependents of any first responder or corrections officers who die from work - benefits few workers, mostly already well-insured men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusions</td>
<td>Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, 2018 provided farm and ranch workers with comprehensive health and safety protections.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemptions</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>“Allowances” - new measure allows employers or industry associations can apply and OHS director can waive requirements of the OHS Code; undermines the principle that safety protections apply equally to all workers; no requirement for government to publish who has received exemptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fines and penalties for violations</td>
<td>Expand the scope of courts to impose and oversee creative sentences, including orders to impose safety training or for employers to pay for research programs or scholarships. Expand OHS officers’ investigative powers at a work site, including the power to issue stop-work orders and to interview workers not present at the time of an incident. Workers affected by stop-work orders must receive their pay while the order is in effect. Other fines and penalties remain unchanged from previous period (up to $500,000 / 6 months prison for first violation, up to $1M / 12 months prison for subsequent violations).</td>
<td>Unchanged from previous period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforcement</td>
<td>Increased proactive inspections on employers targeted as high risk and on workplaces identified as having vulnerable workers. Substantial increase in inspections, orders, and ticketing, as follows: Workplace inspections up 35% in 2017-18 compared with 2016-17 OHS orders up 38% in 2017-18 compared with 2016-17 OHS ticketing increases 714% from 67 OHS tickets issued in 2017-18 to 479 in 2018-19</td>
<td>Substantial drop in inspections, orders, and ticketing, as follows: Workplace inspections down 20% in 2019-20 compared with 2018-19 OHS orders drop 13% in 2019-20 compared with 2018-19 OHS ticketing drops 96% - 22 OHS tickets issued in 2019-20, down from 479 in 2018-19 Ticketing under review, labelled as “red tape” by UCP and may yet be done away with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES

While the changes made by Bill 47 drastically reduced the duties and efficacy of Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committees, changing them to Health and Safety Committees, it is important to focus on participating in meaningful work with your HSC.

So, what exactly do joint health and safety committees do?

Because of the UCP’s Bill 47, the duties of Health and Safety Committees under the law were dramatically reduced, effective September 2021. And that’s a big problem because non-union employers (and even unionized employers with weak language in the collective agreement) can get away with involving workers less.

As we reviewed earlier, the changes to joint committees due to Bill 47 are outlined in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duties of Joint Health and Safety Committees in Alberta before and after Bill 47</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duties created by <strong>Bill 30</strong> (2017 - 2021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 19 (a) - (j)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive worker concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in identification of hazards to workers or other persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make health and safety recommendations to the employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspect the work site at regular intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and promote measures to protect the health and safety of people at the work site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operate with an OHS officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and promote programs for education and information concerning health and safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in investigations of serious injuries and incidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other duties as may be specified in the OHS code</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Government of Alberta has a comprehensive list of all duties of Health and Safety Committees and representatives. There is also a 16-minute webinar available that covers the roles and responsibilities of the Committee and representatives.

It is important to note that OHS legislation is the legal minimum standard that employers must follow. Some employers will continue to run the Health and Safety Committee to a higher stand than required. If your employer does not continue to run your Health and Safety Committee to a higher standard than the required legislation, it could be brought to the attention of your bargaining committee. Like increased vacation, higher wages, and health benefits, your health and safety can be bargained for as well.

By bargaining for better health and safety language workers can hold their employer to a higher standard than OHS legislation. Health and Safety conditions are like wages – the law requires an employer to pay their workers at least the minimum wage, but minimum wages won’t pay the rent, so unions negotiate for better pay. Much like minimum wage, OHS legislation is the minimum required standard, and often the minimum isn’t good enough. Bring Occupational Health and Safety concerns to your bargaining team to be added at your next round of bargaining.

It is important to ensure you and your fellow workers are informed and know your rights as workers.
HAVE ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT HEALTH AND SAFETY

If you want to get your fellow workers involved in health and safety, you need to think like an organizer. So how do you think and talk like an organizer?

The first and most important action is to have one-on-one meetings. That means conversations with individual co-workers. One-on-ones are also sometimes called “organizing conversations.”

As the name implies, an organizing conversation is not small talk about the weather or entertainment. One-on-ones are purposeful. Your aim is to listen. Try to understand the other person. It’s never enough to know what someone’s issue or concern is. What matters is why that issue is important to someone.

Once you understand, make connections. Lay the blame on the employer, and win support for a collective solution.

“It’s all about one-on-ones, and building relationships, and trust. Meeting people where they’re at. There is no magic bullet. Find out what peoples’ issues are, and find out why they’re scared and hesitant.”

– Rhiannon Rutherford, Shop Floor Activist, Canadian Union of Postal Workers

To keep people involved, you need to talk about the issues that matter to them. Why do your members care about what they do?

Remember, one-on-ones are the key action you take all the time to mobilize co-workers. You may have other specific goals. You may want to solve a problem the employer is causing or pressure the employer to take action and resolve a health and safety complaint it is ignoring.

Regardless of what you’re trying to achieve, having good organizing conversations is the way to do it. Your goal is to get as many members involved as possible, and that happens face-to-face.

Download and print copies of a great tip sheet, “An Organizing Conversation,” from Labor Notes: Secrets of a Successful Organizer.

http://www.labornotes.org/content/secrets-successful-organizer-handouts

This network of union members and labour activists publish a magazine, website, books, conferences and workshops. They promote aggressive strategies to fight concessions and unions that are run by their members.
BRUSH UP ON THE A.E.I.O.U.S OF ORGANIZING

To remember how to have effective one-on-one conversations that mobilize your fellow workers, use the list of vowels:

**A - AGITATE** - pose questions that help your co-worker feel the impact of issues, and see that the employer is responsible.
“How’s the new schedule working for you?” “How is that affecting your family?” “Why didn’t the employer have a policy in place that prevented John’s injury?”

**E - EDUCATE** - share beneficial information and ask more questions that help the worker believe conditions can be changed, including ways to solve the problem.
“Do you know what our collective agreement says about that?” “Who’s in a position to fix that?” “Why do you think we’re having this problem?”

