

Occupational Health and Safety

Contents

Occupational Health and Safety	1
Occupational Health and Safety.....	2
General Introduction to Routine Practices	2
Overview	3
Focus on Infection	3
Objectives.....	3
Workplace Illness and Injury Examples.....	3
Stop and Think.....	4
Occupational Health and Safety Act	4
Duties Under the Act.....	5
Employers must:	5
Duties of Supervisors.....	5
Duties of Workers.....	6
Stop and Think.....	6
Internal Responsibility System	6
Roles and Responsibilities.....	7
IRS Culture.....	8
Stop and Think.....	8

Joint Health and Safety Committee	9
Purpose.....	9
Composition	10
H&S Representative	10
Stop & Think in Different Health Care Settings.....	11
Community Care	11
Acute Care	12
Long Term Care.....	12
Reporting.....	12
Notification.....	13
Stop and Think.....	13
Summary	14
End of Module and Test	14

Occupational Health and Safety

Welcome to Core Competency Routine Practices Module Occupational Health and Safety.

General Introduction to Routine Practices

Routine Practices are the infection prevention and control practices that must be used routinely during all activities with all clients, patients or residents, to help prevent and control the spread of infectious agents in all health care settings. No matter what health care setting you work in, routine practices always apply.

Overview

In this Occupational Health and Safety component of the Routine Practices module, you will learn about:

- the Occupational Health and Safety Act
- the Internal Responsibility System (commonly called the “IRS”) and
- the procedure for reporting illnesses and injuries that are related to work.

Focus on Infection

Occupational Health and Safety is a very important component of Routine Practices.

While there are many kinds of occupational illnesses and injuries, in this component we will focus on illnesses and injuries related to infection prevention and control.

Objectives

After finishing this component, you will be able to:

- explain the purpose of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (also known as “the Act”),
- identify the roles of Employers, Supervisors and Workers in the Internal Responsibility System (or IRS), and
- know how to report illnesses and injuries related to work

“The Act” uses the term “Workers”. In your workplace, a health care setting, you may be called “staff” or “health care provider” or “health care worker”.

For the purposes of this component, we will use the term “Worker”.

Workplace Illness and Injury Examples

You may be familiar with some of these headlines:

“Safer Needles a Must,”

“Ministry Focusing on Infection Control Hazards,” or

“Influenza Immunization Saves Lives”.

By teaching you about occupational health and safety, we are trying to prevent workplace illnesses and injuries like those you've heard about in the news.

Stop and Think

Take a moment to “stop and think” about illnesses or injuries you may have heard about in your health care setting.

Do you know a Worker who was exposed to an infectious illness or communicable disease, such as influenza or norovirus, while at work?

What kind of illnesses or injuries were they?

How can exposures be prevented?

Occupational Health and Safety Act

Let’s talk about our first objective, learning about the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act provides us with the legal framework and the tools to achieve the goal of making our workplaces safe and healthy. It sets out the rights and duties of all parties in the workplace.

Employers should note that the Act makes it clear that the employers have the greatest responsibilities with respect to health and safety in the workplace. However, all workplace parties have a role and a responsibility for promoting health and safety in the workplace. This is the basis for the Internal Responsibility System. Every improvement in occupational health and safety benefits all of us. Through cooperation and commitment, we can make a safer and healthier place in which to work.

Whether you are an Employer, Supervisor or Worker, you need to learn about your duties according to “the Act”.

Duties Under the Act

Let’s learn about some of the duties of the Employers, Supervisors and Workers under “the Act”.

Employers must:

- make sure workers know about hazards and dangers by providing information, instruction and supervision on how to work safely
- make sure supervisors know what is required to protect workers’ health and safety on the job
- create workplace health and safety policies and procedures
- make sure everyone follows the law and the workplace health and safety policies and procedures
- provide appropriate personal protective equipment
- make sure workers wear and use the right protective equipment
- do everything reasonable in the circumstances to protect workers from being hurt or getting a work-related illness

An infection prevention and control example of protective equipment might be Personal Protective Equipment (or PPE) and safety-engineered needles.

Employers are also required to report certain occupational injuries and illnesses. We will describe Employer reporting responsibilities in more detail later on in this component.

Duties of Supervisors

Supervisors are responsible to know and to help Workers to learn about health and safety risks in their workplace.

Another responsibility of Supervisors is to ensure employees use or wear equipment, protective devices or clothing that is required to keep them safe.

Duties of Workers

All Workers are expected to participate in training and education provided by the Employer (such as selecting and using personal protective equipment correctly) and to follow all policies and procedures put in place by your Employer.

Also, you need to report any missing or broken protective devices and equipment or other hazards.

