



Labour and Workforce Development
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY DIVISION

Ventilation, Lighting, Sanitation and

Accommodation:

A guide to Part 4 of the

Occupational Safety General Regulations

May 2005

A GUIDE TO PART 4 - Ventilation, Lighting, Sanitation and Accommodation - of the OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY GENERAL REGULATIONS

The information contained in this publication is a guide only and should be read with the *Occupational Safety General Regulations* for specific requirements. The Regulations are available through our [web site](#) or copies may be requested by calling the Information Specialist at 902-424-5400 or toll-free 1-800-952-2687. For your reference and convenience the section of the Regulation has been included where possible.

The guide is divided into three parts:

Part 1 - Ventilation and Lighting - contains information on the ventilation and lighting requirements in a workplace.

Part 2 - Sanitation - contains information on drinking water, washroom and hand-cleaning requirements in a workplace.

Part 3 - Accommodation - contains information on eating area, change areas, emergency shower/eyewash stations, housekeeping, and fire protection and escape requirements in a workplace.

Part 1 - Ventilation (Section 15)

I work in an office and the air is stale who is responsible for fixing this?

The regulation requires the employer to provide for a fresh air supply into a workplace and the removal of stale air from the workplace.

What does “fresh air” mean?

Fresh air refers to outdoor air. Care should be taken in the placing of intake vents to avoid taking in air from areas where car, truck or other exhaust usually occurs.

What about air purity?

The regulation requires the air to be reasonably pure. There is no specific standard the regulation requires but it does name several as guides. These are:

CAN/CSA Z412-M89 “Office Ergonomics”.

CAN/CSA Z204- 94 “Guideline for Managing Indoor Air Quality in Office Buildings”.

ASHRAE 62-89 “Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality”.

I’m an employer who rents office space and have no control over the ventilation system, what can I do?

It is the responsibility of the employer to approach the building owner or their representative and raise the concern.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act places a responsibility on the owner of the premises to make sure it does not affect the health and safety of persons working in it. It is the person who is most in control that has the higher responsibility, in this case the building owner controls the ventilation system and is responsible for its proper working.

What about fumes, gasses or dust that are created as part of my job?

Some activities, such as welding, grinding or sanding, can create fumes, gases and dust that may cause injury when breathed in. Again, it is the responsibility of the employer to deal with this.

The employer has the option to choose what controls will work best for that activity and that workplace. It is possible the problem may be controlled at the source by using a different product - one that does not create fumes, gases or dust. If that is not possible, maybe a fan that removes the fumes to the outside; or finally, maybe a respirator or mask for the worker will be needed.

The best solution is to do the job in a way that does not cause the problem in the first place. Using respirators or other personal protective equipment should only happen when all other options are not possible or feasible.

What about exposure limits for various chemicals?

The American Conference of Government Industrial Hygienists produces the “Threshold Limit Values for Chemical Substances and Physical Agents & Biological Exposure Indices” (TLVs & BEIs) booklet.

The booklet provides guidelines or limits for exposure to a wide variety of chemicals. A proper assessment/testing of the workplace is needed to find out what substances are present and in what amounts. Testing should only be done by a competent person who can interpret the results and is familiar with the “tlvs”.

Lighting (Section 16)

How much light should I have at my workplace?

The regulation has no specific requirements regarding the type of lighting or the amount of it.

The employer is required to provide lighting that is sufficient for doing the work safely. The regulation names two standards that can be used as a guide:

ANSI/IES RP-7-1991 “American National Standard Practice for Industrial Lighting”
ANSI/IESNA RP-1-1993 “American National Standard Practice for Office Lighting”

If the workplace is rented, the building owner, depending on the rental agreement, is responsible for providing adequate lighting. It would be the responsibility of the employer to raise the issue with the building owner.

I have lots of light but what about the glare?

If glare is a hazard or is causing health problems (headaches for example) the employer is required to correct the problem.

What about when the lights fail?

The employer is responsible for providing adequate emergency lighting to allow employees leave to leave the workplace safely if required.

Again, if the employer is renting the workplace space it is the responsibility of the building owner to ensure there is adequate emergency lighting.

Part Two - Sanitation

Drinking water (Section 18)

As an employer what are my responsibilities concerning water?

An employer has to make sure employees have access to enough water suitable for drinking and hand cleaning. Employee access to water can be no further than 200 meters (about 650 feet) and the water must meet the standards in “Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality” 6th edition, 1996.

If there are outlets for drinking and non-drinking water the employer must clearly and appropriately label the outlets.

What if water from a pipe is not available?

If water from a pipe is not available the employer has to make sure it is kept in a covered container. If more than one employee will be using the water the container must have a faucet.

As an employer do I have to provide drinking cups?

Unless the water is available from a fountain (or any upward jet) the employer will provide individual sanitary cups (paper cups for example) where reasonable.

Toilets (Section 19)

What are the requirements for numbers of washrooms/toilets?

A minimum number of toilets for men and women will be made available depending on the maximum number of each normally at the workplace.

number of people	number of toilets
less than 9	1 toilet
more than 9 but not more than 24	2 toilets
more than 24 but not more than 49	3 toilets
more than 49 but not more than 74	4 toilets
more than 74 but not more than 100	5 toilets
more than 100	5 toilets and 1 extra for every 30 people over 100

Important Note: “people” refers to gender - so if there are 3 men and 5 women in your workplace you need 2 toilets - one for men the other for women.

I have 1 toilet for 7 employees - 5 men and 2 women - is this ok?

One toilet is acceptable for men and women if it is in a room that can be locked from the inside.

The table says I need 3 toilets, but all my employees are men, is this really necessary?