**I - INOCULATE** - ask questions that prepare the worker for the consequences of group action, like how the employer is likely to react.
“What do you think the supervisor will do if he finds out we’re trying to change this?”

**O - ORGANIZE** - make a plan to win, and ask for a commitment to take action.
“Most people want to go back to the old schedule. What if everyone signed a petition and marched into the supervisor’s office together to deliver it?”

**U - UNITE OR PUSH** - follow through on the action, and follow up with the worker.
“Will you sign this petition and come with us on Thursday morning to deliver it?”

“Members make the best organizers. They understand what workers are going through and can communicate with them. They’ve done the job, and they know what it’s like.”
– Byron Silva, Coordinator, Laborers’ Easter Region Organizing Fund
REFLECT ON YOUR GOALS AND ON WHAT MATTERS TO THE WORKERS

Before you begin this exercise, take a minute to reflect on your end goal. What do you intend to accomplish? Do you simply want to communicate the issue, is there a call to action, do you want to deter other workers from continuing an unsafe behaviour?

1. What kinds of questions do you want to ask your co-workers? What will you say to find out what matters to them?

____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

2. What is one OHS issue you think could be improved by talking with co-workers about it, so people are on the same page?

____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

3. What things do you want to say to your co-worker about the OHS issue or concern?

____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

4. How will you persuade them to commit to your cause? To propose solutions? To take a specific action?

____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

5. Try writing down a short story about your health and safety concern, framing it in the language of an organizing conversation.

____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
THE IMPORTANCE OF A WELL-ORGANIZED WORKSITE

It is important to remember that our membership is stronger when we work together. As a Liaison, you will need other OHS advocates on your worksite or in your Local to work alongside you to help spread the message about worksite issues and your strategies to ensure they are controlled.

FANOUTS

It is important to make sure that you are not having one-to-one conversations on employer time. Make sure these conversations happen on breaks or before and after work. Use these conversations to get your fellow worker’s contact information so you can follow up after hours. These days many people may use email lists or Facebook groups to help spread the message. It is important that you are not sharing information regarding direct actions on social media. It is also important that you do not write negative or insulting remarks about management, as the information could be shared with them. Remember to take the high road when dealing with management. Share key information over the phone or during one-to-one conversations. By having contact information, you will be able to get in touch with other workers to spread the word about issues, actions, or to help coordinate other committees. Labour Notes provides a great template for creating a worksite fanout called Sketch out a Member Network.

LEAFLETS

Another great way to spread information on a worksite issue is to have leaflets available for your fellow workers. By using leaflets, you can:

- Create an opportunity for conversations
- Direct attention to your issue (When one worker sees another reading the leaflet, it gets people talking)
- Create a distribution network (The idea is for information to flow in all directions along this network, not just from the creator of the leaflet. This is a great way to spread information to advocates identified from worksite mapping.)

**It is important to ensure these leaflets do not contain any information about any type of direct action and speak only to the worksite issue at hand. This issue would have already been brought to the attention of your employer, and you are now trying to raise awareness about the ongoing issue.**
WORKSITE MAPPING

We know that you as OHS Liaisons, cannot do it alone. You need to reach out to other workers on your worksite or in your Local who can help you spread the word to other departments, areas, floors, buildings, or worksites. To do this, you will want to “map” out the existing networks and identify the leaders in those networks and other OHS advocates.

Start by physically mapping your worksite. Are there places where groups gather, such as the break room? Add all the people who work in each space or gather in the break room. If it is possible to get a staff list use that to your advantage. Review Map your Workplace for an in-depth view of worksite mapping.

After you have completed the Map your Workplace handout, begin mapping the groups within your worksite. Identify leaders and advocates within these groups. Also, identify which of your co-workers are union supporters. Who signed the last petition? Who reads the union bulletin board? Using this information will help you identify who to may help you spread the message and get workers talking about OHS. It is also important to recruit help to share information with workers on other shifts or rotations. You need the entire worksite informed, not just your line or department.

AUPE offers a course entirely on direct action and organizing your worksite. For more information, visit www.aupe.org/training.
One of the best ways to get workers involved in health and safety is to get them to map hazards in their workplace. This means holding a special meeting where people have time to map out health and safety risks, agree on priorities, and discuss what actions they’re willing to take to solve the problem. This is not the same as mapping your worksite for the purpose of Organizing. The following mapping exercise is to get your fellow workers thinking about OHS issues they might not be aware of rather than finding a group of like-minded people to help in the fight for safer worksites.

Different types of mapping techniques can gather valuable information and help reveal patterns and hidden problems.

(1) **Body maps** help workers pinpoint health problems arising from work and determine whether fellow workers share symptoms. In preparation, two outlines of the human body should be drawn on large sheets of paper. The separate images should be labelled FRONT and BACK with an overall title of BODY MAP. Direct the participants to indicate, using stickers or colored markers, symptoms or health problems on the applicable area of the body.

After the participants have finished applying stickers or drawing symptoms, they can describe one at a time what health problems they represent. The facilitator can note the nature of the health problem, as reported by the participant, beside the relevant sticker or symbol. By doing this, you will get a broad range of data on the health effects of a job, worksite, or classification.

(2) **Workplace maps** allow you to visualize where hazards and risks are located in your worksite. Ideally, each hazard map would be drawn collectively by several workers from a common worksite or station.

- At a minimum, hazard maps should include:
- A sketch of the physical layout of the work area(s)
- indicating doorways, aisles, and windows and any machinery, equipment, vehicles, and conveyors.
- Symbols or stick figures representing the participants and any co-workers.
- Symbols or sketches representing hazards and their locations.
- Labels or descriptions for each of the hazards, such as “fumes,” “mold,” “metal dust,” or “medical waste.”
- Any safety features now in place.
(3) World maps assist workers in revealing the connection between pains and stresses caused by their job and problems in their personal lives outside the workplace.

A small figure of a person should be drawn in the centre of a large sheet of paper labelled YOUR WORLD MAP. Participants will map the effects they believe their work is having on their personal lives. They can use either symbols or words connected by lines radiating from the centre of the image to identify and describe issues. They can use either symbols or words connected by lines radiating from the central image to identify and describe issues.


