

TheSignal



Ammonia & Ice Rink Refrigeration System Safety

Six recommendations to ensure the continued safe operation of refrigeration systems.

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Safety Branch Welcomes New Senior Executive Director, Scott Nauss

We are thrilled to announce that Scott Nauss will be returning to the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration as the Senior Executive Director of the Safety Branch.

Scott is returning to us from the Department of Agriculture where he held the position of the Executive Director with Agriculture Operations.

Scott's previous roles with the Safety Branch include: Occupational Health and Safety Officer (2008-2013), Regional Director (2013-2014), and Senior Director of Inspection and Compliance (2014-2021).

Scott brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to his new role and, most importantly, a career long passion for workplace safety. Please join us in welcoming Scott to his new role.

– Safety Branch



Safety Manual

for Businesses



Small Business Week

Start off Small Business Week (October 15-21, 2023) by downloading our Safety Manual for Businesses.

Learn more about establishing company policies, workplace responsibilities, hazard assessments, safe work practices, and more! Digital copies available in English or French.

[Safety Manual for Businesses](#)

[Manuel de sécurité pour les entreprises](#)

Ammonia & Ice Rink Refrigeration System Safety

People in Nova Scotia love their ice rinks, whether they're playing hockey, skating, curling, or spectating, spending time on or around the ice is a common pastime throughout the province, no matter the season.

The Technical Safety division within the Safety Branch wants to ensure the continued safe operation of recreation facilities' refrigeration systems, which make it possible to have these ice surfaces available year-round.

To help prevent serious injuries or incidents from occurring, the Safety Branch makes the following six recommendations:

1. Implement clear procedures that provide guidance and instructions to employees regarding the hazards associated with leaking chillers and required actions.
2. Ammonia systems should only be accessed by qualified personnel and employees should be made aware of all emergency kill switches, location of emergency ventilation switches, emergency exits, and how to secure a 'leak tight' mechanical room.
3. Develop and implement applicable emergency situational guidance, regarding ammonia systems, that can be taught and posted in readily accessible areas, both inside and outside the mechanical room.
4. Conduct an assessment and test of the ventilation systems to evaluate effective internal ventilation of the mechanical room and external discharge in a manner that minimizes risk of exposure.
5. Add brine testing, analysis and interpretation to the training and qualifications of refrigeration operators, refrigeration mechanics and power engineers.
6. Implement a refrigeration system maintenance program that addresses wear-out and/or end-of-life, resources, approvals, and accountability.



For more information about regulations, questions, or support, contact Safety Branch by calling 1-800-9LABOUR (1-800-952-2687) or email SafetyBranch@novascotia.ca.

– Jamie Swindells
Boilers & Pressure Equipment Inspector



Traffic Control Safety For The General Public

Summer may have wrapped up, but that doesn't mean that road work and traffic control season is over. In fact, in Nova Scotia we see traffic control all year round now, even in the dead of winter!

Employers doing work on or near a road that is a potential impediment to vehicle traffic or causes drivers to reduce their speed or alter their path of travel are required to have traffic control in place.

These workplaces are defined as Temporary Highway Workplaces in the [Workplace Health and Safety Regulations](#). Employers doing this type of work generally use and must follow the requirements of the [Nova Scotia Temporary Workplace Traffic Control Manual](#), which is an approved code of practice.

The safety of workers is equally important to the safety of the public travelling through a temporary workplace. It's important for the public, including motorists, cyclist, and pedestrians, to know how to safely travel through a work zone.

Some important safety rules to follow are: follow

the directions of traffic control persons, especially those using stop/slow paddles; obey the speed limit and watch for reduced speed limit signs (speed fines are doubled in work areas); don't go around barricades or areas closed off by cones or drums; stay alert and watch for hazards – road surfaces may be uneven, and are especially hazardous to motor cycles and cyclist; and most importantly – be patient – workers will get you through the work zone as quickly and as safely possible.

– Jeff Wight
Occupational Health & Safety Officer

[Workplace Health and Safety
Regulations](#)

Communicable Disease Prevention: Respiratory Illness Season

With summer having come to and end, it is time to look forward to another (and sometimes less pleasant) season. As life returns to the regular routine of work and school, and people begin to spend more time indoors as the weather starts to cool, it becomes the season for respiratory illness.

Respiratory infections occur year-round, but there is a significant increase in both fall and winter.

While each of the commonly circulating respiratory virus (common cold, influenza, Covid) are different, the layers of protection to control the spread of these virus and protect yourself and others from infection are similar.

