

NEW/YOUNG WORKER ORIENTATION GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

On July 26, 2007, requirements for new worker orientation and training come into effect under the BC Occupational Health and Safety Regulation Section 3.22-3.25. WorkSafeBC statistics show that more than half of work-related incidents occur during a worker's first six months on the job with almost 20 percent occurring during the first month. Statistics also show that all workers have five to seven times the risk of sustaining a workplace injury during their first month on the job, regardless of age.

The regulation requires that the employer:

- provides new and young workers with a safety orientation and training specific to the worker's workplace before they begin work
- provides additional orientation and training if the worker requests it or if workplace observation shows that the worker is not able to perform work tasks/processes safely
- documents and keep records of all orientation and training provided.

This guide will outline the topics that are required to be included in the orientation and training. Throughout the document there will be designations of "district" or "site" based topics. According to the regulation a "new worker" also includes a worker who changes worksites. It is recommended that districts have a district orientation and site orientations for new and young workers. Also included with this guide is an example of checklists that can be used, including a general checklist that was developed by WorkSafeBC.

WorkSafeBC recognizes the challenges that school districts face in delivering orientations, in particular with Teachers On Call being called out for assignments on a daily basis. Implementing "reasonable operational solutions" to comply with this regulation for each site in the school district will suffice, however WorkSafeBC has mentioned that each WorkSafeBC safety officer may have their own opinion on what complies and what doesn't.

DISTRICT VS SITE ORIENTATION

The difference between a site orientation and district orientation is that a site orientation would orient a new or young worker to the particular hazards and procedures that would pertain to that particular site. Some examples of what may be covered in a site orientation include:

- who the first aid attendant is for the site and how to contact them
- who the principal/immediate supervisor is and how to contact them
- where the fire exits and fire extinguishers are
- what the potential hazards of the site (or particular classroom) are.

A district orientation would include a general overview of the district's safety program and services, and may include an introduction to other services that the school district may provide. Some examples of what may be covered in a district orientation include:

- rights and responsibilities of a worker
- reporting procedures for workplace injuries
- district level procedures.

The above examples, in addition to others will be addressed in more detail throughout the document. It is required that both district and site orientations occur to comply with the regulation. The format of these orientations is at the discretion of the school district. This guide can be used to ensure that the district includes the necessary components in their orientation programs. A few school districts have decided to place their district orientation online for new/young employees to complete. Others have decided a group orientation will work best. The frequency of the district orientations depends on how often the district hires new/young employees. The site orientations, ideally, should be done each time an employee enters an unfamiliar territory (school, site, and sometimes, even classroom). An example of how one school district has been handling site orientations is giving a handout to each new employee which lists the pertinent information for that particular site.

DEFINITIONS

New worker

Any worker who is:

- New to the workplace
- Returning to a workplace where the hazards in that workplace have changed during the worker's absence
- Affected by a change in the hazards of a workplace
- Relocated to a new workplace if the hazards in that workplace are different from the hazards in the worker's previous workplace

Young worker

Any worker who is under 25 years of age

Hazard

A thing or condition that may expose a person to a risk of injury or occupational disease

Violence

The attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker, and includes any threatening statement or behaviour which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that he or she is at risk of injury.

Musculoskeletal Injury (MSI)

An injury or disorder of the muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, nerves, blood vessels or related soft tissue including a sprain, strain and inflammation, that may be caused or aggravated by work.

I. DISTRICT ORIENTATION REQUIREMENTS

A. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Workers, supervisors, and employers all have specific rights and responsibilities in the workplace. It is important to know these rights and responsibilities.

The district needs to explain the 3 Rights of a Worker:

- the Right to refuse unsafe work under Section 3.12 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation
- the Right to know the hazards of their work
- the Right to participate in safety activities through the safety committee.

The worker also needs to be informed of the protection against discrimination under the *Workers Compensation Act*.

An employer can expect workers to:

- Pay attention during health and safety training
- Remember their training and follow health and safety principles at all times
- Report any perceived hazards in the workplace
- Wear their personal protective equipment at all times
- Inform them about any physical or mental conditions that may impair their ability to perform their jobs safely

If your district has a district safety policy, or any other rights/responsibilities you would like to add, please feel free to include them.

B. INSTRUCTION AND DEMONSTRATION OF THE WORKER'S WORK TASK OR WORK PROCESS

This topic is intended to ensure the worker is provided with both instruction and demonstration - and not simply a verbal description - of work tasks that the worker will be required to perform when they start work. Further training may be required as new tasks are assigned.

The demonstration should address the aspects of the work that will involve safety risks if not performed correctly. For example, if the worker will be operating a piece of equipment, the employer will need to ensure that all safety points are demonstrated, including the use of guarding and other safety devices, means of equipment startup, and how to follow safe operating procedures.

C. WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY RULES

This topic is intended to ensure the worker is trained in the workplace health and safety rules applicable to the workplace and the tasks the worker will perform. The rules are expected to address any hazards that the worker may encounter, and may involve various types of controls, such as work procedures, use of personal protective equipment, and the safe means of operating equipment.

Examples of health and safety rules that can be included are (but not limited to):

District level:

- Lockout procedures
- Asbestos management
- Confined spaces
- Working alone
- Fall arrest and restraint
- Personal protective equipment
- Emergency Preparedness
- Improper Activity or Behaviour
- Physical or Mental Impairment
- Housekeeping
- Spill Management (bodily spills/waste and hazardous materials)

Site level:

- Sign in procedures and any security-related features of the site
- Appropriate use of classroom furniture
- Use of ladders, shelves, bookcases, and window ledges
- Adherence to areas marked off by the Facilities/Maintenance Department during construction
- Emergency procedures for the particular site

D. HAZARDS TO WHICH THE WORKER MAY BE EXPOSED

In general, the top two types of accidents that occur in schools are:

1. overexertion
2. falls on the same level.

These two accident types amount to 43% of all claims in our classification unit. Musculoskeletal injuries (MSI), such as sprains, strains, and tears are 60% of all claims.

The employer must ensure that a worker who may be exposed to a risk of MSI is educated in risk identification related to the work, including the recognition of early signs and symptoms of MSIs and their potential health effects. Specifics include proper lifting techniques (of materials, and in some cases, people/students) and storage priorities (heavier items at lower heights, lighter ones higher up, etc).

Falls on the same level is the result of employees not wearing appropriate footwear, improper housekeeping, and inadequate floor maintenance programs. The employer needs to make their employees aware of appropriate footwear for the job/task (if applicable, let employees know of your district's footwear policy) and the importance of keeping high traffic areas clear of debris and clutter.

Violence can also be an issue for teachers, teachers' assistants (TA) and/or Special Education Assistants (SEA) who deal with special needs students. Information on a need to know basis regarding students with behavioural problems need to be made aware to any teacher on call, SEA, TA, teacher, or anyone else who will be entering the classroom for the first time and who will be having interaction with the students. Custodial staff may also be vulnerable to violence. See the Violence section for more details.

There are other examples of hazards that are pertinent in a school setting that you may also want to make a new or young employee aware of that may be specific to the job that they may be performing. Be sure to include them in their orientation.

E. WORKING ALONE OR IN ISOLATION

If the work requires working alone or in isolation then the procedures for monitoring and summoning assistance must be fully explained and documented. The procedures must include a system for checking on the well being of the worker and establishing the time intervals for checking on the isolated worker.

Working alone may increase the risk to personal security. Procedures for minimizing these risks must be in place and fully explained to the worker.

Examples of employees who may be in a working alone situation are:

- custodial staff

- teaching staff or principals who decide to work evenings and/or weekends on school district property
- home visits.

F. VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

This topic is intended to ensure the worker is provided with orientation and training on the policies and procedures to be followed in the event of violence in the workplace. The worker should be advised of the meaning of the term “violence”, which includes any threatening statement or behaviour, and the circumstances in the workplace where a risk of violence may be present. The worker will need to be trained in the procedures to follow to eliminate or minimize any risk in such situations. They will also need to be trained in the steps to take to eliminate or minimize the risk of injury to the worker in the event of an incident.

The following information should be included in the district’s policy and/or guidelines

The WCB Occupational Health and Safety Regulation Sections 4.27 to 4.31 describe the requirements of a program to reduce the risks of injury to staff from acts of violence. These regulations require:

- A written policy to acknowledge that staff are subject to a risk of injury through acts of violence
- An assessment of the worksite to determine the nature of the risk of injury. Written procedures, policies and arrangements to prevent these risks from becoming actual events.
- Informing staff about individuals with a history of violence these risks and the appropriate response strategies
- Procedures for reporting, documenting, investigating and resolving incidents
- That persons injured or exhibiting adverse symptoms are advised to seek qualified medical assistance.

It is recommended that the following administration guidelines be in place in school districts to assist in complying with these regulations.

- School administrators should investigate all violent incident reports submitted by staff, incidents that result in a referral to medical attention must be reported to the WCB as a worker’s compensation claim and be formerly investigated as required by section 3.8.
- Actions taken to resolve reported incidents should be made known to staff as soon as possible.
- Completed violent incident reports should be faxed to a central location, such as Health and Safety.