MENTOR AN UP AND COMING OHS ADVOCATE

As we have said through this guide, Liaisons cannot be solely responsible for OHS on the worksite or within the Local. Through mapping your worksite and one-to-one conversations, you may identify fellow workers who have an interest in the Union and Occupational Health and Safety but have not started taking action. Make sure you follow up with these members and keep them up to date on OHS information from your Local and the OHS Standing Committee.

Mentor these workers, support them and encourage them to become more active in their worksite by:

- Sharing AUPE educational opportunities with them. You can find a full list of AUPE courses and their schedule at [www.aupe.org/training](http://www.aupe.org/training).
- Invite them to attend a Local OHS sub-committee meeting if your Local has one.
- Invite them to come with you to your Local AGM.
- Ask them to review HIAC with you or ask them if they would like to review theirs with you.
- If they have a question that you don’t have the answer to, let them know you will look into it and make sure you get back to them.

Your fellow workers are your greatest resource and closest allies, sometimes a worker is just waiting in the wings for a tap on the shoulder to take workplace action and join the fight for safer worksites.
TAKE WORKPLACE ACTIONS

Workplace actions are how workers flex their collective muscles. You show each other and your employer that you have power. They are hints about being able to interfere with your employer’s business. You can use workplace actions to voice OHS complaints, too.

Why organize workplace actions? Taking workplace actions can help you:

1. Check how mobilized your members really are and identify who you still need to communicate with
2. Build courage and collective power among your fellow workers
3. Demonstrate solidarity to the employer and apply pressure to resolve an issue
4. Show the employer your OHS concern is important to everybody
5. Identify new union supporters and volunteers
6. Rehearse and prepare for more serious fights
7. Organize a Day of Mourning ceremony for your Local/Worksite

Workplace actions can be understood along a spectrum and categorized into three types of direct action, ranging from solidarity actions, pressure actions, and confrontational actions. See the glossary for details. Here are some of the possibilities:

Show off with symbols
Wear a t-shirt, armband, pin, or button. Roll up a pant leg or sleeve. Click your pen or cough every time you see your target. Tap. Sing. March into work together.

Organize a rally or hold an information picket
Use special public protests or picket lines to publicize your anger. This also makes picketing feel more normal and helps train and prepare your activists.

Call work floor meetings
Gather all the workers of a particular unit, department, or shift for a daily group meeting at the workplace, for rapid updates, to get input, and maintain readiness.

March on the boss
Take AUPE’s Direct Action course to learn how to organize your co-workers to present an issue to management collectively.

“For workers to take ownership of the Union, they have to take action together. We don’t file many grievances, even when we can. Instead, we try to solve our problems through action.”
– LaKesha Harrison, President, AFSCME Local 3299
OHS ACTIVISM 101 — SUGGESTED HEALTH AND SAFETY ACTIONS

To go above and beyond in your role as OHS Liaison, here are a few examples of things you might consider doing:

- Have one-on-one conversations about health and safety with ten co-workers or AUPE members at other work sites.
- Host a lunch’n’learn or grab’n’go to gather OHS concerns and share OHS information. Use the index cards in this booklet or make your own.
- File an OHS complaint with your employer’s head office or government. To file a complaint with Alberta Labour’s OHS Contact Centre or get the support of an OHS officer, call 1-866-415-8690 (or 780-415-8690 in Edmonton).
  https://www.alberta.ca/file-complaint-online.aspx
- For greater impact, make mass phone calls. Get your co-workers or the members of an affected AUPE Chapter to all call in the same complaint.
- Join your health and safety committee (HSC). If you don’t have one, start working towards getting one set up. If your committee has problems functioning effectively, contact AUPE for support.
- Stay in regular contact with the AUPE members sitting on all joint health and safety committees (JHSC) in your Local. Gather information from them.
- Put a health and safety issue on your Local’s next meeting agenda. Or request that “health and safety” be a permanent part of all union meetings.
- Invite the members of another Chapter to meet with you. Help them map out workplace hazards and discuss what you can do together about the problem. Report about your meetings with other Chapters back to the Local and AUPE’s OHS standing committee.
- Propose improved health and safety language to your Negotiating Team for your bargaining unit’s next ingoing proposal. Research the language you need.
- Attend a rally or organize one. Hold a rally or an information picket. Use a public protest and a picket line to publicize your anger about an unresolved OHS issue.
- Start a local Day of Mourning ceremony in your hometown. Use April 28 to educate workers about their safety rights and renew the OHS struggle.
TALK UNION. TALK SAFETY. WHAT DO THE TERMS MEAN?

ACCIDENT – an out-of-date term for an unfortunate and unexpected event that has resulted in damage or injury. Because the word can be used to imply the event was unavoidable (and therefore that no action need be taken to prevent future “accidents”), we prefer to use the term “incident.” See “incident” in this glossary.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS – a form of hazard control that entails changes to work process, policies, training, or rules designed to reduce exposure to hazards. See “control at the worker.”

ARBITRATION – a method of settling a dispute between a union and an employer, in which an independent person (or group of people), called an arbitrator or an arbitration board, make a decision that is binding on both the Union and employer. It is called “interest arbitration” when it involves settling a collective agreement the employer and Union have been unable to negotiate on their own.

ARISES-AND-OCCURS TEST - a test used by the workers’ compensation board to assess whether an injury claim is compensable. To meet this test, an injury must arise from and occur during the course of a worker’s employment.

BARGAINING TEAM – see “Negotiating Team”

BARRIER TO SOLIDARITY - An unjust or discriminatory belief or action that prevents different groups of workers from joining together. Barriers to solidarity include racism, homophobia, and sexism, among others.

BEHAVIOUR-BASED SAFETY - an approach to OHS popular with employers, which views the workplace as a venue of measurable behaviour that can be shaped through feedback to prevent injuries. Labour unions criticize this approach to safety because employers can use it to blame workers, assert greater control, and avoid fulfilling their own responsibilities.

BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS - workplace hazards potentially giving rise to injuries caused by organisms – such as bacteria, molds, funguses – or the products of organisms (like tissue, blood, feces) that harm human health. Controls for biological hazards are often the same as for chemical hazards.

