
Writing Policies: Occupational Health & Safety and Return-to-Work

As a small assessment employer, you are required to have policies in your workplace governing occupational health & safety and early and safe return-to-work. You can write two separate policies, or combine them if you wish.

A policy is a clear written statement that demonstrates your commitment to each of these areas. Here are some tips on how to write your policies.

Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) Policy

An OH&S policy is required under provincial OH&S legislation (Section 36.2 of the OH&S Act , Section 4.1 of the OH&S Regulations) and under federal OH&S legislation (Section 125.(1)(ii) of the Canada Labour Code, Part II).

Your policy must:

- Be written in consultation with your health and safety representative/designate or committee
- State your health and safety related goals
- State the activities required to support these goals and the roles and responsibilities necessary to ensure the activities are implemented
- Be posted in a prominent area (physically and/or electronically)
- Be signed by the highest level of management
- Be dated, reviewed every year and updated as required

Employers are responsible for their employees and have a legal and moral obligation to provide for their safety and well-being. Having an OH&S policy in place will help you meet this responsibility. It also makes good economic sense. Costs related to workplace accidents and incidents can be avoided when the goals outlined in an OH&S policy have been applied.

Sample OH&S policy

You may edit this policy to suit your workplace and maintain and update it as noted above.

I, (business/organization owner/president/CEO, etc.) of (business/organization name) am ultimately responsible for workers' occupational health and safety at the workplace. I will strive to protect workers from injury and illness related to

work; and I will provide the resources necessary to keep the workplace healthy and safe. To fulfill this commitment (business/organization name) will make every effort to provide and maintain a safe and healthy workplace by following industry standards and complying with OH&S legislation. In keeping with OH&S legislation, a healthy and safe workplace will be created in consultation and cooperation with management and workers, in particular the health and safety representative/designate or committee.

Supervisors will be held accountable for the health and safety of employees under their supervision. Responsibilities include ensuring machinery and equipment are safe and established safe work practices are followed. To protect their health and safety, employees must receive an OH&S orientation and specific work task training.

Every employee must protect his/her health and safety and the health and safety of other employees by following legislative requirements and safe work practices and by reporting unsafe conditions they observe.

Contractors will be required to meet legislative requirements and follow (business/organization name's) policies and procedures regarding health and safety.

Health and safety is an integral part of this firm's every day business. It is in the best interest of all to join together and put into practice health and safety principles in all work activities.

This OH&S policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and revised as necessary.

Signed:

Date:

Return-to-Work (RTW) Policy

Your return-to-work policy is similar to your OH&S policy. It must:

- State your commitment to early and safe return-to-work practices after an accident or injury
- Include a reference to communicating with the employee during the return-to-work process
- Include a reference to Section 89 of *the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation (WHSC) Act*
- State the organization's commitment to protecting confidential information
- Outline the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved in return-to-work: employer, injured worker, health care providers, co-workers, WorkplaceNL and, where appropriate, union and return-to-work representatives
- Include a reference to the Hierarchy of Return to Work according WorkplaceNL's *Policy RE-18 Hierarchy of Return to Work and Accommodation*
- Be posted at all worksites (physically and/or electronically)
- Be signed by the highest level of management
- Be dated, reviewed every year and updated as required

Employers who have a re-employment obligation under Section 89.1 of the *WHSC Act* must also reflect that obligation in their return-to-work policy.

Employers are responsible for ensuring their employees get back to work as quickly and safely as possible after a workplace accident or injury. Having a return-to-work policy in place will help you meet this responsibility. It also makes good economic sense by helping you to reduce your workers' compensation costs and return your workplace to maximum productivity levels.

Sample Return-to-Work policy

You may edit this policy to suit your workplace and maintain and update it as noted above.

XYZ Corporation is committed to assisting workers who have been injured on the job to return to work in a timely and safe manner.

The company will fulfill this commitment by contacting the worker as soon as possible after the injury and offering employment that is consistent with the worker's functional abilities. Job options will be identified and offered using the WorkplaceNL's Hierarchy of Return to Work as identified in WHSC Policy RE-18 and in accordance with section 89 and 89.1 of the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act*.

All members of the organization including supervisors, co-workers, and the union are responsible for actively participating and cooperating in the return to work process when required. Where necessary the company will seek input and advice from other parties involved in the RTW process including the Workplace Health Safety and Compensation Commission and external health care providers.

Any personal information received or collected that can lead to the identification of an injured worker will be held in the strictest confidence. Information of a personal nature will be released only if required by law or with the approval of the worker who will specify the nature of the information to be released and to whom it can be released.

This statement will be reviewed at least annually and may be updated or changed as required.

Signed

Date