

The Signal



Stronger Workplaces For Nova Scotia Act

Transformative changes to improve worker health, safety, and job security across the province.

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Stronger Workplaces for Nova Scotia Act

Beginning in early 2023, the former Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration (LSI), recognized the need to explore options and make improvements to the workers' compensation system in Nova Scotia. The focus was on addressing bullying and harassment in the workplace, as well as ensuring job security for workers facing serious illnesses.

Formation of the Workers' Compensation Review Committee – In May 2023, the Minister established the Workers' Compensation Review Committee, which included an independent Chair and equal representation from employers and employees. This committee was primarily tasked with identifying and prioritizing issues within the workers' compensation system. With support from LSI and the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia (WCB Nova Scotia), the committee reviewed extensive information, research, and data.

Public Engagement: Workers' Compensation System Review – In November and December 2023, extensive public engagements were held across the province, involving over 1,000 Nova Scotians. These sessions allowed individuals to share their experiences with the workers' compensation system. The committee also

conducted technical briefings, surveyed WCB Nova Scotia employees, and reviewed current legislation, regulations, and data from other jurisdictions. This comprehensive input culminated in a final report presented to the Minister on July 9, 2024, and shared publicly on August 30, 2024.

Public Engagement: Preventing Workplace Harassment – Concurrently, LSI conducted engagements on preventing harassment in the workplace. Over 600 Nova Scotians participated, highlighting the need for clear rules and government guidance related to workplace harassment. These insights informed policy options to address harassment under Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) regulations.

[Continued >](#)

Community Engagement on Sick Leave –

Additionally, LSI engaged approximately 180 community partners to understand prevalent serious illnesses and recovery times. This information guided improvements to sick leave provisions under the Labour Standards Code.

Key Amendments in the Stronger Workplaces for Nova Scotia Act –

The [Stronger Workplaces for Nova Scotia Act](#), passed in the Fall 2024 sitting of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly, includes amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and the Labour Standards Code. Key changes include:

Workers' Compensation Act:

- Regular reviews of the workers' compensation system every five years.
- Inclusion of a purpose to help guide partner organizations in their roles.
- Mandated cooperation in the return-to-work process, with penalties for non-compliance.
- 100% financial recovery of OHS costs from the WCB Accident Fund.

Occupational Health and Safety Act:

- First steps of adding psychological health

and safety into legislation.

- Requirement for employers to establish and implement a harassment prevention policy.
- Changing the term “discriminatory action” to the term “reprisal”.
- Authority for government to create future regulations on workplace harassment.

Labour Standards Code:

- Addition of five unpaid sick leave days for general illness, supplementing the existing three unpaid days.
- Introduction of a 27-week unpaid leave for serious injury or illness, providing job protection and aligning with federal Employment Insurance sickness benefits.

A Commitment to Ongoing Improvement – The Stronger Workplaces for Nova Scotia Act represents a transformative step in supporting worker health and well-being and ensuring job security. These amendments are just the beginning, as the government continues to explore changes that will benefit the physical and psychological health and safety of all Nova Scotians.



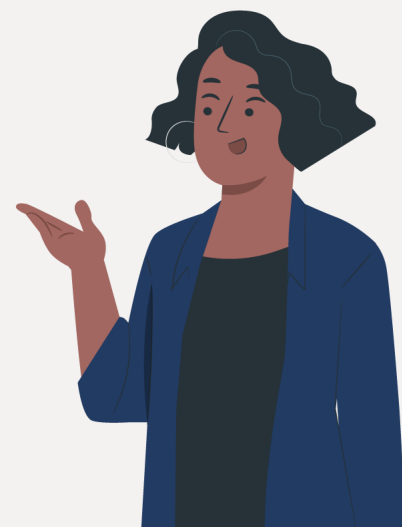
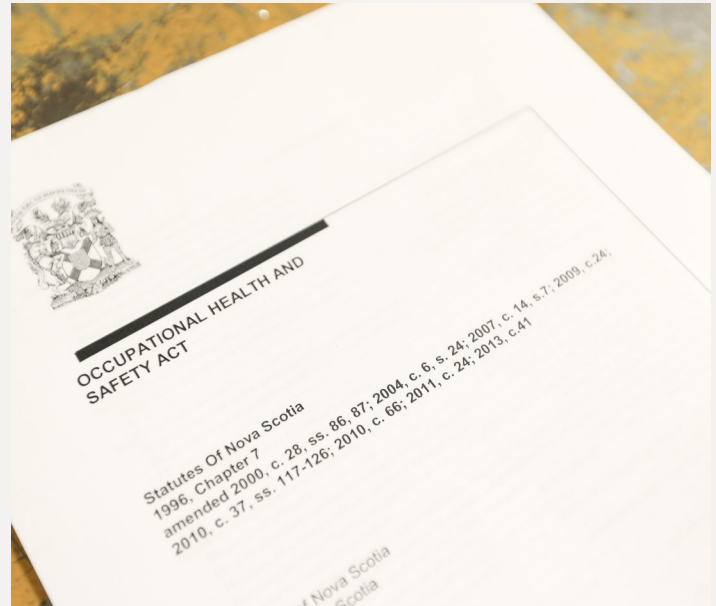
Occupational Health & Safety Act – Replacing The Term "Discriminatory Action" With "Reprisal"