CAMPAIGN - an organized course of actions done to achieve a particular goal.

CAPITALISM – an economic system in which most work is performed by employed workers who are paid wages or salaries, and most businesses and companies are privately owned, undertaking most economic activity with the goal of generating private profit. The pressure employers face to maximize profits in this system incentivizes them to reduce spending on protection of workers’ health and safety.

CARELESS WORKER MYTH – the widely held but false belief that workers are accident-prone, careless, or even reckless in the execution of their duties, and that these characteristics are the primary cause of workplace injuries.
CEILING EXPOSURE VALUE (CEV) – The concentration of a substance that should never be exceeded in a workplace.

CHEMICAL HAZARDS – workplace hazards potentially giving rise to injuries caused by a chemical substance that harms human tissue or interferes with normal physiological functioning. Controls for chemical hazards are often the same as for biological hazards.

CLOSED PERIOD - the period of time during the life of a collective agreement when a group of workers are represented exclusively by their bargaining agent and cannot switch unions or renegotiate new terms in their collective agreement.

COMPLAINT-DRIVEN ENFORCEMENT - a policy wherein workplace inspections are triggered by individual complaints or in response to incidents (i.e., a serious injury or fatality).

CONCESSION – an entitlement, right, or benefit that an employer or government rolls back or removes; something that workers lose.

CONFRONTATIONAL ACTION – one type of direct action that is considered high risk, like job actions. They are a step up from either simply showing solidarity or applying pressure.

CONTINUOUS BARGAINING APPROACH - a way of dealing with the employer in which members enforce their current collective agreement, and also make demands during the closed period. It means using mobilizing tactics like training, grievances, and direct action to pressure the employer during the life of the contract, rather than waiting for the next round of negotiations.

CONTROL AT THE SOURCE – an approach to hazard control that prevents the hazard from entering the workplace via elimination, substitution, or some type of engineering control.

CONTROL ALONG THE PATH – an approach to hazard control that addresses the hazard at some point between its source and when workers encounter the hazard. Some types of engineering controls, like machine guards or local ventilation, control the hazard along the path.

CONTROL AT THE WORKER – an approach to hazard control that controls the hazard only after it reaches the worker. These controls may prevent or reduce the consequences of the hazard rather than control the hazard itself. Personal protective equipment and administrative controls are both examples of control at the worker because they require that the burden of the control be placed upon the worker.

DEMAND SETTING MEETING - A meeting in which members of a bargaining unit constructively debate and discuss different proposals and language for an ingoing proposal, with a special focus on building consensus about one or more demands that all members support.

DIRECT ACTION - acts taken directly by workers in their workplace (or in another location) to achieve a goal, rather than relying on others. Direct actions can be classified as violent or non-violent. Non-violent tactics include: symbolic actions that demonstrate solidarity, distributing pamphlets, work to rule, work refusals, march on the boss, sit-ins or occupations, sick-ins, pickets, Internet activism (hacktivism), wildcat strikes, and so on.
DUE DILIGENCE – the standard of conduct by which employers take every reasonable precaution to ensure safety. It is assessed in a three-part test, of 1. foreseeability (reasonable employers know about the hazards of their business), 2. preventability (reasonable employers take steps to prevent injury), and 3. control (reasonable employers are expected to take action to control hazards).

EMPLOYER OBLIGATIONS – your employer has certain obligations under the OHS Act. These obligations include ensuring, as it is reasonably practicable for the employer to do so, the health and safety of the worker and ensure the workers are aware of their rights and duties under the OHS Act, regulations and OHS Code to name a few. THIS INCLUDED MANAGEMENT BEING LEGALLY REQUIRED TO PROVIDE A SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL ON-SITE. For a full list of employer obligations, see OHS Act, Part 1, Section 3 – Employer Obligations.

ERGONOMIC HAZARDS – ergonomics is the study of people’s efficiency in their working environment, and ergonomic hazards occur as a result of the interaction of work design and the human body, such as work-station design, tool shape, repetitive work, requirements to sit or stand for long periods, and manual handling of materials. Ergonomic hazards are often considered a subset of physical hazards, but it is useful to consider them separately because they can be overshadowed by more obvious hazards.

FAN OUT LIST – a communication system for gathering or distributing information quickly, built and used by a group of workers to help them mobilize. A fan out list is more than just a simple list of contacts. It organizes workers to establish who is responsible for communicating with others, for reaching large numbers of people.

FATIGUE – extreme tiredness resulting from overwork, lack of sleep, illness, or mental or physical exertion. Fatigue can be acute (short-term and relieved by sleep) or chronic (ongoing and not relieved by sleep).

GAIN – a benefit, increase, entitlement, or privilege that an employer or the government grants, especially in response to workers’ demands; something that workers win from their employer or the government.

GENERAL STRIKE – a strike of workers in all or most industries.
Grassroots organizing - grassroots refers to ordinary people, as opposed to the leadership or elite. In an organization like a labour union, the grassroots is also called the rank and file. Grassroots organizing is what happens when people come together, talk about problems, and take charge of solving them. We also call it worker-driven or member-driven organizing because it happens from the bottom-up.

HAZARD – a danger or a potential source of danger.

HAZARD RECOGNITION, ASSESSMENT, AND CONTROL (HIAC) – the process of identifying, prioritizing, and either eliminating or mitigating workplace hazards.

INCIDENT – any undesired event that leads to or could have led to harm to workers. In Alberta, the law defines a “potentially serious incident” (PSI) as any event where a reasonable person would determine that under slightly different circumstances, there would be a high likelihood for a serious injury to a person.
INCIDENT INVESTIGATION – the process of determining what caused an incident and identifying ways of preventing its recurrence.

INCIDENT REPORT – a written document outlining the findings of an incident investigation, including recommendations for preventing future incidents.

INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE (IH) – a term used in the United States for occupational hygiene. See “occupational hygiene.”

INFORMAL LEADER - a worker among the rank and file who is influential and can gain the support of other co-workers.

