

Sample lesson plan to accompany fact sheet on staying safe and healthy at work

This tool provides advice to settlement services staff and workshop leaders on delivering the information in the fact sheet for learners entitled “Information for newcomers to Manitoba about staying safe and healthy at work.” The purpose of the fact sheet is to introduce newcomers to workplace safety and health issues in Manitoba, including *The Workplace Safety and Health Act*.

The fact sheet is recommended for:

- all newcomers enrolled in English-language classes of LINC 4 or above
- newcomers preparing to enter the labour market (e.g., in job-search and employment-preparation programs)
- newly employed immigrants.

Why introduce this topic

New workers (both newcomers and Canadian-born) face an increased risk of injury during their first month on the job, and more than 40 per cent of all workplace injuries happen during a worker’s first six months on the job.

Newcomers or new immigrants face special challenges. Sometimes they are unable to find the work that they hoped to find when they first arrived in Manitoba and, instead, take “survival jobs” that are not in their field. Research has shown that new immigrants to Canada are more likely to work in manual jobs where the risk of injury is higher.

When to introduce this topic

This topic should be addressed when discussing labour market information, workers’ rights and job quality.

How to use this lesson plan

This lesson plan is designed for workshop leaders and settlement services staff who have little knowledge or background in this field and want guidance. The sample lesson plan provides wording that essentially mirrors the information in the fact sheet handed out to learners. It also suggests some classroom exercises.

The lesson plan ends with workshop leaders providing learners with information on “Helpful resources.” Phone numbers and website information are provided as a convenience, but these do not have to be verbally provided during the session. Learners have this information in the fact sheet/handout.

Introduction

Today, we are going to talk about safety and health at work. Workers get hurt on the job every day. Both you and your employer (boss) have a role in making your job safer. When you first come to Canada, you may not get a job in your field. You may end up doing a job you are not used to doing or using tools or machines that you have never used before.

Exercise #1

Ask students if they have heard the term “workplace safety and health” before. If so, ask what they already know about the topic. Ask about workplace safety and health in their countries of origin, and about ways that they have been taught to work safely (or not) in other jobs, either in Canada or their countries of origin.

About The Workplace Safety and Health Act

In Manitoba, the law that protects people at work is called *The Workplace Safety and Health Act (WSH Act)*. The *WSH Act* and its regulations help make workplaces safer, and give workers basic rights so that they can be safe at work.

Who is covered by The WSH Act

The *WSH Act* covers workers in ALL workplaces in Manitoba except workplaces under federal government control, such as post offices, airports and banks, which are protected by federal laws.

Workplace Safety and Health makes sure that everyone follows the *WSH Act*. It can inspect workplaces and order employers to make changes if there are problems.

Duties of employers, supervisors and workers under the *WSH Act*

Employers, supervisors and workers each have their own specific duties in the workplace.

Your employer or supervisor must:

- give you the information, training and supervision that you need to protect your health and safety at work
- tell you about any dangers in the workplace, and take every reasonable precaution to protect you
- make sure that safe work procedures are in place and followed, and that tools, machinery and personal protective equipment are used properly
- ensure that safety equipment – both personal protective equipment and safety equipment on tools and machines – is in good condition
- co-operate and work with joint safety and health committees/representatives
- conduct a workplace safety and health orientation to help new workers become familiar with the workplace and the hazards to which they or others may be exposed.

As a worker, you must:

- use the safety equipment – both personal protective equipment and safety equipment on tools and machines – that your employer says to use
- tell your employer if you see any broken equipment or spot any safety problems
- ensure you do not use any equipment or machinery that could harm you or another worker
- act responsibly in the workplace
- report any violations of the *WSH Act* or its regulations to your employer.

Your legal rights under the *WSH Act*

The *WSH Act* gives workers four legal rights to help protect their health and safety on the job.

1. The right to know about safety and health hazards on the job

Your employer must tell you about all known hazards in the workplace. This might include the types of work activities you do or the potentially harmful materials or chemicals you use.

Exercise #2

Ask the students for examples of things that might cause them to get sick or injured at work.

Have the class brainstorm ideas about common workplace hazards. Every job has different kinds of hazards associated with it, some, more obvious than others.

Examples include:

- knives/cutting materials (in restaurants or manufacturing) → cuts
- wet floors or debris → falling or slipping
- extreme temperatures (cold or hot) → aching muscles or fatigue
- toxic cleaning products or chemicals → illness or disease, both immediate and over time
- shift work → fatigue, sleeping difficulties
- repetitive movement → back, neck, arm, wrist pain
- unclean areas (particularly eating areas or restrooms) → illness from bacteria or viruses
- equipment and machinery → cuts, loss of limbs, death

Other safety and health risks for newcomers include: working quickly (injuries/incidents are more likely to happen when workers have to work rapidly); being fired (from working two jobs or doing shift work); feeling that the work is too easy (workers may not give enough attention to safety).

2. The right to participate in keeping your workplace safe and healthy

You have the right to help make your workplace safer by sharing your ideas or complaints about workplace safety and health with your employer or safety and health representative/committee. Every workplace in Manitoba that employs more than 10 people (but fewer than 20) must have a safety and health representative. If a workplace employs 20 or more workers, it must have a joint safety and health committee.

Safety and health representatives and committees inspect the workplace for unsafe conditions and tell the employer and workers about these conditions. Representatives are workers appointed by other workers; at least half the members of most joint safety and health committees are workers chosen by other workers. You should find out who your safety and health representatives and/or committee members are when you are hired into a workplace.