The recent amendments to Sections 45 and 46 of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act have replaced the term "discriminatory action" with "reprisal." This change aims to clarify the terminology, as "discriminatory action" is often confused with "discrimination," especially in the human rights context.

The term "reprisal" is more appropriate in the context of the OHS Act and Section 45, which prohibits employers from retaliating against employees who comply with or seek the enforcement of the Act. This clarification ensures that employees understand their protections against retaliation more clearly.

Although the term has been updated to "reprisal," the definition remains unchanged: "An action that adversely affects an employee with respect to terms or conditions of employment or any opportunity for employment or promotion and includes dismissal, layoff, suspension, demotion, transfer of job or location, change in hours of work, coercion, intimidation, imposition of any discipline, reprimand or other penalty including reduction in wages, salary or other benefits, or the discontinuation or elimination of the job of the employee."

These changes took effect when Bill No. 464, the [Stronger Workplaces for Nova Scotia Act](#), received Royal Assent on September 20, 2024.



[Occupational Health & Safety Act](#)

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Safety Information Made Simple



Nova **SAFE**

NovaScotia.ca/NovaSAFE

Nova SAFE – Fall 2024 Update

Our Fall 2024 update to Nova SAFE included the release of four new safety topics, as well as significant updates to two existing topics.

NEW

Heat Stress and Cold Stress

Noise

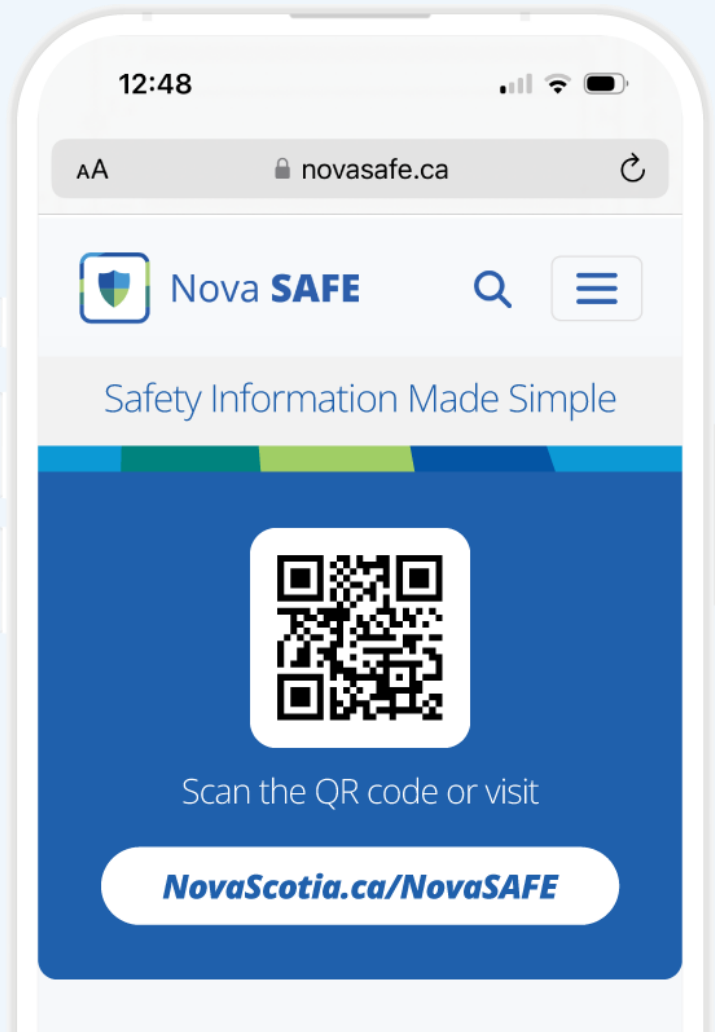
Respiratory Protection

WHMIS

UPDATED

Amusement Devices

Elevators and Lifts



Updated WHMIS Course

The free online WHMIS course on SkillsOnlineNS has been updated. This one-hour course introduces the key elements of WHMIS, providing an easy way for self-employed individuals and others unfamiliar with WHMIS to meet their general education requirement: [WHMIS \(SkillsOnlineNS\)](#)



