

MOL Workplace Inspection Initiative in Ontario Schools

Safe At Work Ontario

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Report Summary

Between September 2011 and June 2012, Ministry of Labour inspectors conducted an enforcement initiative to promote health and safety in the Ontario educational sector.

The initiative was part of the province's [Safe At Work Ontario](#) strategy and was also in response to a student fatality at an Ottawa-area school. Inspectors checked on compliance with the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (OHSA) and its regulations.

The goal was to:

- raise awareness of hazards in the education sector
- encourage employers to identify and control hazards
- address and remedy non-compliance with the OHSA and its regulations
- deter non-compliant employers and
- enhance occupational health and safety partnerships

More than 900 workplaces were inspected in the public and Catholic school systems, including:

- elementary schools (grade 7 and 8) with woodworking shops and
- secondary schools with technological education labs and shops (i.e. auto body , construction, and manufacturing courses) and science labs and
- school boards

Inspectors issued 6,658 orders in total, including:

- 5,164 time-based orders for violations such as failing to:
 - take all reasonable precautions to protect workers from exposure to moving parts of machines
 - maintain safe ladders and guardrails
 - annually inspect lifting equipment such as an auto body hoist and
 - provide personal protective equipment to protect workers from exposure to chemicals
- 283 stop work orders on equipment or processes for violations such as:
 - missing or damaged guarding or shielding devices on equipment
 - unsafe lifting devices and
 - unsafe ladders

A **time-based order**, does not present an imminent safety hazard. They specify the time in which an employer must achieve compliance with the order.

A **stop work order** is issued by an inspector if a violation is found that is of immediate danger to a worker's health and safety. Such an order eliminates the worker's exposure to the hazard by generally requiring a piece of equipment or process not to be used until the violation is corrected.

Of the 6,658 orders issued, employers were required to comply with 563 or 9 per cent of the orders immediately while the inspector was on site.

The top three orders issued during this initiative were for:

- failure to take all reasonable precautions in the circumstances to protect workers (54 per cent) from hazards such as:
 - exposed moving parts on machines
 - slippery work surfaces and
 - unsafe ladders and a lack of guardrails
- failure to maintain equipment and materials (11 per cent), including failure to maintain:
 - guarding devices on equipment
 - lifting devices and
 - personal protective equipment
- failure to comply with information, labeling and training requirements under the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) Regulation (eight per cent) such as:
 - failure to affix workplace labels on hazardous materials

- o a lack of current Material Safety Data Sheets on hazardous materials and
- o unsafe use and storage of hazardous materials

By October 2012, schools and school boards had complied with more than 85% of the orders that inspectors wrote and were working on the remaining ones. Inspectors continue to follow up on the outstanding orders. During routine workplace inspections, the ministry will continue to focus on the workplace health and safety issues in schools and school boards.

Schools and school boards continue to be part of the province’s [Safe At Work Ontario](#) inspection and enforcement strategy.

Full report

Enforcement Initiatives

Enforcement initiatives are part of the province’s Safe At Work Ontario compliance strategy. They may be announced to the sector in advance although individual workplaces are not identified in advance. Results may be posted on the ministry’s website. The initiatives raise awareness of workplace hazards and promote compliance with the [OHSA](#) and its safety regulations.

Inspectors’ findings may impact the frequency and level of future inspections of individual workplaces. Inspectors may also refer employers to health and safety associations for compliance assistance and training.

Enforcement Focus

Inspectors focused on the following key priorities:

Information: Inspectors checked that employers provided workers with information, instruction and supervision to protect their occupational health and safety.

Workplace Violence: Inspectors checked that employers were meeting workplace violence and workplace harassment requirements.

Protective Equipment: Inspectors checked that appropriate personal protective equipment (safety glasses, goggles, and gloves, [etc.](#)), eye wash stations and safety showers were available for workers and being maintained.

Maintenance: Inspectors checked that equipment was being maintained in good condition. They also checked that guarding devices on equipment were being properly maintained. In addition, they checked that lifting devices were being inspected annually.

