
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

ESSENTIAL OUTCOME

After completing the lesson on this chapter, if nothing else, my students should be able to explain the importance of occupational health and safety from the perspectives of each of the stakeholder groups described in the chapter, and have considered how human resources management and practice links to occupational health and safety.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this chapter, students should be able to:

- define occupational health and safety, occupational injury, and occupational illness
- describe the financial and social costs associated with occupational injuries and illnesses
- trace the development of modern models of health and safety management
- list and describe the role of the major stakeholders in occupational health and safety
- explain the connection between human resource management and occupational health and safety
- describe the links between human resource practices and health and safety

KEY CONCEPTS

- Occupational health and safety has evolved over time, beginning in Canada in the late 1800s and becoming formalized through the implementation of legislation such as the Canadian Labour (Standards) Code and the Canadian Labour (Safety) Code in the 1970s.
- The attitude towards responsibility for health and safety has shifted from the worker to a more balanced responsibility shared by the employer and the employee.
- Health and safety is important to employers, employees and the general public because workplace accidents and injuries have significant economic, legal, and moral/ethical implications.
- The major stakeholders in occupational health and safety include government, employers, employees, and organized labour.
- Health and safety professionals and human resources professionals play key roles in the administration and implementation of occupational health and safety programs and services.

STUDENT MOTIVATION

Students who are taking this course as part of a Human Resources Management program will be interested in learning through this introductory chapter about how occupational health and safety fits within the HRM framework, and may be motivated enough to consider making occupational health and safety their HR specialty. Students taking the course as a stand-alone course or for

other reasons may be motivated to learn about the history and development of occupational health and safety by contemplating their own safety concerns as workers, and by comparing their own experiences to those of workers who have gone before them without the health and safety benefits and safeguards they currently enjoy.

BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Students who have never worked in sectors with significant or obvious health and safety risks (manufacturing, construction, mining/forestry, etc.) may have some difficulty relating directly and personally to the issues introduced in this opening chapter. Even so, students whose work experience is limited to retail or clerical functions will still have had some experience with occupational health and safety, even if only limited to basic WHIMIS training or information.

Other students may have some perceived bias (either positive or negative) relating to labour unions, which are described in this opening chapter as key stakeholders in occupational health and safety. This possibility presents an opportunity for instructors to poll or otherwise engage their class in a discussion about their views, and to encourage learners to reflect on (and perhaps challenge) their assumptions and attitudes.

Finally, some students may come to this class with the mindset that responsibility for occupational health and safety “belongs to someone else,” such as their employer, the government, or a health and safety agency. Through this introductory chapter, be sure to reinforce the central concept that occupational health and safety is a shared responsibility of multiple stakeholders, inclusive of each and every working individual.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND LESSON PLAN

1. Engaging Students at the Outset

- b. Learning objective:** *At the completion of this activity, students will have identified factors that contribute to a safe learning environment, and will have related those aspects to the topic of creating safe work environments.*

As this is likely the first meeting of the class, during the first 10 minutes use the major lesson theme of safety to help set the tone for creating a safe and effective learning environment. Using either a “think–pair–share” approach or an “image map” handout (a page with random clip art images students can use as representative symbols), ask students to identify things that to them represent an effective learning environment. After sufficient contributions have been recorded on a flip chart or white board, look for themes and use them to create a “class charter” with which you and the students will co-create and share responsibility for creating and maintaining this positive and safe environment for learning. For example, “charter” items that may emerge could include things like “it feels safe to ask questions,” “we will respect time by starting and ending class on time,” “we will talk one at a time, unless working on group activities,” etc. (NB: Be sure to record the charter for electronic posting or to print and distribute at the beginning of the next class.) By placing an emphasis on co-creating a safe environment for learning, you can effectively link this exercise to the importance of co-creating and maintaining a safe working environment, thus creating an excellent bridge to the course topic.

2. Lesson Engagement Strategies

- a. **Learning objective:** *At the completion of this activity, students will have identified with the issue of workplace injury and put a human face on workplace injury statistics.*

In introducing this chapter, Figure 1.1 (page 5) and Figure 1.2 (page 6) illustrate important statistics on the prevalence of **workplace injuries and deaths in Canada**. To help make these statistics more real to students, instigate some form of polling to find out how many students have at some point in their working lives themselves been injured, and/or personally know someone who has been injured while at work. This could be accomplished through a simple show of hands or the use of “clickers,” or by asking students to pair up and interview each other on the topic.