INTERNAL RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEM (IRS) – system for workplace health and safety in which the government assumes that workers and employers share responsibility and will take actions in partnership to ensure a safe and disease-free workplace. Employers are required to take steps to ensure workplaces are as safe as “reasonably practicable.” The decision by governments to give employers the power to determine how to address workplace hazards strengthens employers’ broader management rights to control and direct work. Worker advocates sometimes criticize the IRS because they find that employees are not given meaningful opportunities to participate, and the state fails to adequately enforce rules or apply penalties for violations. See “due diligence.”

JOB ACTION – a direct action a group of workers uses to interfere with their employer’s business or disrupt production.

JOB DESIGN – decisions employers make about what tasks will be performed by workers and how that work will be performed.

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE (HSC) – committees comprised of worker and management representatives responsible for enhancing workplace health and safety. They can be at the worksite level (HSC) or higher up, covering an entire employer or region. Unions negotiated the first such committees in the 1960s, and governments began legislating them in response to political pressure. They are now a key feature of the internal responsibility system. See also “OHS Committee.”

LATENCY PERIOD – the time between exposure and development of symptoms from that exposure. The long latency period for many occupational diseases can make it difficult to prove to workers’ compensation that the disease arose and occurred due to work.

LOCKOUT – the closing of a place of employment by an employer or the suspension of work by an employer to compel the locked-out employees to agree with terms the employer demands.

MANAGEMENT RIGHTS CLAUSE - article in the collective agreement that gives the employer the exclusive right to organize production and run the workplace.

MARCH ON THE BOSS - an action when workers in a given worksite walk together into the boss’ office to discuss an issue.
MEDIATION – a method of encouraging and assisting in the settlement of collective bargaining disputes, in which the employer and Union agree to use a third person, called a mediator, who assists them.

MEDICAL MONITORING – measuring the presence of a chemical or its metabolic residue in a worker’s blood, body fluids, or tissues.

MODIFIED WORK – an altered set of duties and responsibilities that a worker is able to perform despite an injury or disability.

MOBILIZING COMMITTEE - See “workplace committee.” In AUPE, some components may choose to create a more formal mobilizing committee, which may include component officers, worksite contacts, stewards, and bargaining committee members instead of only rank and file members. Negotiating Team - a small group of workers that members of the bargaining unit elect as their representatives to meet with the employer and negotiate a new collective agreement. While it is sometimes also called a “bargaining team,” AUPE’s Constitution establishes in sections “Negotiating Teams.”

NO FAULT – one of the Meredith principles underlying workers’ compensation, stating that who caused the injury is not a factor in the awarding of compensation.

NO STRIKE CLAUSE - an article in a collective agreement that forbids workers from taking action that disrupts workflow or profits during the life of the contract

NOTICE TO BARGAIN – a notice, presented by either a labour union or employer to the other, to begin collective bargaining

OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE LIMIT (OEL) – the maximum acceptable concentration of a hazardous substances in workplace air. There are OELs for chemical hazards and physical hazards like noise and radiation.

OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE – is the scientific analysis of and protection from hazards at work.

OPPOSITION RESEARCH – the practice of collecting information on a political opponent, an employer, or other adversary that can be used to discredit or otherwise weaken them.

OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION – the tendency of men and women to work in different occupations, thereby facing different workplace hazards.

OHS COMMITTEE - one of AUPE’s thirteen permanent committees that meet regularly, formed of groups of eight or nine members appointed by the Executive to fulfill a specific function. AUPE’s standing OHS committee reviews OHS practices and issues, and educates and communicates with members about OHS. AUPE’s OHS committee is not to be confused with Joint Work Site Health and Safety Committees (JWHSC) or Local OHS sub-committees. Some AUPE Locals have their own OHS committee.

PANDEMIC – a sudden outbreak of an infectious disease that is widespread and affects a large portion of the world population, often with a high mortality rate.
PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) – equipment designed to limit the consequences of a hazard, worn by workers. Helmets, goggles, and latex gloves are forms of PPE. PPE is the least effective control because it does not control the hazard itself and is heavily reliant on human action to be effective. Furthermore, most PPE has historically been designed for the male body, compromising its effectiveness when used by women. See “control at the worker.”

PHYSICAL HAZARDS – workplace hazards potentially giving rise to injuries typically (but not always) caused by a transfer of energy. This category of hazards includes noise, vibration, temperature, electricity, atmospheric conditions, radiation, contact with equipment or other objects, working at heights, and slipping, tripping, or falling.

PICKET – a group of people standing outside a workplace or other venue, protesting something and trying to persuade others not to enter the workplace during a strike.

POLITICAL ACTION - an act or activity that an individual or group takes to exert pressure on elected officials or to otherwise influence government. It includes lobbying elected officials, supporting the election of candidates to government who are sympathetic to the welfare and interests of the supporter, or communicating with the public, media, and opposition parties in order to pressure the government.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER – ill health typically brought on by a terrifying event, with symptoms including flashbacks, severe anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts about the event.

PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT – paid work characterized by limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, job insecurity, and low wages. It is associated with a high risk of ill health due to pressures, disorganization, and regulatory failure in workplace structure and practice.

PRESSURE ACTION – one type of direct action, the purpose of which is to pressure the employer. They are a step up from solidarity actions and a step before confrontational actions. Pressure actions include things like calling group meetings with management, setting up a display table in your workplace lobby, and distributing information.

PROXIMATE CAUSE – the event that is immediately responsible for an injury or near miss event. See “root cause.”

PSYCHO-SOCIAL HAZARDS – a category of hazards that include social, environmental, and psychological factors that can affect human health and safety. These hazards include violence, harassment, stress, mental fatigue, and mental illness.

RANK AND FILE - common and ordinary workers or members of a union, as opposed to the leadership or elite. Sometimes also called grassroots.

RACIALIZED WORKERS – individuals perceived to be a part of a race or ethnicity (e.g. Black, Hispanic, Asian) to which particular characteristics, often negative, are associated.

RADIATION – energy emitted from a source, including heat, light, x-rays, microwaves, and other waves and particles.
REASONABLY PRACTICABLE – precautions that are not only possible but are also suitable or rational, given the particular situation.

REGULATION – a rule made by a federal, provincial, or territorial cabinet or cabinet minister under the authority of an Act and having the force of law.