Safety Procedures: Inspectors checked that required safety measures and procedures were in place to prevent injuries and illness from hazards, including:

- machine guarding/shielding – [e.g.](#) potential exposure by workers to moving parts or pinch points on machines
- chemical hazards – [e.g.](#) unsafe storage or handling of chemicals, compressed gases and flammable liquids
- safe handling and storage of flammable liquids , hot work [e.g.](#) sparks near flammable or combustible materials, created when doing “hot work” such as welding, grinding or cutting and
- slips, trips and falls hazards

Inspection activity

Inspectors visited more than 900 workplaces ([i.e.](#) schools and school boards). Some were visited several times. The inspectors made a total of 1,974 visits.

The inspectors issued 6,658 orders under the [OHSA](#) and its regulations in response to safety issues. On average, three orders were issued per field visit.

Table 1: Enforcement Activity

	Education Sector Initiative September 2011 to June 2012
Total visits*	1,974
Orders (all types)	6,658
Stop work orders	283
Orders per field visit	3.37
Stop work orders per field visit	0.14
* Total number of individual visits ministry inspectors made to all workplaces during this enforcement initiative.	

Table 2: Top Orders Issued During Enforcement Initiative

Violation	Type*	Number of Orders	Percentage of Total Orders
*Time-based orders specify the time in which the employer must comply.			

Violation	Type*	Number of Orders	Percentage of Total Orders
Failure to take all reasonable precautions to protect workers (OHSA S. 25(2)(h))	Time-based	3,566	54%
Failure to maintain equipment and materials (OHSA S. 25(1)(b))	Time-based	738	11%
Failure to comply with information, labeling and training requirements under WHMIS Regulation	Time-based	553	8%
*Time-based orders specify the time in which the employer must comply.			

Stop Work Order Analysis

Inspectors issued 283 stop work orders. These orders were issued for hazards involving guarding or shielding devices on equipment, lifting devices, ladders and guardrails, and other issues.

Details are below.

Table 3: – Stop Work Orders – Most Common Hazards

Reason for stop work order *	Number of stop work orders	Percentage of total orders issued
Guarding/shielding	116	64%
Lifting device (i.e., inspection, weight capacity)	21	12%
Hazard of falling (e.g., ladders, guardrails)	14	8%
Fire/flammable	8	4%
Equipment maintenance	4	2%
Personal protective equipment	4	2%
* Stop work orders do not have a specific compliance date, but remain in effect until the hazard is corrected.		

Conclusion

School boards are continuing to address health and safety hazards identified during the enforcement initiative. By October 2012, schools had complied with more than 85% of the orders and were working on the remaining ones.

School boards are reviewing their occupational health and safety programs and applying the lessons learned from the initiative to all schools.

The initiative helped raise awareness about occupational health and safety and promoted positive changes in schools' health and safety culture.

Principals and other school officials should continue to work with their staff to improve this culture.

Adequate resources should be allocated to ensure equipment and facilities meet the requirements of the [OHSA](#) and its regulations.

School boards should also ensure all management and staff receive training on the [OHSA](#) and are aware of their rights, roles and responsibilities.

Next Steps

A key to workplace health and safety in Ontario is the Internal Responsibility System (IRS). Employers, supervisors, workers, Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSCs) and health and safety representatives all have a key role to play in ensuring health and safety and eliminating illness and injury.

The Ministry of Labour will continue to work with Ontario's Ministry of Education, health and safety associations, and labour and management stakeholders to:

- promote awareness of the continuing need to identify workplace hazards
- promote voluntary compliance with the [OHSA](#) and
- strengthen the IRS

Inspectors continue to follow up on outstanding orders issued during the initiative. During routine inspections, the ministry will continue to focus on workplace health and safety issues in schools.

Health & Safety Tools & Resources Available to Teachers & Students

The Ontario curriculum includes health and safety knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate.

Occupational health and safety resources available to both teachers and students include:

- [Live Safe! Work Smart!](#) customized resources for teachers in all subject areas. The Ministry of Labour resources provide occupational health and safety lessons that match Ontario curriculum.
- Curriculum resources available from teacher associations such as the [Ontario Council for Technology Education](#) (OCTE) and [Science Teachers Association of Ontario](#) (STAO).
- Safety resources and videos for teachers available from Ontario's health and safety associations. Independent student learning resources also available from [Passport to Safety](#) and the Ministry of Labour's [WorkSmartOntario](#) website.

For more information on identifying, preventing and controlling these hazards, please contact [our safety partners](#).

Please direct questions on a specific school to your local school board.

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