

The Occupational Health and Safety Awareness and Training Regulation: Supporting healthy and safe workplaces

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Beginning July 1, 2014, employers in Ontario must ensure that all their workers and supervisors complete a basic occupational health and safety awareness training program. The content of the training must meet the new regulatory requirements.

The Occupational Health and Safety Awareness and Training Regulation (O. Reg. 297/13) under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) is the new regulation that requires employers to make sure workers and supervisors complete a basic occupational health and safety awareness training program. A copy of the regulation may be downloaded here:

www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2013/elaws_src_regs_r13297_e.htm

Besides these new requirements, employers continue to have on-going duties under the OHSA to inform workers about workplace-specific hazards. These include the general duty to "provide information, instruction and supervision to a worker to protect the health or safety of the worker" [clause 25(2)(a)].

Regulatory Requirements under the Occupational Health and Safety Awareness and Training Regulation

Employers must:

- ensure that workers complete a basic occupational health and safety awareness training program **as soon as reasonably possible**
- ensure that supervisors complete a basic occupational health and safety awareness training program **within one week of working as a supervisor**
- maintain a record of the training completed by workers and supervisors, and
- provide a worker or supervisor with written proof of completion of the training, if requested by the worker or supervisor (up to six months after ceasing to work for the employer).

Training for workers

The training program for workers must include instruction on:

- the duties and rights of workers under OHSA
- the duties of employers and supervisors under OHSA
- common workplace hazards and occupational illnesses
- the role of joint health and safety committees (JHSCs) and of health and safety representatives under OHSA
- roles of the ministry, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), and Health and Safety Associations, and
- information and instruction requirements set out in the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) Regulation.

Training for supervisors

The training program for supervisors must include instruction on:

- the duties and rights of workers under OHSA
- the duties of employers and supervisors under OHSA
- how to identify, assess and manage workplace hazards, the role of joint health and safety committees (JHSCs), and of health and safety representatives under OHSA
- roles of the ministry, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), and Health and Safety Associations, and
- sources of information on occupational health and safety.

Exemptions

- Workers and supervisors who previously completed a worker or supervisor training program, either with their current or a former employer, do not have to take the training again if they can provide proof that they completed the training and their current employer is able to verify that the training program covered the content required by the regulation.
- A supervisor who has completed a basic occupational health and safety awareness training program for supervisors, prior to the regulation coming into force, does not have to complete a worker training program in addition to the supervisor program.

Resources and tools for employers and other workplace parties

The Ministry of Labour provides a number of resources and tools to help employers and other workplace parties comply with the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Awareness and Training Regulation. Please note that employers are not required to use these specific ministry products in order to comply with the regulation as long as the training they provide covers the necessary content.

Workbooks and accompanying employer guides that cover the basics of occupational health and safety are available free and provide workers and supervisors with the option of completing the training program in paper format, either by printing them from a personal computer (available in English, French, traditional Chinese, simplified Chinese, Hindi, Portuguese, Punjabi, Spanish and Urdu) or by ordering printed copies (available in English and French only) from ServiceOntario Publications:

- *Worker Health and Safety Awareness in 4 Steps: Workbook*
- *An Employer Guide to Worker Health and Safety Awareness in 4 Steps*
- *Supervisor Health and Safety Awareness in 5 Steps: Workbook*
- *An Employer Guide to Supervisor Health and Safety Awareness in 5 Steps*

In addition, electronic (e-learning) training tools are available in English and French online free to help employers comply with the regulation requirements:

- *Worker Health and Safety Awareness in 4 Steps*
- *Supervisor Health and Safety Awareness in 5 Steps*

The Ministry of Labour will provide regular updates on its website as additional resources and tools become available. One of these is a new explanatory guideline. The guideline will describe the regulation requirements in plain language, and provide tools to help employers and workplace parties comply with the requirements.

For more information:

- Ministry of Labour:
www.Ontario.ca/LearnToWorkSafe

Note: *This document does not constitute legal advice. To determine your rights and obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations, please contact your legal counsel or refer to the legislation at www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90o01_e.htm.*

While this fact sheet is available to Ministry of Labour inspectors, they will apply and enforce the OHSA and its regulations based on the facts as they may find them in the workplace. This fact sheet does not affect the enforcement discretion of inspectors in any way.