3. The right to refuse work that you think is unsafe

You can legally refuse to do work that you think might hurt you or another worker. This includes when you think the equipment or machines you are using are unsafe or are being used in a way that might hurt you or someone else, or when you feel that the physical conditions of the workplace are dangerous. Your boss does not have the right to fire you for refusing unsafe work. However, there is a specific way to refuse work so that you are protected by the *WSH Act*. See the SAFE Manitoba website for details: safemanitoba.com/bulletin-193.

4. The right to protection from discrimination

If you try to protect yourself or another worker from unsafe conditions, you cannot be disciplined or discriminated against as long as you believe you are acting in the best interest of safety and health.

Exercise #3

Ask the members of the class if they have ever done something at work that they believed was unsafe. Discuss with the class why it might be scary or intimidating to refuse unsafe work. Role-play with students about how they might refuse unsafe work.

Violence and harassment in the workplace

Everyone should be able to work without fear of violence or harassment, in a safe and healthy workplace. Violence and harassment in the workplace are not tolerated in Manitoba.

Workplace violence is when someone exercises or attempts to exercise physical force against a person or makes any threatening statement or behaviour that gives anyone reason to believe that physical force will be used against them.

Workplace harassment is when someone engages in inappropriate conduct – including comments, displays, actions or gestures – that is made on the basis of race, creed, religion, colour, sex, sexual orientation, gender-determined characteristics, marital status, family status, source of income, political belief, political association, political activity, disability, physical size or weight, age, nationality, ancestry or place of origin.

Harassment can also be referred to as “bullying,” which may involve severe, repeated conduct that adversely affects a worker’s psychological or physical wellbeing if it could reasonably cause a worker to be humiliated or intimidated, or a single occurrence, if it is shown to have a lasting, harmful effect on a worker.

Actions by an employer or supervisor that are part of normal work activities are not usually considered harassment. This is the case even if the actions result in unpleasant consequences for a worker. Examples of activities that would not normally be considered workplace harassment include work assignments, scheduling, job assessments, performance evaluations, workplace inspections, implementation of dress codes and disciplinary action.

Generally, differences of opinion and minor disagreements between co-workers would not be considered harassment.

All workplaces must have policies or programs to prevent violence and harassment. Your employer must tell you about these prevention policies and programs. This includes telling you about the process for reporting incidents of workplace violence and harassment, and how your employer will investigate and deal with incidents or complaints.

If you are facing violence or harassment at work, you should inform your employer, supervisor, safety and health representative or joint safety and health committee. If the problem cannot be solved internally (within your workplace), then you should call Workplace Safety and Health. See *Helpful resources* for contact information.

If you are in immediate danger or an emergency situation, you should contact the police.

For more information, including what is considered workplace violence or harassment under the *WSH Act*, see: safemanitoba.com/guideline-harassment and safemanitoba.com/guideline-violence.

Other important information

Tell your supervisor if you do not understand safety and health instructions or safety rules. If you cannot read rules and instructions on your own, have someone translate them for you. Ask your supervisor or co-workers for help if you are new to the job.

If your employer tries to punish you in any way for refusing work that you feel is unsafe – for example, by cutting your hours or firing you – then you can report this to Workplace Safety and Health (WSH). WSH can help, but note that these complaints can sometimes take considerable time to resolve.

This document does not constitute legal advice or formal training. To determine rights and obligations under *The Workplace Safety and Health Act* or *The Workers Compensation Act*, contact legal counsel or refer to the legislation at:

web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/w210e.php (WSH), or web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/w200e.php (WCB).

The original content for this toolkit was developed by the Institute for Work & Health (IWH) for settlement agencies and other teachers of newcomers to Ontario (Kosny A, Lifshen M, Smith P, Saunders R and Rhooms R. 2011).

The Institute for Work & Health is an independent, not-for-profit organization. The Institute's mission is to conduct and share research that protects and improves the health of working people and is valued by policy-makers, workers and workplaces, clinicians, and health & safety professionals. To learn about IWH visit iwh.on.ca.

For more information, call 204-957-SAFE in Winnipeg or 1-855-957-SAFE outside Winnipeg.

All injuries at work should be reported to a supervisor. In Manitoba, reporting injuries is the law. See the fact sheet about workers compensation for more information.

Helpful resources

A number of organizations address safety and health in the workplace.

Workplace Safety and Health is the government body to contact to report unsafe work practices, injuries or incidents, or if you have general workplace safety and health questions. Call 1-866-888-8186 or visit the website at safemanitoba.com.

The **Workers Compensation Board** can answer any compensation-related questions. It is also the body to contact to make a claim. Call 1-855-954-4321 or 204-954-4100 in Winnipeg to make a claim. For all other enquiries, call 204-954-4321 in Winnipeg or 1-855-954-4321, or visit the website at: wcb.mb.ca.

The Manitoba Federation of Labour Occupational Health Centre (MFL OHC) is a community health centre that helps workers, employers, and joint health and safety committees to improve workplace health and safety conditions and eliminate hazards. Call 204-949-0811 in Winnipeg or 1-888-843-1229 or email mflohc@mflohc.mb.ca.

Employment Standards can resolve disputes between employers and employees with regards to the rights and responsibilities of most employers and employees in Manitoba. Call the inquiry line at 204-945-3352 in Winnipeg or 1-800-821-4307, or visit the website at: gov.mb.ca/labour/standards.



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