

# Workers have the Right to Participate

IN THEIR OWN HEALTH AND SAFETY



Revised January 2020

**The Right to Participate** – being involved and having a say in your own health and safety – is important because workers are the ones doing the job and are the ones who will be affected if exposed to hazards.

**Recent changes to Alberta's Occupational Health and Safety Legislation mean there are now some new ways for workers to participate in health and safety:**

## 1 Health and Safety Committees (HSC's)

A joint Health and Safety Committee (HSC) is required by employers who have 20 or more workers, for projects that are expected to last 90 days or more. A site-specific HSC is required for work sites with multiple employers that have 20 or more workers where work lasts 90 days or more.

An HSC is made up of a worker and an employer co-chair, and at least 2 other members. At least half of the committee must be made up of workers (to be selected by workers, or as specified in the union Constitution [in unionized workplaces]).

An HSC is required by law to meet regularly (at least quarterly) to discuss health and safety issues of the workplace, respond to health and safety concerns and suggestions from workers, identify ways to address issues, and make recommendations to the employer to make things safer. The Employer must respond to committee recommendations within 30 days.

### **The committee may also:**

- participate in the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs
- conduct and monitor workplace inspections
- participate in incident investigations
- follow-up on progress made and monitor program effectiveness

## 2 Health and Safety Representatives (HS Reps)

A Health and Safety Representative (HS Rep) is required by employers who have between 5-19 workers, for projects that are expected to last 90 days or more. A site-specific HS Rep is required for work sites with multiple employers that have 5-19 workers where work lasts 90 days or more.

The HS Rep is a worker, and is chosen by other workers. An HS Rep carries out some of the same duties as a committee.

Both HSC's and HS Reps have important responsibilities in supporting workers who use their Right to Refuse Dangerous Work.

*(see our Right to Refuse fact sheet)*

### **HSC and HS Rep Training**

HSC co-chairs and HS Reps must be trained in their duties and responsibilities, to be delivered by an organization approved by the Minister.

All HSC members and HS Reps are allowed time annually to attend training (the greater of 16 hours or the number of hours normally worked during two shifts)

Workers must be paid at their regular rate of pay while taking this training.

**(sections 29 and 30 of the OHS Act)**

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**ALBERTA WORKERS'  
HEALTH CENTRE**

Information, Education and Empowerment for Workers

Phone: 780-486-9009  
Toll-Free: 1-888-729-4879

[www.workershealthcentre.ca](http://www.workershealthcentre.ca)



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FACT SHEET ARE FOR  
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## 3 Worker participation in Hazard Assessment, Elimination, and Control

Hazard Assessments are required by employers. A Hazard Assessment identifies the potential dangers of your job, and how you are protected from those dangers.

Workers should be involved in a Hazard Assessment when you first start a job, or when the work changes. Some workers whose job tasks or locations change frequently may need more regular Hazard Assessments.

Once a hazard has been identified, it should be eliminated or properly controlled to protect the worker. Getting rid of the hazard or making sure that it can never reach the worker is the most effective way of protecting people, rather than relying only on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or training a worker to “be safe” [these kinds of solutions do nothing to deal with the actual hazard]. A useful tool is called the Hierarchy of Controls.

## 4 Workers can participate in Health and Safety in many ways:

- asking supervisors questions like, “What are the dangers of my job?”, “How can I do this job safely?”
- raising Health and Safety concerns, suggesting solutions
- being involved on the HSC, or as an HS Rep
- thinking about the most effective way to protect workers from hazards (using the Hierarchy of Controls)
- being involved in choosing the worker HSC members or HS Rep
- using the Right to Refuse dangerous work
- getting involved in union health and safety activities (in unionized workplaces)
- talking about health and safety with family, friends, co-workers and others
- contacting the Occupational Health and Safety Contact Centre with any questions

For more information on HSC’s and HS Reps, and to report dangerous work:

Contact the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Contact Centre.

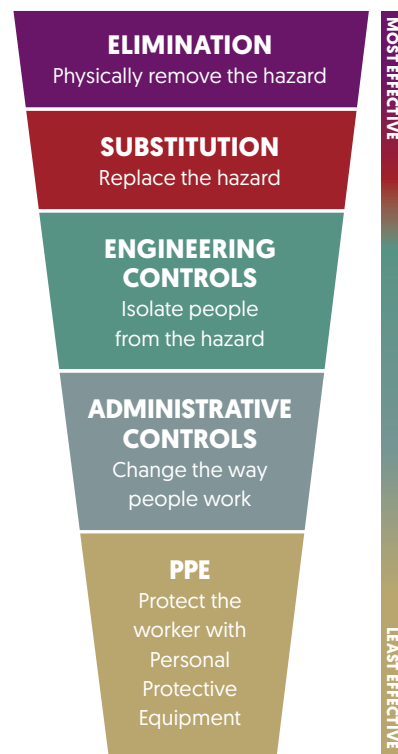
Tel. 780-415-8690 (Edmonton) or Toll Free 1-866-415-8690

You may phone the OHS Contact Centre at any time. Your call is confidential.

“An employer must involve affected workers in the hazard assessment and in the control or elimination of the hazards identified.”

Section 8(1) of the OHS Code

### Hierarchy of Controls



SOURCE: NIOSH



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