When all your employees are male the regulations allow the employer to have up to 2/3 of the required toilets as urinals instead. So in this case you can have 2 urinals and one toilet.

What about the condition of the toilet facility?

The regulation has a number of requirements the facility has to meet including: easy access, ventilation and lights, heated where reasonable, kept clean, sufficient paper supplies, a waste container, and maintained in working condition. If the facility is a portable unit it has to be emptied and serviced so it does not overflow.

The employer is also responsible to make sure the employee has a reasonable chance to use the facilities.

Hand-cleaning facilities (Section 20)

Does the workplace need a place to wash hands?

Where the workplace has running water (plumbing) the regulation say the employer has to provide a sink (or something similar) in a room with 1 toilet. Extra sinks would be needed where there are more urinals or toilets.

Where there is no running water but there are toilet facilities the employer will provide hand cleaning facilities or supplies where reasonable.

Where should I put the hand cleaning facility?

Hand cleaning facilities and supplies should be as close to the toilet as is practical.

What about hazardous substances?

The employer will provide an employee exposed to hazardous substance that could affect food the facilities, supplies and opportunity for cleaning their hands.

What other things does a hand cleaning facility need?

Where there is a wash basin an employer also has to provide hot and cold running water, soap or another appropriate cleanser, and enough sanitary hand drying supplies.

Part 3 - Accommodation

Eating areas (Section 21)

Do I need to provide an eating area for employees?

Depending on the workplace and the type of work being done an eating area may have to be provided by the employer.

If the work being done creates the chance food will be contaminated the employer will provide an enclosed eating area away from the work area. The separate eating area may be an actual lunch room but not always.

An employer can have an agreement to use a restaurant, cafeteria, food court, or similar facility if it is close enough to the workplace.

If the workplace is outdoors the employees should be protected from bad weather conditions.

If I provide an eating area what else do I have to do?

The eating area needs to be kept clean, have adequate light, heat and ventilation (where appropriate), have enough seats and tables for the number of people that would normally use the area, and have garbage containers.

What about a refrigerator?

The regulations do not require the employer to provide a refrigerator. Should the employer provide one, or the employees buy their own, the regulations do not allow anything hazardous (chemicals, samples etc) be stored in it.

Work clothes and change rooms (Section 22)

I work in a place where I have to change into a hazardous material suit, what do I do with my street clothes?

If the employer expects employees to wear work clothes to protect their health and safety, the employer has to provide a changing room. Also storage will be required to keep street clothes and work clothes from becoming wet or dirty.

Where work clothes may become contaminated and become a health risk to an employee the employer will also arrange to have them cleaned as needed.

What about workplace showers?

If it is feasible and there is a chance the employee's skin could come into contact with a hazardous substance the employer is to provide a shower.

If the employer does provide showers they have to figure out how many they will need. They will have to consider how many men and women normally work at the site that could be exposed to the hazard at any one time.

The regulations require a shower for each gender, if needed, where there are less than 10 employees. An additional shower is not needed until there is an additional unit of 10 men or 10 women.

number of people	number of showers
less than 10 - all men or all women	1
less than 10 - men and women	2 (1 for each gender)
15 - all men or all women	1
15 - men and women	2 (1 for each gender)
20 - all men or all women	2
20 - 15 men and 5 women	2 (1 for each gender)
25 - all men or all women	2
25 - men and women - 20 men and 5 women	3 (2 for the men - 20 is two units of 10 and 1 for the women)

Remember - it is a unit of 10 of each gender that triggers the additional shower.

If I provide showers what else is needed?

There also has to be enough water with a temperature between 35 C and 45 C that can be adjusted by hand, and enough soap and towels.

Emergency showers and eyewashes (Section 23)

When are emergency showers or eyewashes needed?

If an employee is at risk of being critically affected by caustic (something that burns or eats skin - lye for example), acidic or other hazardous substances the employer will provide as needed an emergency shower, emergency eyewash or some other type of equipment that can remove the matter.

What is meant by emergency shower?

ANSI Standard Z358.1 “Emergency Eyewash and Shower Equipment” defines an emergency shower as “ a unit that enables a user to have water cascading over the entire body”. Cascading water is understood to mean lots of water.

Different from the requirement for a shower, an emergency shower or eyewash needs to be located in the work area where contact could occur.

If an emergency shower or eye wash fountain is put in, the employer is responsible for its proper maintenance and operation as laid out by the manufacturer of the equipment.

Housekeeping (Section 24)

What about cleaning up the workplace?

The employer has to ensure waste material, debris, and garbage is regularly removed from the workplace and brought to a suitable disposal area. The removal should be regular enough to prevent any hazard from material collecting in the work area.

Note: depending on the worksite it may be the employee’s responsibility to keep their work area clean and free of debris. The employer’s responsibility would be to provide containers and areas for the collection of the debris and ensuring the employee does what is expected of them.

Fire Protection and escape (Section 25)

Who is responsible for fire protection?

Ensuring there is adequate fire protection is the responsibility of the employer.

What about vehicles?

This regulation does not require a fire extinguisher be installed in a vehicle. If the employer does install them they are responsible for the employee being trained in how to use one and aware of the hazards in fighting vehicle fires.

Does it matter what type of fire protection is used?

If the workplace is a project, the regulation requires the employer to consider *Part 8 of the Nova Scotia Building Code* under the **Building Code Act** to determine the type of protection needed.

If the workplace is in an occupied or enclosed structure the employer is to consider the *Fire Safety Act*.

Note: the same references are to be considered for determining the quantity of fire protection.

Should doors be locked?

Subject to the Fire Prevention Act, all doors necessary for a safe emergency exit from the premises are required to be open; unless every person in the workplace has a key to open all these doors.