REPRODUCTIVE HAZARDS – workplace hazards that give rise to injuries to workers’ ability to reproduce or, in the case of pregnancy, to injuries to a fetus.

RETURN TO WORK (RTW) – programs designed to reintegrate injured workers into the workplace via practices such as modified work.

RIGHT TO KNOW – workers’ right to know about the hazards they face in their workplace under the internal responsibility system.

RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE – workers’ right to engage in workplace health and safety activities (often through joint health and safety committees) under the internal responsibility system.

RIGHT TO REFUSE – workers’ right to decline to undertake unsafe work under the internal responsibility system. It represents one of the few instances where workers can legally disobey their employer. A refusal requires employers to investigate and remedy unsafe work. The legislation of most governments and interpretation have narrowed the instances when workers can legally refuse.

RISK – likelihood that a hazard will result in injury or ill health.

ROOT CAUSE – the ultimate or “real” cause of an injury or near miss incident, as opposed to proximate cause. See “proximate cause.”

SAFETY DATA SHEETS (SDS) – contains information about potential hazards, safe use, storage and handling practices, and emergency procedures. Manufacturers and suppliers must provide and employers must make available to workers up-to-date MSDS for any chemicals that are controlled products under WHMIS.

SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS – programs that construct goals and performance measures related to safety, often with the assistance of an outside consultant.

SAFETY ORIENTATION – training for new workers that addressed workplace hazards, emergency procedures, PPE training, polities and job-specific OHS.

SECONDARY PICKETING – picketing somewhere other than the place of employment. Secondary picketing is illegal in Alberta.

SOCIAL NETWORK - 1. the arrangement or system of relations between different members of a group. 2. a dedicated website or application which lets users communicate by posting information, comments, messages, images or videos.
SHIFT WORK – work that occurs outside regular weekday hours. It may include regular evening or night work, rotating schedules, split shifts, irregular shifts, or on-call work. It is a growing trend in Canada. Some forms of shift work encourage behaviour contributing to poorer health, disrupts family and social activities, adds stress, and chronic fatigue.

SOLIDARITY ACTION – 1. One type of direct action workers take, characterized by showing solidarity, like by wearing buttons or marching in to work together; 2. a job action taken by workers or members of a labour union in support of another group of other workers, sometimes called a “secondary action” or “sympathy action.”

SOLIDARITY UNIONISM - an approach to forming a labour union that rejects relying on negotiating and enforcing formal contracts, or on mediating relations with the employer through union staff or elected officials. Instead, workers who believe in solidarity unionism focus on gaining a measure of control in the workplace, through grassroots organizing and by taking direct action to pressure an employer to concede to workers’ demands.

STAKEHOLDER - a person, group or organization that has an interest or concern in an organization. Stakeholders can affect or be affected by the organization’s actions. Stakeholders may be clients, patients, service users, customers, creditors, directors, employees, government (and its agencies), owners (shareholders), suppliers, unions, and the community from which an organization draws its resources.

STRATEGIC CORPORATE RESEARCH - the practice in which workers in unions or social-change organizations analyze corporate ownership, finance, organization, and power, to reveal the employer’s relationships and other information that makes campaigns more effective at changing how the boss deals with workers.

STRIKE – a refusal to work organized by two or more workers, as a form of protest, or for the purpose of compelling their employer to agree with a demand.

TASK ANALYSIS – mapping out the flow of work to allow for a systematic examination of how a job is supposed to be conducted.

THERMAL STRESS – stress produced when temperature extremes prevent your body from properly self-regulating to maintain core body temperature at about 37 degrees Celsius.

TIME-WEIGHTED AVERAGE EXPOSURE VALUE (TWAEV) – the maximum average concentration of a chemical in the air for a normal eight-hour work day or 40-hour workweek.

TOXIC WORKPLACE – a workplace characterized by relentless demands, extreme pressure, and brutal ruthlessness representing the extreme of stressful workplace environments.

UNFAIR LABOUR PRACTICE – an activity that violates Alberta’s Labour Relations Code, committed by an employer, employer’s organization, labour union or individual.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION BENEFITS – programs and other benefits provided by a workers’ compensation board to increase the probability of an injured worker returning to employment.
**WAGE-LOSS BENEFITS** - benefits paid by a workers’ compensation board to workers whose income is reduced by an injury.

**WORKPLACE ACTION** - a form of direct action a group of workers use to demonstrate symbolically to each other, and especially to their employer, their collective power and ability to disrupt production.

**WILDCAT STRIKE** - a strike that workers take without authorization of union leadership, and usually in violation of rules governing strikes. They are sometimes spontaneous and taken without any advance notice. Wildcat strikes are illegal in Alberta, and result in heavy fines or other punishments.

**WORKPLACE COMMITTEE** - an informal group of volunteers at a single workplace, who self-manage and mobilize their co-workers to take collective action and resolve issues. It is sometimes called a “mobilizing committee,” “shop committee,” or “shopfloor committee,” and is an essential part of solidarity unionism.

**WORKPLACE HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INFORMATION SYSTEM (WHIMIS)** - a notional system that requires the labelling of hazardous material. In Canada, updates to WHIMIS 2015 were to reflect and align with the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS). Main components are hazard identification, product classification, labelling, safety data sheets (SDS), worker education and training. (CCOHS.ca)

**WORK TO RULE** - the action of workers who follow official rules, hours, and policies exactly, in order to slow down production and efficiency. It is also called “work to contract.”

**WORKSITE INSPECTIONS** - an examination of a worksite by a government inspector like an OHS officer to ensure compliance with occupational health and safety requirements. Inspections may be random or targeted, or triggered by worker complaints. Inspectors also investigate serious workplace injuries and fatalities.