- b. **Learning objective:** *At the completion of this activity, students will have reflected on the economic cost of work-related injury and considered how a work-related injury might affect them personally.*

When discussing the **economic costs of work-related injury** (pages 8–10), ask students to reflect on what the financial impact on them might be if they suddenly found themselves unable to work and therefore earn money, and discuss with a partner. How might a complete or partial loss of income affect them? How might it affect others who depend on them? Encourage the students to put themselves in the place of an injured worker, or of an employer who depends on the productivity of a worker who is no longer available due to an injury at work. This reflective activity will help to put a human face on the statistics discussed earlier in the chapter.

- c. **Learning Objective:** *At the completion of this activity, students will have identified the various responsibilities for workplace health and safety borne by each of the major stakeholder groups identified in the chapter.*

In the section “**The Stakeholders**” (pages 11–16) prepare and post a flip chart sheet for each of the four stakeholder groups (government, employers, employees, organized labour) and have students freely move from chart to chart recording their thoughts and understanding of health and safety responsibilities for each group. When their ideas are exhausted, review the charts comparing their contributions to the information in the text, and discuss/comment on any additional or missing aspects.

- d. **Learning Objective:** *At the completion of this activity, students will have discussed the four major aspects identified in the chapter related to role of human resources in occupational health and safety.*

When reviewing **the role of human resources in health and safety** (pages 16–19) have students pair up again (same or different partner used in activity “b,” above) and briefly discuss the four areas described. To reinforce the growing role of occupational health and safety in the field of human resources management, show the class one or two current job postings for occupational health and safety specialists (possibly from www.Monster.ca or www.Workopolis.ca).

3. Lesson Plan Notes

A. Introduction—Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Stakeholders

Engage students in a discussion about the three principal rights that provide the basis for much of the health and safety legislation in Canada. Employers and employees both play a vital role in the fulfillment of the basic right to participate in knowing, identifying, and correcting OH&S problems.

- The right to refuse dangerous work without penalty.
- The right to participate in identifying and correcting health and safety problems.
- The right to know about hazards in the workplace.

B. The Importance of the Management of Occupational Health and Safety in Organizations

Engage students in a discussion about the factors that underlie the need for human resource managers to understand and implement effective OH&S policies and programs.

- New technologies have led to new health and safety concerns (i.e., repetitive strain injury and computer vision syndrome).
- The public's decreased tolerance for work-related hazards.
- Rising direct and indirect costs associated with workplace injuries and illnesses.
- Organized labour ensuring both the proper management of workplace safety and bringing emerging OH&S issues to management's attention.
- Legislation requires employers to take every reasonable precaution to ensure the safety of their employees (due diligence).
- Employers have a moral obligation to employees, their families, and the community to provide a safe work environment.

C. Historical Development of Modern OH&S

Discuss historical examples of injuries and illnesses that brought world attention to industrial and technological hazards. Engage the students in a discussion about historical work-related concerns that occurred before and during the Industrial Revolution, leading to a discussion of new workplace injuries and illnesses due to the advent of new technologies. You can show pictures, tell stories, and give examples of early tragedies (i.e., Alice in Wonderland “Mad Hatters” were men who became mad due to mercury poisoning while manufacturing felt hats; Japanese families living in fishing villages ate fish contaminated by mercury dumped into the water by manufacturing companies, leaving their children born with physical and mental birth defects; and exposure to chemicals and dust in manufacturing companies led to severe respiratory and skin diseases). These historical events brought the world's attention to workplace hazards. Refer to OH&S Notebook 1.1, “Preventing Computer Vision Syndrome,” as an example of new workplace OH&S concerns. Ask students for examples of current workplace injuries or illnesses that are in the news.

Give an overview of the development of Canadian OH&S standards and legislation that grew out of society's emerging concern (historical tragedies) about workplace OH&S. Use PowerPoint slides.