Gradual Onset Psychological Injury (GPI)

The Department of Labour, Skills, and Immigration (LSI) continues to work with our partners at the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia (WCB Nova Scotia) to develop guidance and better supports for workplaces around Psychological Health and Safety.

As part of this ongoing effort, we are pleased to highlight the recent launch of the [Psychological Health and Safety Resources Centre](#) by WCB Nova Scotia. This new site is specifically designed to provide workplaces with essential resources, key principles, and best practices for fostering Psychological Health and Safety. The content is based on the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (CSA Z1003) and additional information from WorkSafe Saskatchewan.

The information found in the Resource Centre is separated into three different sections:

Workplace Psychological Health and Safety – This section takes a closer look at the National Standard for Psychological Safety at Work and the 13 psychosocial factors that support positive mental health. Creating a psychologically safe workplace is vital for preventing Gradual Onset Psychological Injury (GPI).

Psychologically Safe Leadership – This section outlines the five domains that comprise psychologically safe leadership, providing valuable insights and action plans for leaders to support their teams effectively.

Tools and Resources – This section offers a range of practical solutions, including new assessment tools and discounted educational resources, designed to support ongoing mental health initiatives in the workplace.

We all have an important role to play when it comes to creating psychologically safe and healthy workplaces.

[Continued >](#)

What is Gradual Onset Psychological Injury?

Gradual Onset Psychological Injury (GPI) is a work-related psychological injury that develops over time due to repeated stressors, often from ongoing bullying or harassment. It's important to recognize when workplace stress can become harmful. [Learn more >](#)

Treatment, Return to Work, and Recovery

Employers play a key role in supporting workers with Gradual Onset Psychological Injury (GPI) during their recovery. By building trust, staying connected, and offering accommodations, you can help ensure a safe and timely return to work. [Learn more >](#)

Preventing Psychological Injury

Creating a psychologically safe workplace is vital for preventing Gradual Onset Psychological Injury (GPI). Explore the 13 factors that contribute to psychological health and discover practical resources to apply at your workplace. [Learn more >](#)

WCB Nova Scotia Resources:

- [Gradual Onset Psychological Injury](#)
- [Psychological Health and Safety Resource Centre](#)



Ice Rink Refrigeration System Safety

Ice rink refrigeration system safety is important for everyone, both on and off the ice. Facility employees should be aware of hazards, follow standard operating procedures, and know how to respond in emergencies. Learn more: [Ice Rink Refrigeration System Safety \(Safety Bulletin\)](#)

AWARE-NS – Nova Scotia Health & Community Services Safety Association

AWARE-NS is the Nova Scotia Health and Community Services Safety Association. Our Vision “Safe and healthy people; safe and healthy workplaces” guides our Mission to “advance workplace health and safety in health and community services sectors in Nova Scotia via collaboration, leadership, knowledge exchange, and innovation”.

Our funders, the Departments of Seniors and Long-Term Care (SLTC) and Community Services (DCS) support our Mission. AWARE-NS works with organizations in the Long-Term Care (LTC), Home Care (HC), and Disability Support Program (DSP) sectors to achieve their safety goals. Between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, **12,266** certificates were issued for our 36 on-line courses; **335** organizations participated in AWARE-NS Programs; and **1960** individuals participated in our programs.

AWARE-NS’s Safe Handling and Mobility (SHM) and Lifting and Moving Safely (LAMS) Programs were developed in response to the prevalence of Musculoskeletal Injuries (MSI) in healthcare settings. Also supporting MSI prevention, the Safety Equipment Fund, administered by AWARE-NS, provided safety equipment to the LTC sector.

Our team performs Workplace Violence Prevention Risk Assessments and Safety Audits, to determine the overall performance of an organization’s health and safety system at a given point in time. A Workplace Violence Risk Assessment is a legislative requirement that must be conducted every 5 years. AWARE-NS works with organizations in facilitating the workplace violence risk assessment process and developing a workplace violence prevention plan based on its outcome. Our risk assessment process considers the physical premises and the organization’s policies and procedures, assigning ratings of probability and severity of violence in 25 hazard categories in the work setting. The job tasks most likely to experience workplace



violence are personal care provision, medication administration, and working alone / overnight. An increasing trend in the workplace is bullying and harassment incidents.