- Summary information from violent incident reports should be recorded. An annual report of this information should be discussed with the district safety committee once a year. In the interest of consistency in practice among school districts, September is suggested. Information recorded should include:
 - Date
 - Time
 - Type of incident, e.g. verbal threat, physical assault
 - Perpetrator type e.g. secondary student, special needs student, adult
 - Action taken to resolve incident
 - Number of prior incidents by the same individual
- The names of victims or perpetrators should not be disclosed on this report.
- Summary information should also be taken on perpetrators. This would include:
 - Name
 - Date of incident
 - Type of incident
 - This information can be used to advise principals, managers of past incidents and to consider support issues for students, especially in the special needs area
- The violent incident report should be referred to police when intent to harm is evident.

G. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

This topic is intended to ensure the worker is provided with appropriate orientation and training in the use and care of personal protective equipment or clothing that the worker will be required to use to safely perform their work. This is a standard expectation under Part 8 of the Regulation, and will help the worker meet his or her obligations to use PPE properly. If there is no PPE required for the protection of the worker then there is no need to cover this topic.

Examples of types of PPE that a district may be required to provide orientation and training for include:

- Safety headgear (e.g. hard hats)
- Eye and face protection (e.g. safety glasses, goggles, face shields, etc)
- Limb and body protection (e.g. gloves, aprons, etc)
- Footwear (e.g. safety boots, non-slip footwear, etc)
- High visibility and distinguishing apparel (e.g. high visibility vests)
- Respiratory protection (e.g. N95 mask, half piece respirator, etc)
- Hearing protection (e.g. foam ear plugs, ear muffs, etc)
- Fall protection.

H. FIRST AID AND INJURY/ILLNESS REPORTING

As described in the “Site Orientation” section, the following information pertaining to first aid needs be made aware to the new worker at the site level:

- The name of the first aid attendant
- How to seek first aid treatment.

At the district level, the process for reporting injuries to the employer, along with the worker and employer’s responsibility to report an injury according to Division 5 of the *Workers Compensation Act* needs to be explained to the new worker. This includes outlining the forms that need to be filled, reporting timelines, investigations, etc.

I. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

This topic is intended to ensure the worker is advised of potential emergency situations that could occur in their work location, and is trained in the procedures to follow. Site-specific information should be covered in the site orientation (see “Site Orientation” section below), but there is general information that can be covered at the district level.

The following should be included (but not limited to):

- Earthquake drills and procedures
- Lockdown procedures
- Mercury and other hazardous spills
- Bomb threats
- Fire alarm procedures.

J. DISTRICT HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAM

Under this topic the employer is expected to provide an orientation to the OHS program. The orientation would describe the program elements, which are outlined in section 3.3 of the Regulation, and how they are implemented in the workplace. The minimum program requirements are (as taken from section 3.3):

- (a) a statement of the employer's aims and the responsibilities of the employer, supervisors and workers,
- (b) provision for the regular inspection of premises, equipment, work methods and work practices, at appropriate intervals, to ensure that prompt action is undertaken to correct any hazardous conditions found,
- (c) appropriate written instructions, available for reference by all workers, to supplement this Occupational Health and Safety Regulation,
- (d) provision for holding periodic management meetings for the purpose of reviewing health and safety activities and incident trends, and for the determination of necessary courses of action,
- (e) provision for the prompt investigation of incidents to determine the action necessary to prevent their recurrence,
- (f) the maintenance of records and statistics, including reports of inspections and incident investigations, with provision for making this information available to the joint committee or worker health and safety representative, as applicable and, upon request, to an officer, the union representing the workers at the workplace or, if there is no union, the workers at the workplace, and
- (g) provision by the employer for the instruction and supervision of workers in the safe performance of their work.

Employees should be told where a copy of the district's health and safety program can be located.

K. WHMIS

This topic is intended to ensure the worker is provided with an orientation on the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), and its application to controlled products in the workplace. The orientation should explain the WHMIS hazard classes, and the use of WHMIS labels and MSDS. In addition, there are four WHMIS objectives for training a worker in how to work safely with controlled products. Workers need to know the hazards of the products, how they can protect themselves, what to do in case of an emergency or spill, and where to get more information on the products.

II. SITE ORIENTATION REQUIREMENTS

A site orientation must be given to each worker that is new to a worksite. This includes Teachers On Call, maintenance staff, and any other staff that move from site to site.

The following safety-related topics should be included in a site orientation:

- Name of the principal (or supervisor) and how this person can be contacted
- Name of health and safety representative for the site (or health and safety committee members) and how this person can be contacted
- Name of first aid attendant
- How to summon first aid help
- Location of first aid kits
- If entering a classroom with a violent student, ensure that the education plan and any other pertinent information is made known
- Emergency procedures for the site, including locations of emergency exits, muster stations, locations of fire extinguishers, location of hazardous material spill kits, lockdown and earthquake procedures, etc
- Working alone procedures
- Site safety rules; examples include:
 - Appropriate use of classroom furniture
 - Use of ladders, shelves, bookcases, and window ledges
 - Adherence to areas marked off by the Facilities/Maintenance Department during construction.