In 1889, the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labour in Canada made several recommendations about improving OH&S, including these:

- Establishment of standards and mandated regular inspections.
- A system for compensating victims of industrial accidents, regardless of fault.
- That a labour bureau be created to oversee these activities.

In 1974, the Royal Commission on the Health and Safety of Workers in Mines, formed by the Ontario government, was the first to articulate the three principal rights of workers that continue to be enshrined in current legislation. These rights provide the basis for much of H&S programming in Canada.

- The right to refuse dangerous work without penalty.
- The right to participate in identifying and correct OH&S problems.
- The right to know about hazards in the workplace.

In 1988, legislation was passed that established the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS).

In 1994, the Ontario Workmen's Compensation Act (first province) provided lost-time wages to injured workers.

Following the First World War, federal and provincial governments began to enact legislation to protect workers from accidents and illnesses; it addressed compensation, employer liability, and workplace practices.

In 2003, Bill C-45 (also called the Westray Bill—the Act to amend the Criminal Code) established a duty in criminal law (criminal liability of organizations) to protect the health and safety of everyone in the workplace. (Refer to the text OH&S Today 1.3, “A Predictable Path to Disaster at Westray”). CBC has a video on the Westray Disaster.

In conclusion, highlight that the result of continued improvements to OH&S legislation has led to a continued decline in the number of workplace accidents.

D. Changing Perspectives On Risk and Liability

Ask the students if they believe certain individuals are more likely to be involved in accidents than others (i.e., accident proneness). Engage students in a discussion about how historical attitudes and thinking, about OH&S and liability have changed over time. Before the early 1900s, the *assumption of risk* stated that when a worker accepted employment, he or she also accepted the risks associated with that job and workplace. The attitude of both employers and employees was that occupational injuries were caused by *worker carelessness, accident*

proneness, and the worker's failure to act safely. Few workers were compensated unless it was solely the responsibility of the employer. Modern OH&S attitudes, thinking, and liability recognize that enhancing OH&S requires cooperation and a *shared responsibility* among multiple stakeholders, such as government, employers, and workers. Following the First World War, federal and provincial governments began to enact legislation to protect workers that included compensation, employer liability, and workplace practices to prevent accidents and illnesses. Bill C-45 established organizational liability under the Criminal Code.

Conclude by emphasizing that the change in attitudes, thinking, and liability about OH&S from the careless worker to the shared responsibility approach has led to improved workplace OH&S.

E. Health and Safety Financial and Social Costs

Ask students to list (and calculate if possible) the financial costs of an injury or illness in their workplace. Have students share their lists (and calculations). List all the financial costs in two columns (direct and indirect) on a white board/overhead/computer projector screen.

Examples of direct costs that can result from a work-related injury or illness:

- worker's lost time
- investigation time
- finding/training replacement worker
- increased WCB premiums

Examples of indirect costs that can result from a work-related injury or illness:

- potential increase in WCB assessment
- potential fines and legal costs
- family impact/stress
- pain and suffering from long-term effects of injury
- employee stress

Refer to the text OH&S Today 1.1, "Direct and Indirect Costs of Injury," to illustrate additional examples of indirect and direct costs that can result from a work-related injury. Expand on other costs such as these: unhealthy behaviour, work stoppages and strikes, negative publicity caused by a death or serious public health problem, failure to retain employees, emotional impact, and increased WCB insurance premiums. Refer to OH&S Today 1.2, "The Costs of Unhealthy Behaviour," and OH&S Notebook 1.4, "Does Cost Motivate?"

Go to the WorkSafe BC website's Small Business WorkSafe Safety Calculator to summarize the cost calculations for specific injuries and industries.

If the students have access to the Internet they can use the WorkSafeBC Small Business Safety Calculator or the Tourism and Hospitality Safety Calculator (www.worksafebc.com) to create their own accident scenario and calculate the accident costs for their industry, including incident, investigation, damage, replacement, and production costs.

Ask students to discuss other reasons, besides economic, that should be considered in the control of workplace hazards. Engage the students in a discussion about the legal, moral, and social reasons to ensure workplaces are safe.