These programs are focused on worker safety and are often requested before an LSI inspection. Also, LSI officers might suggest organizations contact AWARE-NS for support of their post inspection goals. Often, other AWARE-NS programs are recommended, mainly Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee Training and Workplace Violence Prevention Workshops. Related is the Safety Management System (SMS) Development Program, another program offered by AWARE-NS, which helps organizations proactively identify and control hazards.

[Continued >](#)

A workplace safety culture is difficult to achieve without an effective SMS. The 13 elements of the SMS include program content, tools, templates, and forms that support the needs of the Nova Scotia Health and Community Services sectors.

AWARE-NS is in receipt of an LSI OHS Education Fund Grant. These funds supported a pilot in which AWARE-NS reviewed / audited 11 DSP orgs in preparation for their LSI safety inspection. Work continues with the DSP, LTC, and HC sectors. In addition, training sessions were

provided to LSI Officers regarding DSP sector characteristics. We are looking forward to continuing this collaborative work with LSI!

– Dawn Pickering
Executive Director, AWARE-NS



Safety Tips For Portable Space Heaters

As the weather cools down, many people turn to portable space heaters for extra warmth. While these heaters can provide comfort, they also come with safety concerns. Here are some important tips to consider when using a portable space heater:

Last Resort: The use of supplemental portable electric heaters should be considered a last resort for heating.

Heater Type: Avoid using heaters with moving parts (fans) or visible heating elements. Instead, opt for low-wattage, radiant plug-in heaters designed for safe use.

Proper Placement: Ensure heaters are placed at least three feet away from anything that can burn, including papers, clothing, and rugs. Keep heaters out of high-traffic areas and doorways to prevent tripping hazards.

Direct Plug-In: Always plug space heaters directly into a wall outlet. Avoid using extension cords or power strips, as they can overheat and pose a fire risk. Never plug other electrical devices into the same outlet as the heater.

Level Surfaces: Place heaters on level, flat

surfaces. Do not position heaters on cabinets, tables, furniture, or carpets, as these can overheat and cause fires.

Certification: Check that your space heater is certified by a recognized standard, such as the Canadian Standards Association (CSA).

Read Instructions: Always read the manufacturer's instructions and warning labels carefully before using any space heater.

Inspect Regularly: Before each use, inspect heaters for cracked or broken plugs, loose connections, or any signs of wear. If the heater is damaged, do not use it.

Unplug When Not in Use: Always unplug and safely store the heater when it is not in use to prevent accidental activation.

Fuel Safety & Supporting Nova Scotia's Path To Net-Zero By 2050 – Hydrogen Blends

In July, the Technical Safety Division of the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (LSI), Safety Branch issued a [Safety Notice](#) confirming the regulatory compliance of a local natural gas utility's plan to blend up to 5% hydrogen into the existing Halifax area natural gas networks in 2026.

Technical Safety's verification of compliance with applicable legislation, regulations and safety standards will continue for the design, build, and operational phases of this project.