It is important to report any injuries and illnesses you think you may have gotten in the workplace. For example, if you think you may have been exposed to a communicable disease, such as influenza or norovirus, or have picked up an infection while at work, you need to report this to your Supervisor.

Stop and Think

This is a “stop and think” reflection.

Take a moment to think about your roles and duties in your workplace.

Then, think about infection prevention and control, your responsibilities, and the activities you need to do to follow the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Next, we’ll learn about the Internal Responsibility System.

Internal Responsibility System

One of the primary purposes of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) is to facilitate a strong Internal Responsibility System (IRS) in the workplace. Workplace parties’ compliance with their respective statutory duties is essential to the establishment of a strong IRS in the workplace.

Simply put, the IRS means that everyone in the workplace has a role to play in keeping workplaces safe and healthy. Workers in the workplace who see a health and safety problem

such as a hazard or contravention of the OHS Act have a duty to report the situation to the employer or a supervisor. Employers and supervisors are, in turn, required to acquaint workers with any hazard in the work that they do.

In Ontario, it is now second nature to put on a seatbelt every time we get into a car. We teach our children that this is important. It is part of our culture.

In Ontario workplaces, health and safety needs to be a part of our culture, too.

The IRS helps support a safe and healthy workplace. In addition to the workplace parties' compliance with their legal duties, the IRS is further supported by well-defined health and safety policies and programs in the workplace, including the design, control, monitoring and supervision of the work being performed.

The employer, typically represented by senior management, is responsible for ensuring that the IRS is established, promoted, and that it functions successfully. A strong IRS is an important element of a strong health and safety culture in a workplace. A strong health and safety culture shows respect for the people in the workplace.

Roles and Responsibilities

Employers have a general duty to take all reasonable precautions to protect the health and safety of the Worker. "The Act" has very specific responsibilities for the Employer to follow.

Workers are responsible to work safely, in accordance with "the Act" and regulations. Workers need to report hazards or hazardous situations or problems to their Supervisor.

Employers and Supervisors together have a duty to look at hazardous problems and situations and eliminate them whenever possible or ensure appropriate controls are in place.

Everyone has a role in the IRS.

Worker responsibilities under the IRS include:

- knowing about hazards in the workplace and how to do their job safely
- participating in workplace health and safety and

- reporting unsafe working conditions as quickly as possible

Supervisor responsibilities:

Once a hazard has been identified, the Employer and Supervisor have a duty to look at the problem and eliminate hazards that could injure Workers, or make sure that appropriate controls are in place.

Employer responsibilities include:

- learning about safety hazards in the workplace
- making workers aware of hazards
- providing adequate first aid, including supplies and someone trained in first aid

IRS Culture

The IRS is a system where everyone has direct responsibility for health and safety as an essential part of his or her job. It is a responsibility of the head of any organization or company to ensure that the entire system of direct responsibility for health and safety within the organization is established, promoted and improved over time. For an IRS to be successful everyone must be committed to health and safety as a key part of doing their job.

Following Routine Practices described in the remaining components of this module, is a good example of how Employers, Supervisors and Workers join together to build a safe workplace.

Stop and Think

Let's "stop and think"!

How do you contribute to the Internal Responsibility System?

How does your workplace demonstrate a culture of health and safety?

Joint Health and Safety Committee

An important part of the internal responsibility system for health and safety, is the workplace needs to have either a Joint Health and Safety Committee or a Health and Safety representative. It depends on the size of your workplace.

If you have 20 Workers or more, your workplace must have a Joint Health and Safety Committee.

If your workplace has fewer than 20 Workers and more than 5 Workers, then your workplace needs a Health and Safety Representative.

Workplaces with 5 or fewer Workers need to have, as a minimum a first aid kit.

Purpose

Let's talk first about workplaces that have 20 or more Workers.

"The Act" requires the employer to establish a joint health and safety committee at all workplaces where 20 or more workers are regularly employed

The Health and Safety Representative or the Joint Health and Safety Committee where applicable contribute to workplace health and safety because of their involvement with health and safety issues, and by assessing the effectiveness of the IRS. They do this by:

- Identifying situations that may pose a risk to workers;
- Making recommendations to the employer and the workers for the improvement of health and safety of the workers;
- Obtaining information from the employer respecting identification of potential/existing hazards

For more information please review the Guide to the Joint Health and Safety Committees and Health and Safety Representatives in the Workplace under the resources section.

Composition

The Joint Health and Safety Committee is composed of two co-chairs, one from management and one representing Workers.

On the committee, at least half of the members must be workers who do not exercise managerial functions.

At least 4 persons are required on the Joint Health and Safety Committee for workplaces with more than 50 Workers.