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

To quickly assess student learning against the chapter learning outcomes, at the end of the class:

- Ask for volunteers to recall the definitions of occupational health and safety, occupational injury, and occupational illness without referring to their notes or the text.
- Refer back to learning activity “b” and ask students to summarize the key points of their conversations.
- Conduct a brief pop quiz of the key events and legislative timelines described on pages 6 and 7.
- Refer back to the stakeholder flipcharts created in learning activity “c.”
- Refer back to the student conversations during learning activity “d,” and ask a few students to reiterate their key take-away from the discussion.

REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING

Good teaching requires the practice of ongoing self-assessment and reflection. At the completion of this lesson, you may find it helpful to reflect on the following, and consider whether or not you want or need to make any adjustments for subsequent lessons.

- What worked in this lesson? What didn’t?
- Were students engaged? Were they focused or did they go off on tangents?
- Did I take steps to adequately assess student learning?
- Did my assessments suggest that they understood the key concepts?
- What (if anything) should I do differently next time?
- How can I gather student feedback?
- How can I use this feedback for continuous improvement of my teaching?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Weblinks for Occupational Health and Safety specialists job postings:

- www.monster.ca
- www.workopolis.ca
- *WorkSafe BC DVD. Lost Youth Video—Four Stories of Injured Young Workers.* Michael, Jennifer, John, and Nick all speak of losing their youth after suffering serious workplace accidents. Through dramatic recreations of these accidents and one-on-one discussions with the young people and their parents, *Lost Youth* tells four stories of lives forever altered. The video and class discussion guide can be downloaded from <http://www2.worksafebc.com/Topics/YoungWorker/Resources-YoungWorkers.asp>.
- A list of other DVD titles can be accessed at WorkSafeBC Library Services: http://www.worksafebc.com/about_us/library_services/assets/pdf/videos_titles.pdf.

SUGGESTED ANSWERS TO CASES AND EXERCISES

Discussion Questions

1. Why have people historically been more concerned about work-related injuries than work-related illnesses?

Answer: The effects of industrial diseases often do not become apparent or visible for years, are indirect, and are complicated by many other factors, which can range from lifestyle to lack of knowledge/research to unsafe acts. Workplace injuries, on the other hand, are immediate, direct, and highly visible, often involving emergency situations.

2. How has our understanding of personal liability for accidents changed over the years?

Answer: Attitudes, thinking, and liability about OH&S historically were quite different from today. Before the early 1900s, the *assumption of risk* stated that when a worker accepted employment he or she also accepted the risks associated with that job and workplace. The attitude and belief of both employers and employees was that occupational injuries were caused by *worker carelessness*, *accident proneness*, and the worker's failure to act safely. Few workers were compensated unless it was solely the responsibility of the employer. Modern OH&S attitudes, thinking, and liability recognize that enhancing OH&S requires cooperation and a *shared responsibility* among multiple stakeholders, such as government, employers, and workers. Following the First World War, federal and provincial governments began to enact legislation to protect workers; these new laws addressed compensation, employer liability, and workplace practices to prevent accidents and illnesses. Bill C-45 established organizational liability under the Criminal Code.

3. For what reasons, besides humanitarian ones, should workplace hazards be controlled?

Answer: Employers, employees, and the public should control workplace hazards for economic and legal reasons. Directly and indirectly, work-related injuries and illnesses cost Canadians billions of dollars annually, and these costs need to be minimized and managed by the human resource department. Direct and indirect costs include incident, investigation, damage, replacement, and production costs. Other costs can include these: unhealthy behaviour, work stoppages and strikes, negative publicity resulting from a death or serious public health problem, failure to retain employees, emotional impact, and increased WCB insurance premiums. Employers are legally responsible for ensuring the health and safety of all their workers. An employer must take all care and precautions that are reasonable in the circumstances to protect the well-being of workers or coworkers to meet the legal OH&S standard of due diligence. An ongoing OH&S program that controls specific hazards in the workplace forms the basis of due diligence. An employer that has all the OH&S program elements required by legislation, in effect and working well, is acting with due diligence. The minimal OH&S program elements include these: statement of aims and responsibilities, inspection of premises, equipment, and work, written instructions, management meetings, investigation of accidents/incidents, maintenance of records and statistics, and instruction and supervision of workers.

