

4.7 Workplace Health and Safety Promotion Policy

Policy Statement

The Province of Nova Scotia as an employer values the physical and psychological well-being of its employees and is committed to protect and promote employee health, safety and wellness through compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and regulations and the adoption of health and safety best practices.

The Province aspires to become a model organization for optimizing the physical and psychological health and safety of its employees. A positive work culture contributes to employee health and safety, job satisfaction and engagement, while enabling employees to contribute most effectively in their role of delivering high-quality public service to meet the needs of Nova Scotians.

The promotion of workplace health and safety focuses on the factors that are within the responsibility of the employer. There is a positive impact on employee well-being and organizational performance, which leads to employees feeling respected and empowered, when every reasonable effort is made to work collaboratively with employees to protect their physical and psychological health.

Definitions

DEPUTY HEAD

The deputy of the member of Executive Council presiding over a department and all others whom the Governor in Council from time to time designate as having Deputy Head status.

DEPARTMENT

Any government department, office, or public service entity listed in Category I of Appendix I-A, Corporate Administrative Policy Manual 100, Chapter 1, Policy 1.2 Corporate Administrative Policy Manuals Policy.

INTERNAL RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEM (IRS)

The underlying philosophy of the Nova Scotia *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and this policy. Its foundation is that everyone in the workplace shares responsibility for the health and safety of persons at or near the workplace. This philosophy requires everyone to pro-actively identify hazards, take on the primary role in resolving the hazard and, if it is beyond the individual's ability or authority, report the hazard to management for their action.

JOINT OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE (JOHSC)

A forum for bringing the IRS into practice. The committee consists of employee and management representatives who meet on a regular basis to address health and safety issues. They are required for all workplaces that have 20 or more employees, as per Section 29 of the *Occupational Health & Safety Act*.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (OHS) REPRESENTATIVE

An employee selected by their colleagues to represent them on matters pertaining to occupational health and safety, which is required for all workplaces that have 5 or more but less than 20 employees as per Section 33 of the *Occupational Health & Safety Act*.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (OHSMS)

A coordinated and systematic approach to the prevention of injury and illness in the workplace. It establishes a standard of care, through extensive consultation with all groups found in the organization. A successful OHSMS is interwoven in all aspects of the organization such as policy development, business planning, client service, operations, human resources, financial management and procurement and is based on the ideology of continuous improvement. It also includes the elements of an Occupational Health & Safety Program, as outlined in Section 28 of the *Occupational Health & Safety Act*.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

State of being free from illness or injury; a person's physical condition. Physical impacts of work factors include the conditions under which work is conducted (e.g., environment, equipment used) and the tasks being performed (e.g., training, experience).

PSYCHOLOGICAL (MENTAL) HEALTH

State of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and successfully, and can contribute to their community (World Health Organization adapted wording).

Psychological impacts of work factors include the way work is carried out (e.g., tasks, workload, and work methods) and the context in which work occurs (e.g., including relationships and interactions with managers and supervisors, coworkers and clients or customers).

Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Clarify that departments are expected to develop and maintain a departmental OHS policy and OHSMS specific to their departmental needs, which incorporates elements of physical and psychological hazard identification and injury and illness prevention;
- Support departments to comply with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and regulations;
- Encourage regular communication on the topic of health and safety within and among departments and the maintenance of an open dialogue aimed at promoting a positive health and safety culture and engagement for their employees; and
- Guide departments to integrate workplace health and safety promotion into their planning and decision-making activities.

Application

This policy applies to all civil servants whose terms and conditions are set out in accordance with the *Civil Service Act* and regulations, and other direct employees of the provincial government, including all bargaining unit employees.

Nothing in this policy, or a departmental policy subsequently created by this policy, restricts management's authority and responsibility to manage the performance of employees or take appropriate disciplinary action when necessary.

Policy Directives

All departments must comply with the following:

- As per section 27 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, in consultation with their departments' JOHSC(s) and/or OHS representatives, create and communicate a written health and safety policy. This policy should recognize their commitment to the protection of both physical and psychological health and safety. Departments may engage with the Public Service Commission for assistance with their OHS policy and program development.
- As per section 28 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, in consultation with their departments' JOHSCs and/or OHS representatives, develop, implement, manage and review their OHS program that is appropriately resourced and tailored to the activities and infrastructure of the department. The OHS program should be expanded to include strategic elements of an OHSMS, as per Workplace Health and Safety Promotion Guidelines.