Keep up to date vaccinations — Flu vaccines need to be renewed each year and are updated annually to protect against the strains currently circulating in the community. Likewise, with new COVID-19 strains on the rise, new vaccines have been developed to provide up to date to protection.

Stay at home when sick — Rest and recover until symptoms have passed.

Clean your hands often — Use soap and water or a alcohol based hand sanitizer.

Cover your coughs and sneezes — Use a tissue or the bend of your arm.

Wear a mask when appropriate — A well fitted mask will protect you and those around you at times of high respiratory activity in the community.

Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces and objects frequently.

— Christopher Sheppard
Occupational Hygienist

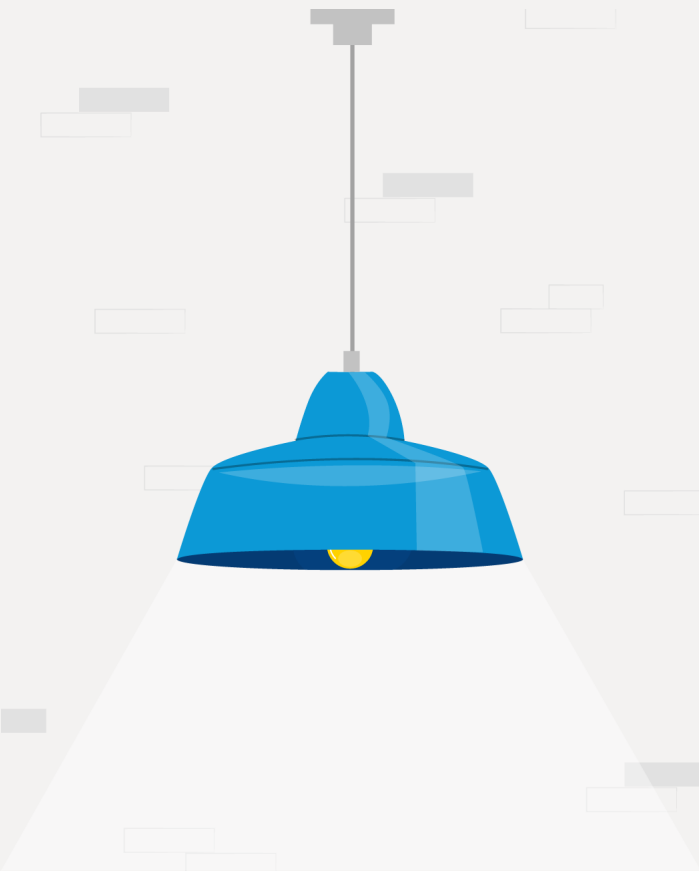
Health Canada — [Respiratory Infectious Diseases: How to Reduce the Spread with Personal Protective Measures](#)

Nova Scotia — [Colds and the Flu](#)



Is Poor Lighting Putting Your Workers' Safety at Risk?

Proper workplace lighting has a significant impact on worker safety. You may think of the most obvious reasons that proper lighting is important such as slips and falls in hallways and stairways, however, there are other areas of workplace safety that lighting plays an important role.



First, proper lighting makes all tasks easier and safer to complete. If light levels are too high or too low, it impairs your workers' ability to complete tasks safely and efficiently.

Here are some affects of poor lighting in the workplaces and tips to correct them:

Eye Strain — If an area is poorly lit, our eyes have to work harder to see the tasks required causing eye strain. On the other hand, if the area is over-lit or has a flickering light, this may cause headaches and migraines.

Safety Tip: Make sure that each work unit makes

lighting a priority. If your workplace has access to natural light, make efforts to ensure that all workers have access to it. Work with your Workplace Safety Committees to identify areas to improve lighting.

Poor Posture — In addition to headaches, your workers may also experience neck, back and shoulder pain if they have to bend over or strain to see items as a result of poor lighting. Your workers may have to sit in uncomfortable or awkward positions causing strain injuries.

Safety Tip: Ensure proper lighting by supplementing with additional fixtures like lamps. Remove shadows and dark spots with blinds to help eliminate the need to move your neck or body posture to eliminate the light glare.

Mental Well-Being — There are many health-related hazards of poor lighting. Poor lighting can have a negative effect on our mental health. Working in gloomy or low light workspaces for a prolonged period of time can make your workers feel, tired, stressed, and unproductive. Over time, that may affect workers safety performance and overall well being.

Safety Tip: Your Workplace Safety Committee can perform a lighting risk assessment that can assist in supporting the installation of proper lighting, which will ultimately improve your workers overall mental health.