4. Who are the stakeholders in health and safety? What roles do they play?

Answer: The major OH&S stakeholders are government, educators, parents, students, unions, industrial accident prevention associations and safety alliances, health and safety professionals, suppliers, health and safety committees, and community groups, as well as employers and workers.

The two main goals of government OH&S legislation are: to ensure that injured workers receive compensation and that employers accept liability, and to prevent accidents and illness by establishing safe work environments. The federal government created the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety (CCOHS) as a vital H&S research and resource organization: visit www.ccohs.ca.

The employer, owner, or management team plays the most critical role in OH&S because they have the authority and responsibility to ensure legislative compliance. They are responsible for the following: providing and displaying a written OH&S policy; providing and maintaining equipment, materials, and protective devices; ensuring and monitoring safe work practices; reporting occupational injuries and illnesses; establishing OH&S committees; and providing OH&S training for management and workers.

Employees have multiple roles, both as individuals and as members of organized groups. Workers are responsible for performing their duties and tasks in a safe and responsible manner, wearing protective equipment in compliance with company and legislative regulations, reporting defective equipment and other workplace hazards to the employer, and exercising the right to refuse to carry out a dangerous activity.

OH&S committees and organized labour bring emerging OH&S problems and issues to the attention of governments and employers and pressure other stakeholders to take corrective actions.

Stakeholders can support safe working conditions by collaborating and sharing information, resources, and expertise with other OH&S stakeholder groups. Visit www2.worksafebc.com/Topics/YoungWorker/Resources-YoungWorkers.asp.

Using The Internet

1. How do organizations treat occupational health and safety? Find the websites for major corporations in your area. Search them for information on health and safety. Who in the organization administers health and safety programs? What kinds of programs are in place?

Answer: OH&S is almost exclusively formally managed under the human resources function in large organizations and informally managed by management in smaller organizations. Health and safety a critical responsibility of all human resource management for these reasons:

- It is a people issue.
- It requires legislative compliance.
- It requires integration with other human resource functions.
- It increases OH&S benefits and decreases costs.

- It is about building a strong health and safety culture.
- It is part of the business plan.
- It is about change management.

Exercises

1. For one week, read the local newspapers and listen to the news. Make a note of the main topic of every article or item relating to occupational health and safety. What roles are the media playing? What OH&S issues are most likely to gain attention? Give reasons for your answers.

Answer: The media provide a wide range of programming (online, paper, and newscasts) that informs and enlightens citizens around the world about OH&S issues. They make a powerful impact on OH&S by bringing legal, environmental, and public health concerns immediately to the public's attention. They inform and help citizens deal with emergency situations. They help society exchange ideas, opinions, and information through news articles, opinion pieces, to letters to the editor. The media increase public awareness of OH&S issues and share the public's OH&S concerns, opinions, and perspectives.

The CBC Westray news article (“Remember Westray victims with better safety: miners”) can be found at www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2002/05/09/westray_ten020509.html.

2. Interview a human resources manager about occupational health and safety. What is HR's role in the effective management of occupational health and safety at work? What HR functions are involved in meeting health and safety requirements?

Answer: Occupational health and safety is usually managed under the HR function for these reasons:

- It is a people issue.
- It requires legislative compliance.
- It requires integration with other human resource functions.
- It increases OH&S benefits and decreases costs.
- It is about building a strong H&S culture.
- It is part of the business plan.
- It is about change management.

An HRM's role is to understand and implement effective OH&S systems, policies, programs, and initiatives that are part of the organization's strategic approach. OH&S is an integral part of all HRM functions, including these: legislation review, job analysis (i.e., identify hazards of the job), change management, orientation and training, labour relations, benefits (i.e. provide benefits to support OH&S), performance management (i.e., make safety a performance criterion), disability management, claims management (i.e., employer OH&S affects costs), recruitment and retention, developing policies and procedures (safe work practices), accident inspections and investigations, safety leadership, climate and culture, motivating safety

behaviour, wellness practices, retention and turnover (a healthy environment enhances recruitment and retention), and strategic management.

Cases

Case 1: Production or Safety?

Students can review the case and answer the questions at the end of the case: (e.g., Who is at fault here? What can be done to ensure that similar incidents will not occur in the future)? *Or* they can approach the case from an inspection point of view and develop a list of critical questions (5 W's and How) to determine who was at fault and what can be done to ensure that similar incidents do not occur in the future. Ask students to identify which questions will help them recognize the root causes of the accident.