- Embed workplace health and safety promotion in their planning activities by setting goals and targets for their department's OHSMS and including them in their operational and performance planning activities.
- Establish and maintain emergency response plans to prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies that have been identified as a risk for their department.

Policy Guidelines

This policy is supported by Workplace Health and Safety Promotion Guidelines, developed by the Public Service Commission, to assist departments with implementing this policy and their OHSMS. These guidelines are available on MyHR and will be reviewed and updated by the Public Service Commission as needed.

Accountability

The Province of Nova Scotia is the employer under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and regulations and is responsible for ensuring compliance with this legislation. Each department and deputy is responsible for workplace health and safety within their department. It is the Deputy Head who is accountable for the management of resources and for the implementation and administration of laws and policies applicable to government employees.

HEAD OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE/DEPUTY MINISTER TO THE PREMIER

The Head of the Public Service/Deputy Minister to the Premier is responsible to:

- Provide strategic direction and priorities to Deputy Heads on workplace health and safety promotion for the Nova Scotia public service; and
- Set and promote a culture of workplace health and safety promotion for the public service, including regular discussions at Deputy Head meetings.

DEPUTY HEADS

Deputy Heads are responsible to:

- Promote, maintain and annually review their departmental health and safety policy and OHSMS and take appropriate action as necessary;
- Ensure that responsibility and authority for the promotion of a safe and supportive work environment is outlined through their respective OHSMS;
- Allocate sufficient and appropriate financial, material and human resources to OHS activities;
- Ensure workplace health and safety promotion is a priority for their departmental decision-making processes by incorporating OHS goals into operational/business plans; and

- Hold executive staff and managers accountable for their OHS responsibilities and provide consistent support for the implementation of the departmental policy and OHSMS.

MANAGEMENT/SUPERVISORS

Management/Supervisors are responsible to:

- Ensure that workplace health and safety promotion is integrated into their daily activities by maintaining open communications with employees regarding all aspects of their work environment;
- Provide employees with preventative and protective measures to control physical and psychological hazards;
- Support employees in the implementation of the departmental policy and OHSMS by ensuring required training needs are met, and employees receive timely orientation;
- Support the efforts of the JOHSC by facilitating the participation of employees and responding to requests and recommendations;
- Assign work and supervision appropriate for the employee's knowledge, training and experience to perform the tasks safely;
- Hold their employees accountable for their responsibilities as defined by their OHSMS; and
- Respond to reports of health and safety incidents and escalate as necessary to ensure a timely and appropriate response.

EMPLOYEES

Employees are responsible to:

- Take personal responsibility for protection of their physical and psychological health and safety;
- Follow their departmental OHSMS and model the internal responsibility system by actively identifying hazards and taking appropriate action; and
- Report all workplace hazards, injuries and illnesses to their manager or supervisor in a timely manner.

DEPARTMENTAL JOINT OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE/ REPRESENTATIVES

Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees/Representatives are responsible to:

- Promote their OHSMS and foster a culture of workplace health and safety promotion; and
- Collaborate with the department in the creation and maintenance of their departmental OHS Policy and OHSMS.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

The Public Service Commission is responsible to:

- Provide a consultative support service to departments with respect to workplace health and safety which includes assisting and advising departments in the development and review of their respective OHSMS and health and safety policies;
- Lead corporate initiatives to support improvements in workplace health and safety promotion, resulting in a reduction of workplace injuries and illnesses;
- Coordinate the development and access to reference materials and share best practices regarding workplace health and safety to support departments;
- Coordinate training, and education for employees, managers and senior leadership on a wide variety of workplace health and safety promotion topics and accountabilities;
- Consult with internal/external stakeholders on corporate workplace health and safety promotion initiatives;
- Create an environment of collaboration and networking across government, through safety forums such as the OHS Community of Practice; and
- Explore solutions for the collection, analysis and distribution of corporate key performance indicators and workplace health and safety promotion statistics.

Monitoring

The Public Service Commission is responsible for implementation of this policy and ensuring this policy is up to date with workplace health and safety promotion practices.

References

- CAN/CSA-Z1003-13/BNQ 9700-803/2013 - Psychological health and safety in the workplace
- CAN/CSA-Z1000-14 - Occupational health and safety management
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and regulations
- Workplace Health and Safety Promotion Guidelines

Enquiries

All enquiries relating to the interpretation and application of this policy should be referred to:

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