

JOINT HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

QUICK REFERENCE CARD

JOINT HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE (JHSC)

A **JHSC** is a primary component of any employer's Occupational Health and Safety Management system. It helps to address one of the basic rights of workers, the right to participate in workplace health and safety. A JHSC has been a **legal requirement** for all BC workplaces with 20 or more workers since 1977.

INTERNAL RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEM

The Internal Responsibility System (IRS) is simply the process of every individual in an organization taking some responsibility for **implementing, maintaining** and **improving** workplace health and safety. Workers, supervisors, managers, CEO, members of the Board of Directors; all these individuals have legal responsibilities for health and safety in the workplace.

JHSC PROGRAM

Consists of the following:

- A documented assessment
- Process to appoint management representatives
- Selection of two co-chairs
- Develop documented Terms of Reference
- Identification of JHSC activities
- JHSC recommendations to the employer
- Orientation, training and annual educational leave

JHSC LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The Workers Compensation Act (WCA) specifies the legal requirements that apply to the **appointment** and **operation** of a Joint Health and Safety Committee or a Worker Health and Safety Representative.

SELECTION OF MEMBERS

At a minimum a committee must be made up of **four** people, with at least **50%** of the members selected from among those employees who do **not** exercise any management duties.

ALTERNATES

Alternates are backup individuals that will **represent** committee representatives who are unable to attend meetings or fulfill other duties due to work or other commitments.

IDENTIFY HAZARDS

The primary function of the JHSC is to **identify** existing or potential hazards in the workplace. It is important that both health and safety hazards are considered in the process.

WORKER CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

If a worker has a concern or complaint related to workplace health or safety they must initially report the circumstances to their **supervisor** and allow the supervisor time to correct the issue. However, if the supervisor does not address the issue in a timely fashion or to the satisfaction of the worker then a member of the **JHSC** should be contacted.

WORKPLACE INSPECTIONS

Worker and employer representatives of the JHSC are expected to participate in **monthly** formal inspections of the workplace as per OHSR 3.5-3.8. **Members** should be part of the inspection team along with departmental **managers** and area **supervisors** for the various departments/areas of the workplace.

INCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

An incident is any occurrence which resulted in or had the potential to result in **property** or **environmental** damage, or personal **injury** or **illness**. All incidents are required by Part 3, Division 10 of the Workers Compensation Act to be investigated by the employer.

REFUSAL OF UNSAFE WORK

One of the basic rights that a worker has is the ability to refuse unsafe work. **OHSR 3.12(1)** states "A person must not carry out or cause to be carried out any work process or operate or cause to be operated any tool, appliance or equipment if that person has reasonable cause to believe that to do so would create an undue hazard to the health and safety of any person."

MEETING SCHEDULE

It is beneficial to have the regular **monthly** meetings scheduled for a constant date and time. This allows JHSC members to schedule in the meetings well in advance of their occurrence and minimize the chance of not being able to attend because of a conflicting commitment.

TRAINING

Members of the JHSC must be given the necessary **training** to permit them to efficiently and effectively carry out their assigned duties. Areas where members should receive training include **hazard identification** and **risk assessment**, **workplace inspections**, **right to refuse** event and **incident investigation**.

ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL LEAVE

Each member of the JHSC is legally entitled to **8 hours** of annual leave to attend training or educational courses that are concerned with occupational health and safety. The employer is **required** to pay the members at their regular rate of pay during this educational leave as well as the cost of the course and reasonable expenses.

DEFINED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

What does the JHSC want to accomplish? The **employer** and the **committee** must have a goal that they want to achieve such as “improve the health and safety of the workplace”. In addition the committee must determine short term objectives to achieve their goal and must ensure that there is a means to determine if those objectives have been met.

SHARED LEADERSHIP

This requires that everyone on the committee accept **personal** responsibility for ensuring that issues are brought forward, are discussed and adequate solutions are developed. The co-chairs of the JHSC are there to guide the committee **not** to act as formal **leaders**. Everyone must participate in the activities of the JHSC and offer the necessary support.

EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION

This ensures that **every member** of the JHSC is involved in the discussions and ongoing activities of the committee to the best of their abilities and strengths. Activities are evenly shared among the committee with no one person saddled with the majority of tasks while others do very little.

TRUSTING ATMOSPHERE

External mandates and alliances must be left **outside** JHSC activities. There must be a high level of acceptance and trust among the members and a strong belief that what the committee does is **important** and **cannot** be obstructed by external factors.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Honest and open communication involves not only talking but also **listening**. Epictetus, a Roman philosopher said “We have two ears and one mouth so we may listen more and talk the less.” Everyone on the JHSC must be able to bring forward their perspective and ideas to committee discussions. **No one** should control discussions or prevent another member’s views from being brought forward.

EXTENSIVE DIVERSITY

The wide range of knowledge, skills, experience and ideas that **each** individual brings to the JHSC is what establishes and maintains the committee. The **thinker**, the **doer** and the **evaluator** all bring their strengths to and have their place in the effective committee.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflicting points of view often surface during the JHSC decision making process or when undertaking other activities. There has to be a **process** for resolving any conflict through discussion where all points of view are explored and the best resolution to the conflict is reached through **consensus**.

EFFECTIVE DECISIONS

The JHSC must have the ability to effectively **identify** issues, **discuss** options, reach consensus on **solutions** and provide adequate **recommendations** to allow **corrective** action to be taken within a reasonable period of time.

SUPPORT

The management team starting with the **CEO** or **senior manager** in the workplace must commit to the concept of a JHSC and support it **fully**. The committee must be seen as a venue for identifying and addressing occupational health and safety concerns. This means that management must provide the necessary support to make the JHSC **effective** and **successful**.

TRUST

The JHSC is the means by which workers are able to participate in improving health and safety in their workplace. The committee is the source of information and the point of contact for issues that have **not** been resolved through regular means. The JHSC is **not** intended to replace or circumvent the authority of supervisors and workers must always report health and safety issues to their supervisor who has the responsibility for investigating and taking any corrective action.

JHSC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A JHSC should set regular goals for itself and measure their accomplishments to determine their effectiveness in achieving objectives. It is important to make sure that:

- Goals are vague; objectives are specific
- Goals are unconfirmed; objectives can be measured

COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is required in all JHSC activities. This means communication between **committee members**, as well as communication with all the **stakeholders** in the workplace; the **employer**, **managers**, **supervisors**, **workers**, **unions** and **WorkSafeBC**.

EFFECTIVENESS

The effectiveness of the employer’s health and safety program and of the JHSC objectives can only be measured by results. These can be a **reactive** measurement such as a reduction in injuries and damage costs, or it can be **proactive** such as the number of meetings where health and safety was a topic, the number of workplace inspections carried out and the percentage of identified hazards corrected along with the time for correction.

EVALUATION

The JHSC should be doing an **evaluation** of itself on a **regular basis** to understand and assess the value of its operation. The evaluation must be **impartial** and identify both strengths and weaknesses.

MATURE COMMITTEES

As a JHSC gains knowledge and experience, developing the skills necessary to effectively and efficiently address workplace health and safety issues it can become what may be described as a “mature” committee. A mature committee is one that bases its decisions on a process of **deliberate**, cautious **consideration** of all aspects of an issue.