If your workplace has up to 50 Workers, you need at least two persons on your Joint Health and Safety Committee.

A Health and Safety Representative needs to be designated in settings where the number of workers regularly exceeds five.

The Joint Health and Safety Committee needs to meet at least once every 3 months to make recommendations to the employer and workers about improving health and safety; receive reports from the employer on new programs and potential hazards; review reports of occupational injury or illness; and reports of inspections.

H&S Representative

What about smaller workplaces?

If there are more than five employees but less than 20 employees in a health care workplace, the employer must ensure that workers select a Health and Safety Representative.

The Occupational Health and Safety legislation states that in work places that have fewer than **20** but more than **five** employees, a Health and Safety Representative needs to be selected by other employees and be from non-management.

The Health and Safety Representative is responsible for inspecting the workplace monthly and identify situations that might be a hazard to Workers.

For workplaces with one to five Workers, such as in a community health setting, you do not need a Joint Health and Safety Committee or a Health and Safety Representative. Your workplace should make sure that workers know how issues such as injuries or hazards are handled.

Stop & Think in Different Health Care Settings

Below are 3 options of different health care settings: Acute Care, Long-term Care or Community Care. You will be asked questions to reflect (or “stop and think”) on the unique aspects of your workplace setting.

Review the health care setting that most closely matches your workplace.

Community Care

Every Community Care setting is unique. You may provide health care in a client’s home. Or you may work in public health or provide health care in a clinic setting or an out-patient ambulatory care setting.

Your Community Care workplace may be a large provincial workplace or a smaller setting where there are fewer than 20 employees in total or perhaps your workplace has less than 5 employees.

“Stop and Think” about the following questions:

- Is your workplace large enough to have a Joint Health and Safety Committee?
- Who would you contact if you had an occupational health and safety concern?
- How would you find out who is responsible for health and safety in your workplace?
- Who is your Health and Safety Representative and how do you contact him/her?

If you know the answers to these questions, you are more likely to be able to fulfill your role and be part of a health and safety team.

Acute Care

“Stop and Think” about your Acute Care setting.

Do you know where your Occupational Health and Safety department is located?

What should you do after hours when Occupational Health and Safety is closed?

Do you know who the members of your Joint Health and Safety Committee are? Do you know how to contact them?

If you know the answers to these questions, you are more likely to be able to fulfill your role and be part of a health and safety team.

Long Term Care

“Stop and Think” about your health care setting.

Does your workplace have more than 20 Workers?

If you have more than 20 Workers, who are the co-chairs and members on your Joint Health and Safety Committee? How is information from the meetings shared?

Who do you report to about a workplace hazard, illness or injury during business hours and after business hours?

If your workplace has fewer than 20 Workers, who is your Health and Safety Representative and how do you contact them?

If you know the answers to these questions, you are more likely to be able to fulfill your role and be part of a health and safety team.

Reporting

Reporting occupational illnesses or injuries is required under “the Act.”

In order to report, first you must understand the definition of an “Occupational Illness” according to the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

It is defined as; “a condition that results from exposure to a physical, chemical or biological agent to the extent that the health of the Worker is impaired and includes an occupational disease for which the worker is entitled to benefits under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.”

Any injury that occurs at a workplace is an occupational injury and may need to be reported.

Notification

Who needs to report?

Employers are responsible to report occupational illnesses or injuries in the workplace.

They must report to the following groups within 4 working days:

- The Joint Health and Safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative
- The trade union, if any
- The Ministry of Labour

Employers should be familiar with the reporting requirements, and with the information required to be included in the report.

The employer may also have obligations to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB).

If the illness is a reportable disease, then the Employer must also notify the Medical Officer of Health at your local Public Health Unit according to the Health Protection and Promotion Act (Ontario Regulation 559/91).

Stop and Think

Take a moment to “stop and think” about reporting responsibilities.

As a Worker, what do you need to report?

To whom do you need to report?

Who is responsible for reporting to the Ministry of Labour, trade union and your occupational health service?

What does your employer have to report to the Medical Officer of Health at your local Public Health Unit?

Summary

- The Occupational Health and Safety Act sets out the duties of Employers, Supervisors and Workers to keep the workplace safe.
- The Internal Responsibility System works best when everyone works together to support a culture of safety.
- Injuries and illnesses related to work must be reported immediately.

End of Module and Test

This is the end of the module.

To show that you have completed this component, there is a test. There are five questions in the test.

You need to answer every question correctly and then you can print out a certificate.

If you do not answer questions correctly, review the material and retake the test.

If you are ready, please return to the [PHO website](#) and select the Challenge Question document that corresponds with this module.