

Workplace health and safety are critical to maintaining a safe and productive environment. The Health and Safety Committee plays a vital role in this effort, bringing together employer-appointed and employee-selected representatives to address health and safety concerns, develop prevention programs, and monitor workplace hazards. Their structure, responsibilities, and operational guidelines ensure collaborative efforts to promote a safe workplace.

Who needs a Health and Safety Committee?

Any workplace that has 20 or more employees.

When is it applicable to have a Representative instead of a Health and Safety Committee?

Any federally-regulated workplace that has 19 or fewer employees, and any provincially regulated workplace with 5-19 employees.

Who is on the Health and Safety Committee?

A workplace health and safety committee consist of at least two people (federal), or four people (provincial). They are elected or volunteer, in accordance with the condition that at least half of the committee members are employees who do not exercise managerial functions.



It is recommended to have representatives from various departments, for example:

- Yard Workers
- Shop Workers
- Drivers
- Vulnerable workers
- non-managerial office staff

Example of a balanced Health and Safety Committee:

- Operations Manager- Employer Co-Chair
- Shop Supervisor- Employer
- Dispatcher- Employer
- Driver- Employee Co-Chair
- New Driver- Employee (vulnerable worker)
- Driver- Employee
- Mechanic- Employee
- Receptionist- Employee

Committee members are elected to two-year terms (or a length set out in the constitution). Members may continue to hold office until re-appointed or re-elected, or until a replacement is appointed or elected.

What does the Committee do?

The committee's responsibilities are:

- consider and expeditiously dispose of health and safety complaints;
- participate in the development, implementation and monitoring of programs to prevent workplace hazards, including ergonomic related hazards, if there is no policy committee in the organization;
- participate in all inquiries, investigations, studies, and inspections pertaining to the health and safety of employees;
- participate in the implementation and monitoring of a program for the provision of personal protective equipment, clothing, devices, or materials, and, if there is no policy committee, participate in the development of the program;
- keep adequate records of work accidents, injuries, health hazards, health and safety complaints and regularly monitor this data;
- cooperate with health and safety officers;
- participate in the implementation of changes that may affect occupational health and safety, including work processes and procedures, and, if there is no policy committee, participate in the planning of the implementation of those changes;
- assist the employer in investigating and assessing the exposure of employees to hazardous substances;
- inspect each month all or part of the work place, so that every part of the work place is inspected at least once a year;
- participate in the development of health and safety policies and programs, if there is no policy committee.
- participate in the development, implementation and monitoring of a work place violence prevention policy, if there is no policy committee in the organization



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What is a “Terms of Reference” document?

The terms of reference document is like the list of rules and expectations for the health and safety committee. It lists details regarding the:

- Composition of the committee
- Selection of the committee members
- Terms of how long members will serve on committee
- Co-chairs responsibilities
- Training allowance and compensation
- Activities of the committee as referenced by legislation
- Meeting schedule for the committee
- Meeting conduct including quorum, minutes and conduct of member expectations

How often does the committee meet?

Federally regulated workplace Health and Safety Committees are required to meet nine times per year at regular intervals and during regular working hours.

Provincially regulated workplace Health and Safety Committees are required to meet at a minimum of 4 times a year (quarterly).

What items are recorded in the meeting minutes?

Minutes must be taken of each meeting. The minutes may include:

- time and date of meeting,
- who attended (including first and last names and their role e.g., worker rep, employer rep, resource person,
- items discussed (reports, problems, statistics, education),
- reasons for recommendations (and counter arguments voiced),
- recommendations (specifying action by whom, and when),
- time and date of the next meeting.

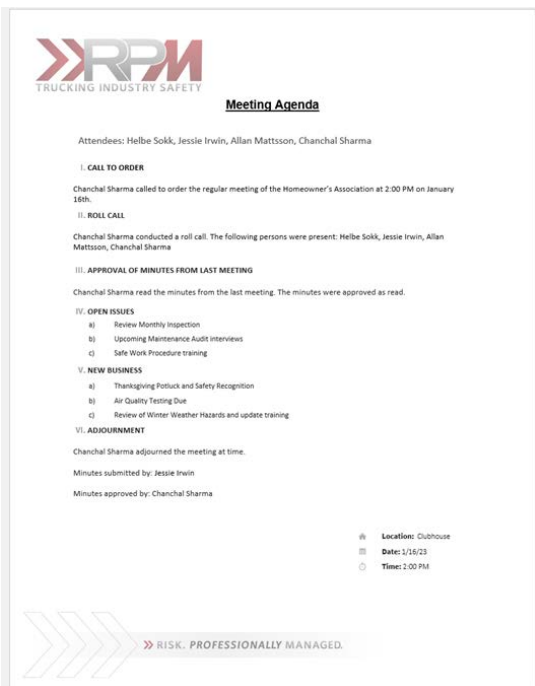
As soon as feasible after each committee meeting, the minutes must be provided to both chairpersons for their approval and signature. After receiving a copy of the minutes, the company will make a copy available to the employees as soon as possible.

Minutes of previous meetings are useful sources of information as they may show trends and reveal problems requiring more investigation, the training of new committee members, or the determination of safety training topics. The length of time they are kept may vary with the frequency of the meetings and other factors, but a minimum of two years is suggested. In some cases, the jurisdiction has mandated a record retention time period.

****Federally Regulated Companies must complete a Workplace Committee Report and submit it to the federal government no later than March 1st of each year.****

The Health and Safety Committee is integral to fostering a culture of safety in the workplace, ensuring employees’ health and well-being through proactive initiatives and consistent monitoring. By adhering to clearly defined terms of reference, meeting regularly, and documenting their work in detailed minutes, the committee ensures transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in workplace safety standards.

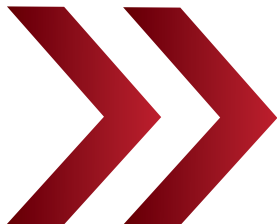
Need more information? RPM can help! The Workplace Safety and Health Committee and Worker Safety and Health Representative course meets the training requirements as well as the SAFE Work Certified Training standards criteria for health and safety representatives and committee members.



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