**WESTRAY ACT (BILL C-45)** - the name of the law that amended Canada’s Criminal Code in 2004 to allow for the criminal prosecution of individuals and organizations that direct the work of others when a worker is injured, and the employer failed to meet its due diligence requirements. Criminal prosecution is meant to address cases of profound failings, such as the 1992 explosion at the Westray Mine in Nova Scotia, for which the amendment is named.
HIGHLY RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- Get help from an AUPE OHS specialist or your Membership Services Officer (MSO). Use AUPE's OHS reporting form at https://www.aupe.org/member-resources/forms/ohs-reporting-form or call the AUPE Resource Centre from Monday to Friday, 8:30 to 4:30 pm at 1-800-232-7284

- Access free practical resources about OHS legislation, hazards, health and wellness, from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety https://www.ccohs.ca


- Take all the OHS courses AUPE offers. Take other courses like Direct Action or Talking Union to learn valuable skills you can apply to health and safety. Sign up for a union course at https://www.aupe.org/training

- Take a University of Alberta OHS course, or a University of Calgary OHS course. They are available online or in person at locations throughout Alberta. See if your employer or Local will assist with the costs. https://www.ualberta.ca/extension/continuing-education/programs/health-and-safety/occupational-health-and-safety https://conted.ucalgary.ca/hse/

- Read the latest issue of Hazards Magazine, edited by Rory O’Neill and published quarterly, Hazards is an independent and union-friendly source for OHS activism http://www.hazards.org

- Ensure you understand what counts as Potentially Serious Incidents (PSI) and how to report them. https://www.alberta.ca/report-potentially-serious-incidents.aspx


- Read the latest news post in Organizing Work, a platform for workers to talk about their workplace campaign struggles and commentary on challenges unions face today https://organizing.work/

Print copies of AUPE's “Mobilizing Fan Out Sheet” and use them to gather your co-workers’ contact information https://www.aupe.org/documents/J8U7U/. Check with your Local and Chapter Chairpersons to get access to existing communication lists.


SAMPLE INDEX CARDS FOR ONE-ON-ONES

You can cut out the following pages to make a set of speaker’s cards. Use these index cards to assist you when giving OHS orientations to AUPE members.

Use the cards just as they are, or make changes until they meet your needs. You may have specific goals or a unique situation. Go ahead and tailor your one-on-ones.

Set a goal for how many people you’re going to try to talk with. Here are some tips:

☐ Know your material. Learn the basics about OHS and AUPE. Don’t worry if you don’t have an answer. Invite the person asking the question to find out together with you, or find out the answer and then get back to them.

☐ Make it personal. Use humour, personal anecdotes, and conversational language.

☐ Practice makes permanent. Rehearse your talk aloud several times. If you need notes, check your cards as a reminder only. Do not read your notes.

☐ Time yourself. Be able to explain the basics of your OHS orientation in five to seven minutes. Allow extra time for questions and discussion.

☐ Pace yourself. Many people rush when they’re nervous. Practice talking at a calm, steady pace. Use pauses for greater impact and smile to maintain attention.

☐ Choose an appropriate location. Plan how you will get your listener to accompany you to a space free of distractions and away from management.

☐ Arrive early. Relax. Visualize your success. Give yourself time to gain familiarity with the location. Breathe and stretch before starting. Imagine yourself talking confidently and that your listener is engaged.

☐ Speak clearly. Make eye contact. Use the right volume so you’re heard.

☐ Use visuals or other resources. Show a picture, infographic, handout or poster. Give the listener something to take with her.

☐ Trust your listener. Most people are grateful that someone else is concerned about their welfare. They want to know more about why you would want to talk with them about AUPE and about health and safety.

☐ Involve the worker. Invite the worker to join you in taking an action.
1. Introduce Yourself. Find out about the member

My name is . I’m the OHS Liaison for Local at AUPE. Do you know much about AUPE?

How long have you worked here?

Do you have any concerns about your health and safety at work?

I’d like to invite you to do a health and safety orientation with me. It will take about ten to 20 minutes, depending on the questions you might have.

3. Right to know

The first one of the “Four Rs” is the Right To Know about hazards we face. Hazards are the dangers of working in this workplace.

Some hazards are obvious. But there are also hidden hazards. Chemical, biological, and psychological hazards are often not apparent.

The law says employers must train workers adequately to protect health and safety. Your supervisor must advise you about all the hazards in your work area. Your employer must also advise and provide you the means to eliminate or control the hazards you face on the worksite.

Has your employer ever provided you a health and safety orientation, or OHS training?

[OHS Act, sections 2(d i), 3(2) and 4(a)(b).] Code Part 2 section 7, 8

2. Overview of rights and the law

You have a right to feel safe at work and return home each day healthy.

Every year, more than a hundred workers in Alberta lose their life on the job, and more than a hundred thousand are injured or hurt. We want to stop that.

Alberta has a law that is meant to protect your health and safety at work. It’s called the Occupational Health and Safety Act. It can be found in the OHS handbook along with the OHS Regulations and Code.

You have four safety rights that the government has acknowledged in this law. We call them the “Four Rs.”

4. WHIMIS

There are also rules to help us know about dangers.

The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHIMIS) is a federal program that requires our employer to label dangerous materials.

The employer must provide us with safety data sheet (SDS) that outline the hazards of the substance, and instructions for their safe handling. Do you know where to find the safety data sheets at your workplace?

Have you ever read one?

[OHS Code, Part 29]

http://whmis.org

https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/download/sample/530

https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/chemicals/whmis_ghs/sds.html
5. Right to participate

The second of our “Four Rs” is the Right to Participate. You have a right to participate in OHS activities and in decisions that could affect your health and safety.

This right gives you a process for addressing safety issues and concerns you may have. You are allowed to speak up. Raising safety concerns helps keep everyone here safe.

[OHS Act, section 2(d)(ii)] Code Part 2 section 8, Part 13

6. The collective agreement

Our collective agreement is the written contract between the employer and AUPE that outlines the terms and conditions of our employment.

The collective agreement includes health and safety rules.

The Union helps keep us safe, because it negotiates for stronger safety standards than the minimum requirements. It makes union members aware of their rights and the obligations of the employer.

We can file grievances if the employer breaks a rule.

The employer meets its obligation to let us participate in health and safety by consulting with AUPE to create a health and safety committee (HSC).

[OHS Act, Part 2]

7. Health and Safety Committee (HSC)

The Health and Safety Committee (HSC) is a group of workers and managers who sit together to deal with OHS concerns.