To determine who is at fault, and what can be done to ensure that similar incidents will not occur in the future, an inspection needs to be done by the plant manager. Asking the question, “What can the owner, management supervisor, and employee do to prevent the accident from recurring?”, can identify the root cause of the accident. The safety inspection must identify as many root causes as possible by including human (i.e., unsafe acts), situational (unsafe conditions), and environmental factors (i.e., physical, chemical, biological, ergonomic).

Inspections must be done on a regular basis. An important question to ask in this case is, “Was additional care and attention paid to inspections due to the workplace changes resulting from increased production levels?”

Employers are legally responsible to ensure the health and safety of all their workers. They must establish a health and safety program that incorporates OH&S into the organization's business planning, strategies, and systems, and they must establish plans, policies, and procedures to control hazards once they have been identified. An important question to ask in this case is, “Was the owner and management team showing due diligence and a commitment to employee safety?” They should have been aware of the changing conditions to increase production and the various procedures necessary to carry out the work processes safely. Another important question to ask in this case is, “Was there an OH&S program, and did supervisors receive training concerning the new workplace conditions?” Policies, procedures, inspections, health and safety committees, training, maintenance of records, and investigations are the core elements of an occupational health and safety program. A joint OH&S committee is required when 20 or more workers are regularly employed in the workplace. Was there a committee established to identify and resolve health and safety programs in the workplace?

The supervisors should do inspections continuously each time they pass through the production area. They are accountable for the safety of workers under their control, and they should have identified the risk factors involved in increasing production. They should have been constantly looking for and correcting any hazards that might arise, such as workers' unsafe acts (i.e., not wearing protective equipment), unsafe conditions (i.e., the soldering process), and environmental factors (i.e., use of chemicals). Did the supervisor ensure that the employee was adequately trained and aware of all the health and safety hazards? The employee needs to understand his principal rights and responsibilities: to refuse dangerous work without penalty, to participate in

identifying and correcting health and safety problems, and to know about hazards in the workplace. Was the employee aware of the risks and hazards involved in working with chemicals and neglecting to wear proper eye protection? Did the employee show a lack of precaution, poor judgment, or inappropriate behaviour? Did the employee deviate from standard job procedures or practices that would require disciplinary action from the supervisor (i.e., failure to use personal protective equipment)?

While the employer is ultimately responsible for the overall safety of all the employees, the supervisor is responsible for ensuring the OH&S of all workers under his/her supervision, and the employee is responsible for following safe workplace procedures and reporting health and safety problems to the Health and Safety Committee that is responsible for identifying and recommending solutions. A safe workplace is the shared responsibility of the employer, supervisor, worker, and Safety Committee.

Case 2: Do We Need Health and Safety?

This case is an example of a communication and interest conflict that has arisen due to lack of information and perceived or actual incompatibility of interests (different ways of managing workplace health and safety in an office work environment). This is a complex situation that requires understanding and developing strategies based on many workplace environment variables, which can range from the organizational culture and context to leadership style to interpersonal relationships, power dynamics, and motivation.

The employee should approach this situation in a collaborative and cooperative way, with attention given to improving working relationships and increasing OH&S awareness and understanding, while reducing defensiveness and resistance, or the escalation of conflict. The employee would initially want to listen and seek out the manager's point of view, interests, and expectations concerning employee health and safety and then share her knowledge of the economic, legal, and moral importance of managing occupational health and safety. The employee should share some examples of specifically researched economic, social, and legal benefits associated with office injuries and illnesses (i.e., computer vision syndrome, repetitive strain and back injuries) and the importance of the identification, evaluation, and control of hazards (i.e., ergonomics) associated with office and computer workstation environments.

She would want to discuss the employee's right to and employer's responsibility for safe working conditions under provincial and federal legislation. She would begin the discussion by referring to the three principal employee rights and her legal responsibility to participate in identifying and correcting OH&S problems. Further discussions could focus on the legal requirement of due diligence, occupational health and safety programs, and the development of a Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

The goal would be to create an organization that supports workplace health and safety through the delicate balance of enforcement and empowerment.