



Psychologically Healthy & Safe Workplaces

Health PEI is beginning to undertake the process of implementing the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (PHSMS). This voluntary Standard was developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada to assist both public and private sector organizations in creating a workplace that facilitates psychological health and wellbeing of its employees. Developed out of scientific literature pulling from areas such as workplace health and safety, law, and social science, the standard is meant to serve as an instruction for managers and co-workers on facilitating the health and safety needs and rights of those around us in the workplace. This is to say that, although individuals are responsible for their own mental and physical health on a daily basis, the methods outlined in the standard can be used to assure that the workplace is not serving to impede on any individual's psychological wellbeing unnecessarily.

When one refers to psychological wellbeing in this manner, they are referring to factors including but not limited to a sense of belonging, social justice, self-worth, self-esteem, self-efficacy, accomplishment, or autonomy. As outlined in the standard, the business case for the facilitation of these needs in the workplace includes risk mitigation, cost effectiveness, recruitment and retention, and organizational excellence and sustainability. The empirical researched outlined in the Standard outlines how workplaces that take this positive approach have more success in recruiting and retaining talent, have employees that are more engaged, are more creative and innovative, and have higher profit levels, while reducing the risk of negative events such as disability, injury rates, absenteeism or morale problems.

The Standard promotes the necessary recognition and accommodation of legitimate workplace health and safety needs by managers and co-workers. Although leaders will be responsible for establishing and reinforcing the stated values, it is crucial that workers are able to participate as well through the provision of the necessary time, resources, and instruction.



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As modern research in mental health continues to change the way we think about human behavior and interactions, the implementation of the Standard throughout Health PEI, other provincial health authorities, and other sectors throughout the country allows Canada to lead the way on this important issue.

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Workplace Inspections Principles

Workplace inspections are the most common way for OH&S Committees and Representatives to contribute to identification of hazards, which is anything with the potential to cause damage or harm to people, environment, material, property, equipment or processes.



When conducting a workplace inspection, keep the following principles in mind:

- Look above, below, around and inside – what do you see
- Pause, observe when entering to see activities and tasks
- Develop a questioning attitude to determine what injuries have potential to occur
- Be aware of injury exposure due to over exertion in lifting, pushing, pulling or reaching
- Use as many senses as possible – look, listen, smell, feel
- Record as you go along, in case you forget
- Clearly describe hazard on recording form
- Never touch or operate a piece of equipment, ask the worker to demonstrate
- Talk to workers to get their concerns
- Ask questions regarding WHMIS, emergency procedures, eyewash stations, etc.

How Can I Prevent Heat-related Illnesses?

If practical, workers in hot environments should be encouraged to set their own work and rest schedules. Experienced workers can often judge heat strain and limit their exposure accordingly. Inexperienced workers may need special attention as they may continue to work beyond the point at which signs of heat strain appear.

People are generally unable to notice their own heat stress related symptoms. Their survival depends on their coworker's ability to recognize these symptoms and seek timely first aid and medical help.

Salt and Fluid Supplements: A person working in a very hot environment loses water and salt through sweat. This loss should be compensated by water and salt intake. Fluid intake should equal fluid loss. On average, about one litre of water each hour may be required to replace the fluid loss. An acclimatized worker loses relatively little salt in their sweat and, therefore, the salt in the normal diet is usually sufficient to maintain the electrolyte balance in the body fluids. For unacclimatized workers who may sweat continuously and repeatedly, additional salt in the food may be used. Salt tablets are not recommended because the salt does not enter the body system as fast as water or other fluids. Too much salt can cause higher body temperatures, increased thirst and nausea. Workers on salt-restricted diets should discuss the need for supplementary salt with their doctor.



Sport drinks, fruit juice, etc: Drinks specially designed to replace body fluids and electrolytes may be taken but for most people, they should be used in moderation. They may be of benefit for workers who have very physically active occupations but keep in mind they may add unnecessary sugar or salt to your diet. Fruit juice or sport and electrolyte drinks, diluted to half the strength with water, is an option. Drinks with alcohol or caffeine should never be taken, as they dehydrate the body. For most people, water is the most efficient fluid for re-hydration.

Emergency Action Plan: In extreme environments, an emergency plan is needed. The plan should include procedures for providing affected workers with first aid and medical care.

Reference: http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/phys_agents/heat_control.html