CCOHS — [Lighting](#)

What Is Carbon Monoxide & Why Is It Dangerous?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a gas that is sometimes referred to as “the silent killer” because it's not only poisonous, it's also colourless, tasteless, and odourless. Unless you have a working CO alarm installed, it's incredibly hard to detect.

CO is produced by burning fuels such as propane, natural gas, oil, wood, charcoal, alcohol, kerosene, or gasoline — all of which are commonly used in your home, boat, or business.

Exposure to high concentrations of CO can interfere with the body's ability to absorb oxygen, which can lead to serious illness, severe side effects, or death.

It's essential to recognize the early symptoms of CO poisoning and take them seriously, especially if multiple people in the same household or environment are experiencing similar symptoms:

- Headaches
- Confusion
- Vomiting
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Chest pains



As CO builds up in the bloodstream, symptoms can evolve and magnify:

- Increased confusion and drowsiness
- Fast breathing, fast heartbeat, or increased chest pain
- Vision problems
- Seizures

If you suspect CO poisoning, it's crucial to take immediate action:

- Turn your appliances off
- Get everyone outside of the building, including pets
- Call 911 or your local emergency number
- Seek medical attention to treat symptoms

– Paul Fowler
Chief Fuel Safety Inspector

[Carbon Monoxide Exposure](#)

When an accident or illness happens in the workplace, it's important to have first aid ready to help before professional medical attention can be provided. Having a properly stocked first aid kit can play a crucial role when seconds matter. Learn more: [Workplace First Aid Guide for Employers](#) | [\(French\)](#)

Seasonal Hazards

A lot of people in Nova Scotia would pick fall as their favorite season. All of the beautiful colours and the cooler weather make being outside a true pleasure. However, it is important to be conscience of seasonal hazards.

Cooler air, falling leaves, stormy weather, shorter days, and flu season increase exposure to hazards that can cause accidents, injuries, and illnesses.

Slips, trips, and falls can be prevented when walkways and building entrances are cleared of leaves, water, ice, and snow. Use warning signs where trip hazards exist or cannot be removed. Encourage employees to wear non-slip footwear and take their time when leaving their vehicles or carrying objects.

Falls from ladders often occur when reaching, carrying objects, cleaning roofs and gutters, hanging decorations, and when outdoor conditions are wet or icy. Ensure you are using the right ladder for the job.

Prepare for hazardous fall and winter driving conditions. Service your vehicle and ensure you top up all of the fluids. Cars should contain a first aid/emergency kit and when the seasonal temperature drops below 7 degrees, it's time to change to winter tires.

To help prevent the spread of contagious illnesses like the flu, RSV, and Covid, encourage employees to practice what they learned during the



pandemic. Social distancing, frequently washing hands, cover up when coughing and sneezing, and clean communal surfaces. Pay attention to heating, cooling and ventilation systems to ensure good indoor air quality can also help reduce the spread of disease.

Stay safe and enjoy the fall colours.

Nova SAFE

[Safety Information Made Simple](#)



Health & Safety in Noisy Workplaces

Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) rates can vary significantly depending on various factors, including the industry, the level of noise exposure, the region, and the effectiveness of workplace health and safety measures. It's important to note that while NIHL is a preventable occupational health issue, it still remains a concern in many industries where noise exposure is common.

Ensuring health and safety in noisy workplaces is essential to protect workers from hearing damage and other associated health risks. Employers need to assess workplaces where there is a risk of exposure to loud noise or other hazardous sounds. In situations where noise is above safe limits adequate controls are needed to protect workers.

Here are some key issues that need to be considered where you work:

Hazard Assessment – Identify sources of noise or the nature of the hazard that could potentially damage hearing. This could include machinery

noise, power tools, explosions, or any other loud sounds.

Noise Level – The Workplace Health and Safety regulations adopt exposure limits (Threshold Limit Values) established by the American Conference of Government Industrial Hygienists. The maximum allowable level of noise over an 8-hour period is 85 decibels (A-weighted). Noise limits change depending on how many hours people are exposed, which needs to be evaluated based on the work environment.

[Continued >](#)

Types of Hearing Protection – Part 3 of the Occupational Safety General Regulations outline the requirements for personal protective equipment (PPE). Where noise levels exceed the exposure limit then adequate PPE needs to be implemented. Hearing protectors reduce the noise exposure level and the risk of hearing loss when worn correctly. There are different types of hearing protection devices, such as earplugs and earmuffs. Hearing protectors need to be selected based on the level and frequency of noise and how they fit. Not all are created equal, and it's recommended to consult with a qualified professional to assist with selecting the right devices.