The worker representatives on the committee are chosen by the Union. We elect the committee members at our AGM’s, so they are independent of management and represent us. If the Union is unable to find a representative for the HSC, the employer can appoint one. The employer should not have more representatives than worker representatives.

The HSC:

• receive worker concerns
• participates in employer hazard assessments
• promotes health and safety and makes recommendation to the employer
• reviews the employer’s inspection documentation

They post the minutes of their meetings for everyone to review and stay informed. Do you know where to find the latest minutes from your HSC?

You can raise a health and safety concern at any time with a member of the HSC. Do you know who the worker representatives are your HSC?

[OHS Act, section 13 Part 2, (1)(6), section 14 (1)]

8. Right to refuse

The third right in your “Four Rs” is the Right to Refuse dangerous work.

If you’re asked to do work you think poses “undue hazard” to you or to any other person, these are the steps you take:

1. Don’t do the work.
2. Tell your supervisor or other representative of the employer as soon as possible what you’re refusing to do, and why.
3. The employer must investigate and take action to eliminate the danger. The employer is allowed to assign another qualified worker to do the work but does not have to inform the worker about your refusal. If the danger was not immediately removed, the employer must provide you and the HSC with a report once their investigation is complete that explains the actions, they took to address the danger.
4. If the employer does not stop the work, investigate, or take action to eliminate the danger, you should inform AUPE and the government. I’ll explain how in a minute.

You are to stay at the work site and do other safe work the employer assigns you. Do you understand how to refuse dangerous work?

[OHS Act 2(d)(iii) and Part 3, section 17]

9. No discipline

Your employer is not allowed to discipline you because you refused dangerous work or were following your duties under the law. However, it is important to know that, while employers are not allowed to discipline you, there are not rules around them discriminating against you. We call this the right to be free from reprisal and it is the “fourth R.”

Discriminatory action means any action or threat the employer makes that negatively affects your terms or conditions of employment. Discipline would be an action that hurts your career or punishes you for exercising your rights. For example, an employer could schedule you for all night shifts and that would be discriminatory, but your employer can not suspend you without pay.

If you believe the employer has disciplined, you for refusing dangerous work make sure you inform your Union Steward or Membership Services Officer immediately.

[OHS Act section 2 (d) (iv) and Part 3, section 18]

11. Violence and harassment

Violence and harassment are not part of your job.

Violence means threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to case physical or psychological injury or harm. That includes domestic violence and sexual violence.

Harassment means any incident or repeated incidents of unwelcome conduct, comment, bullying or action that causes offence or humiliation to a worker, or adversely affects that worker. It does not mean reasonable conduct of an employer or supervisor to manage the worker.

The law requires the employer to ensure none of the workers experience harassment or violence in the workplace.

The law also requires that you do not cause or participate in violence or harassment.

[OHS Act sections 4(1)(a iii) and 5(d)]


10. Lifting and handling

Let’s talk for a minute about common hazards AUPE members face, and what employers must do to prevent injuries because of these hazards.

Slips, trips, and falls are a danger for everyone. Another common hazard is lifting and handling loads and patients.

It is important you protect your back and avoid musculoskeletal injuries. This is an especially common injury in healthcare.

Your employer must provide you with appropriate equipment and with training for lifting and handling heavy and awkward loads.

Health care employers must have a special program for helping workers lift or transfer patients, clients or residents.

[OHS Code Part 14]


12. Working short

AUPE members in all sectors have been reporting an increasing number of complaints about short staffing and unmanageable workloads.

Working short is when employers choose to place additional workloads on workers instead of calling in available replacement staff. Working faster and harder is stressful and harmful to workers’ health.

The Union has started a sub-committee and campaign to help members deal with concerns. The union research department has created a survey and is doing focus groups.


In 2019, the BC Nurses’ Union won a ‘working short premium’ in their contract. The idea is that paying staff who are forced to work short more money is an incentive for employers to go ahead and ensure safe staffing levels are provided at all times.

Working short is not safe, and you should report it to AUPE. The more evidence we gather, the more we can bring the problem to employers to deal with.
13. WCB

Despite our best efforts to prevent injuries and occupational disease (this includes physical injury, psychological injury, and exposure to disease, etc.), sometimes they happen.

You should report any and all injuries to the Workers’ Compensation Board.

The Workers’ Compensation system provides injured workers with income to replace lost wages, rehabilitation and medical benefits. It is paid for by all employers.

You have up to two years from the date of an injury to file a claim.

It doesn’t matter if you did not lose time and worked through the injury. You should file a claim even if you think the matter was insignificant. You need all your claims recorded to help show that your injury arose from and occurred in the course of your employment.

You never know when in the future, if you develop an occupational disease or chronic pain, you will need that claim as proof.

You can report online, go to
www.wcb.ab.ca > Claims > Report an injury > Report online
https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/workers/worker_handbook.pdf

14. File a complaint

At any time, you can file an OHS complaint to the government, and get an OHS officer involved. OHS officers are also AUPE members. Their job is to investigate and inspect workplaces to make sure the employer is meeting its obligations. They have the power to issue orders and ticket employers for violating the law. All complaints can be made anonymously.

To file a complaint, you call the OHS Contact Centre:
780-415-8690 (in Edmonton)
1-866-415-8690 (in Alberta)
1-800-232-7215 (TTY – Hearing Impaired)

Complaints can also be made online at
https://www.alberta.ca/file-complaint-online.aspx

You can see the full process of filing a complaint by watch How to File an OHS Concern with the Government

15. AUPE

AUPE helps members like us to stand up for our safety and rights.

AUPE offers OHS courses. You can take a course in the union education program for free and get wage replacement during your time away from work.

https://www.aupe.org/training

The Union has its own standing OHS committee. It’s a group of eight members led by one of the Union’s Vice-Presidents. They focus on promoting OHS.

At any time, you can get help from an AUPE Membership Services Officer (MSO) or from one of the Union’s OHS specialists. Just call the Union at the toll-free number, 1-800-232-7284.

Are you interested in taking an OHS course from AUPE?

Will you sign our petition to the employer about this OHS issue? Will you come to our next Chapter meeting?