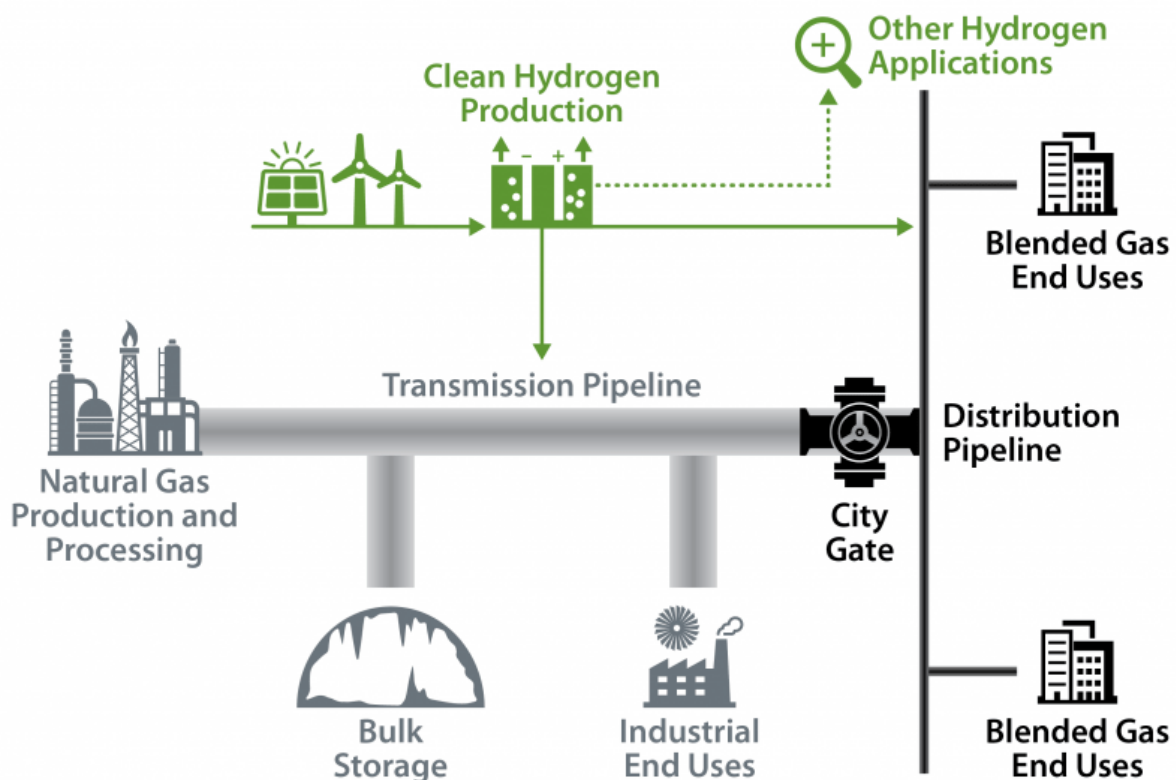
This initiative supports Nova Scotia's climate change goals as outlined in the [Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act](#). The Act targets a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 53% below 2005 levels by 2030, aiming for net-zero by 2050.

The Province's [Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth](#) and the [Green Hydrogen Action Plan](#) highlight the essential role green hydrogen will

play in our future energy system. This step demonstrates Nova Scotia's commitment to sustainable energy solutions and paves the way for innovative practices in energy production.

Anyone with questions or concerns regarding hydrogen blending in the existing natural gas networks should contact their natural gas provider.

Safety Notice: [Hydrogen Blends – Regulatory Scope](#)



Safety Awareness – Lock-Out Tag-Out (LOTO)

Lock-Out Tag-Out (LOTO), regulated under the [Occupational Health and Safety \(OHS\) Act](#) and [Occupational Safety General Regulations \(OSGR\)](#), is essential where work involves potential hazards if machinery or equipment becomes energized. This includes installation, maintenance, and repairs. Lock-out ensures the system is in a safe zero-energy state before any work is performed.

Key Components of LOTO Procedures:

- **Zero-Energy State:** Lock-out ensures all hazardous energy sources are isolated and dissipated, securing each lock-out location with a device and tag, and verifying a zero-energy state.
- **Written Procedures:** Employers must provide detailed written procedures for achieving and maintaining a zero-energy state, locking out equipment, and notifying affected persons.
- **Compliance:** Employers are responsible for ensuring equipment is properly equipped with safety devices and employees are trained and competent in lock-out procedures.
- **Verification:** A competent person must verify that lock-out was performed correctly and that the system is in a zero-energy state before work begins.

Risks of Non-Compliance – Failing to adhere to lock-out and tag-out requirements can lead to severe consequences, including injury or death, property damage, financial impacts from downtime or loss of business, and legal consequences under the OHS Act and the Criminal Code.

LOTO Procedures in Fuel Safety – The [Fuel Safety Regulations](#) address lock-out procedures for [tagging gas installations](#). Unsafe equipment can be locked out through random inspections, service calls, or routine scheduled inspections. In cases where equipment is not in imminent

danger but not code compliant, inspectors will provide written reports to property owners, outlining concerns and timelines for compliance.

Fuel Safety Inspections may issue Yellow/Warning tags for equipment or property owners with a history of maintenance concerns. These tags require issues to be resolved within 30 days, or the supplier must post a Red tag and lock out the gas supply.

In cases of imminent danger, Fuel Safety Inspectors will lock out the equipment or gas supply with a Red/Lock-out tag until the deficiency is corrected. Once resolved and conditions meet the standards of Fuel Safety Inspectors, the tags are removed.