Training and Education – Educate employees about the risks of exposure to noise, the importance of hearing protection, proper use and maintenance, and the signs of hearing damage. Regular training can raise awareness and encourage safe practices.

Other Control Strategies – Engineering and administrative controls are additional methods of reducing the risk of overexposure to noise. These

methods are effective when implemented correctly, however in many situations, they are not practicable. Ideally a combination of engineering and administrative controls and PPE are the best strategy given the dynamic of workplace environments.

These considerations can help support an effective hearing conservation program. Remember that protecting employees from noise-related hazards is not only a legal requirement but also crucial for their long-term health and well-being. Regular monitoring, training, and continuous improvement efforts are essential to maintain health and safety in noisy workplaces.

– Don Hartt
Manager, Technical Services

[Personal Protective Equipment](#)

[Occupational Safety General Regulations](#)

Patio Heaters

Patio heaters help provide extra comfort and extend our time spent outdoors on cooler Fall days. Just remember that they need to be used safely to avoid dangerous hazards such as fire and carbon monoxide poisoning from occurring.

Learn more about the DO'S and DON'TS of using patio heaters:
[Outdoor Patio Heater Safety Bulletin](#)



Business Support Series – Workplace Safety Webinars

Beginning in October, Safety Advisors with the Safety Branch of the Department of Labour Skills and Immigration will be delivering a series of webinars in partnership with the Halifax Chamber of Commerce.

These information sessions are designed to engage with business owners and explain in clear language what business owners need to know about workplace health and safety, how to develop a safety framework that reflects the nature of their business and leveraging health and safety as a recruitment and retention tool. If you or your business could benefit from this information, please visit the [Halifax Chamber of Commerce Events](#) page.

As part of their mandate to promote workplace safety awareness across Nova Scotia, Safety Advisors are available to speak at businesses, industry meetings, AGMs and sector initiatives. The Safety Advisors will discuss the need for health and safety policies and programs, hazard awareness, the impact of health and safety on your business, and specific topics such as violence in the workplace. These sessions

conclude with an overview of the tools and free resources available to business operators and their staff.

To book an information session with our Safety Advisors, please contact the Safety Branch at SafetyBranch@novascotia.ca or call 1-800-9LABOUR (1-800-952-2687).

– Sterling Kendall
Safety Advisor



Webinar #1 – October 13, 2023 – An introduction to Nova Scotia's Occupational Health and Safety laws and how they impact small businesses.

An overview of the laws and regulations on occupational health and safety in Nova Scotia that apply to businesses.

A review of the health and safety requirements and responsibilities for businesses.

A review of free OHS resources, online training, and information available to businesses operators and their employees.

[Continued >](#)

Webinar #2 – November 23, 2023 – Creating a Health and Safety framework that reflects your business.

Examining the requirements and content of a safety policy and a safety program.

An overview of the purpose and function of the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or Safety Representative.

A review of free OHS resources, online training, and information available to businesses operators and their employees.

Webinar #3 – December 13, 2023 – Looking to the future. Using Health and Safety to promote recruitment and retention.

The benefits for businesses of a having a safety framework. A look at the direct and indirect costs of accidents.

Discussing the impact of safety on recruitment and retention.

A review of free OHS resources, online training, and information available to businesses operators and their employees.



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Providing your feedback will help us continually improve our newsletter and include more of the content you'd like to see.

[Feedback Survey](#)

Safety Branch by the Numbers

Reporting period: Jan 1, 2023 to Sep 30, 2023

2972

Total Inquiries

2088 Occupational Health and Safety

884 Technical Safety

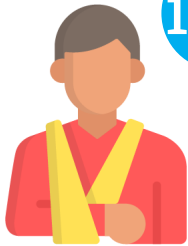
2545

Workplace Inspections

30

Opened OHS Investigations

1015



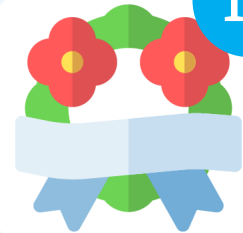
Serious Injuries

93



Serious Incidents

14



Workplace Fatalities

5 Acute / 9 Chronic

1570

Orders Issued

85

Administrative Penalties

2

Summary Offence Tickets

10

Charges Laid

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for workplace and public
space safety issues,
concerns and regulations.

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- ✓ Helpful definitions
- ✓ Direct links to legislation
- ✓ Additional resources

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