

SAFE Work and the Supervisor

Your Responsibilities

Workers rely on their supervisors the most for training and direction on safety and health. Supervisors need to know that most serious incidents happen during a workers' first year on the job. Supervisors must be competent and trained to address work-related hazards.

Supervisor Responsibilities

A supervisor is a person who:

- is in charge of a workplace
- has authority over a worker
- implements management's policies
- directs the work of others.

Supervisors must ensure that:

- everything is being done to protect the safety and health of workers
- workers follow safe work procedures and safety and health laws
- workers use all devices and wear all personal protective equipment as required by the employer and by law
- workers are told of the safety and health risks for the area in which they are working
- workers who move to another area or to a different activity must be given a safety and health orientation and/or training as required before they begin their new work.

Employer Responsibilities

- **Orientation** – Workers must be given the name and contact information of their supervisor to report unsafe conditions at the workplace. This information must be included in every new worker's safety and health orientation.
- **Training** – An employer must ensure that supervisors are given and/or have the proper education, experience and knowledge for their job. At times, supervisors are given their positions because they are good at what they do. This does not mean that supervisors know how to instruct workers and manage the day-to-day activities of others, nor does it mean they will effectively manage workplace safety and health issues. Employers must teach supervisors the specific skills and knowledge they need to be effective, so that supervisors can train other workers on safe work procedures for the tasks they supervise.
- **Strong safety and health policies** – Companies must have strong safety and health policies to ensure supervisors fully understand and put into practice company policies and procedures.

(see over)



- **Senior management commitment** – Supervisors need to rely on senior management for training and safety and health policies to be effective. Top level management must make safety and health visible within the organization to show that they are serious when it comes to the safety and health of workers.

Tips to think about when considering a supervisory position or when already a supervisor

- Supervisors have the right to ask employers for information and for a written safety and health orientation program that can be used with new workers to cover the basics in a consistent way.
- What supervisors need to know varies with different jobs or industries. Supervisors will train new workers more effectively if they ask questions about specific hazards and written safety procedures.
- Different people learn differently and a “one-size-fits-all” approach for all workers may not be effective.
- Supervisors should watch workers do their work to check that they understand their training. Most new workers are trying to “fit in” with new co-workers and they are only able to absorb so much information.
- Supervisors should encourage all workers to ask questions. New workers often try to impress their supervisors and do not want to appear as though they have not understood something.
- Supervisors should assign a mentor to a new worker: this is strongly recommended. This can help ease the process of “fitting in” and will allow workers to focus on the safety and health aspects of their new job. However, experienced and professional workers do not always follow the rules. They have often integrated bad practices into their day-to-day activities and are not always aware that they are doing them.
- Supervisors should ask for a copy of their written workplace safety and health program (which is required in workplaces with 20 or more workers) and familiarize themselves with the contents. This program symbolizes an employer’s commitment to safety and health.

Reference to legal requirements under workplace safety and health legislation:

- Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act, W210
 - Section 4.1, Duties of supervisors
- Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Regulation, M.R. 217/2006
 - Part 2, General Duties

Additional workplace safety and health information available at safemanitoba.com

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SAFE Work Manitoba contact information:

Winnipeg: 204-957-SAFE (7233)

Toll-Free: 1-855-957-SAFE (7233)

Publications and resources available at: safemanitoba.com