Nova SAFE: [Lock-out](#)



Labour, Skills and Immigration
Fuel Safety Division

LOCK-OUT TAG

The appliance and/or equipment is not compliant and has been removed from service. The appliance and/or equipment cannot be operated until the following corrections have been made as per Section 35 of the Fuel Safety Regulations.

Safety Awareness – Seasonal Hazards

Slips, Trips and Falls

Slips, trips, and falls are among the most common workplace accidents, but they can be prevented! Always ensure walkways are clear, surfaces are dry, and appropriate footwear is worn. Learn more: [Slips, Trips and Falls \(Work Safe For Life\)](#)



Communicable Disease

Respiratory infections occur year-round, but there is a significant increase in the Fall and Winter seasons. While circulating viruses may vary, the layers of protection to control their spread remain similar. Learn more: [Preventing Respiratory Infectious Diseases \(Health Canada\)](#)



Carbon Monoxide

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is sometimes referred to as “the silent killer” because it’s not only poisonous, but also colourless, tasteless, and odourless. Unless you have a working CO alarm installed, it’s incredibly hard to detect. Learn more: [Carbon Monoxide \(Health Canada\)](#)



Escalator Safety

Did you know: Accidents on escalators are the most frequently reported incidents on elevating equipment in Nova Scotia, often requiring emergency medical assistance. Injuries are typically highest among seniors and children. Learn more: [Escalator Safety \(Safety Bulletin\)](#)

Staying Safe On The Slopes

Winter is here, and Nova Scotia's ski season is in full swing! Our Technical Safety team has been busy conducting routine inspections on chair lifts, T-bars, magic carpets, and gondolas throughout the province to ensure all equipment meets safety standards. While we work hard behind the scenes, your actions can also make a big difference in keeping our passenger ropeways and conveyors safe and enjoyable for everyone.

Here are some helpful safety tips to keep in mind while spending time on the mountain:

- **Chair Lifts:** Always lower the restraint bar once seated, informing other riders before doing so. Sit back in your seat and avoid bouncing or swinging during the ride. Only raise the bar when you see the designated "raise the bar" sign.
- **T-Bars:** Stay standing, keep loose items secure, and remain in the track until you reach the unloading area.
- **General Safety:** Follow the operator's instructions at all times, secure loose items like gloves and cell phones, and make sure to clear the unloading area promptly to prevent collisions.



A safe ski experience starts with everyone playing their part. For more safety tips, visit [skisafety.ca](https://www.skisafety.ca).

We'd love to hear from you. — Providing your feedback will help us make continuous improvements to our publications and include more of the content you'd like to see.

The **Signal**

[The Signal Feedback Survey](#)

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Make a **positive & lasting** impact in workplace safety with resources available through the OHS Education Trust Fund.



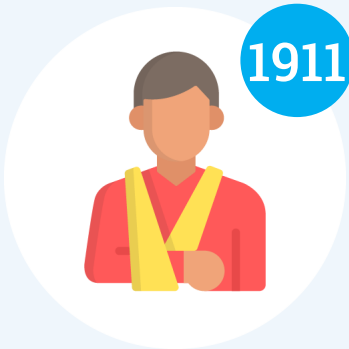
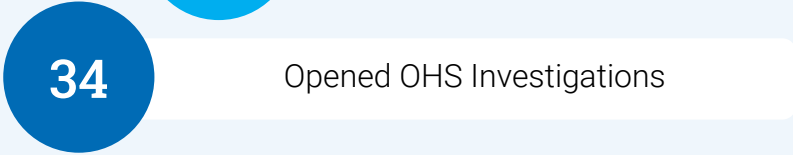
The Signal is Changing

Starting in Spring 2025!

We're excited to announce that The Signal will transition to a new quarterly report format starting in Spring 2025. This update will enable us to provide data-focused updates, spotlight important initiatives, and highlight emerging trends. Each quarterly report will contribute to a comprehensive annual summary, capturing the highlights of the entire year.

Safety Branch by the Numbers

Reporting period: Jan 1, 2024 to Dec 31, 2024



Serious Injuries



Serious Incidents



Workplace Fatalities

6 Acute / 6 Chronic



Orders Issued



Administrative Penalties



Summary Offence Tickets



Charges Laid

MAKE THE RIGHT CALL.

Call **1-800-9LABOUR** for workplace and public space safety issues, concerns and regulations.



Safety Information Made Simple

- ✓ Plain language summaries
- ✓ Helpful definitions
- ✓ Direct links to legislation
- ✓ Additional resources

Scan the QR code or visit

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