

Frequently Asked Questions for Workplace Joint Health and Safety Committee and Policy Health and Safety Committees

My workplace committee doesn't have enough time.

- If there was not enough time scheduled to get through a meeting's agenda items, then the meeting time is not adequate to meet the needs of the committee. Before the meeting adjourns, the committee should schedule another meeting to complete the agenda as soon as possible. It is not a good practice to have undiscussed agenda items be deferred to the next meeting because it could be letting problems get worse.

I'm not clear on the tasks of health and safety committees.

- The Health and Safety Committee members perform the following functions:
 - Identify potential hazards including performing inspections.
 - Evaluate those potential hazards.
 - Identify and raise health and safety concerns.
 - Investigate injuries and illnesses caused by the workplace.
 - Meet regularly to discuss occupational health and safety concerns, including proactive prevention.
 - Ensure the maintenance of records of meeting and related activities.
 - Help develop and promote health and safety training.
 - Investigate refusals to work.
 - Receive and participate in the distributing of health and safety information.
 - Recommend corrective action.
 - Follow up on implemented recommendations.

If one of the Health and Safety Committee's primary functions is making recommendations, what kinds of recommendations should I be making?

- Recommendations may be made to:
 - Change specific work practices or conditions that have or could potentially hurt workers
 - Correct root causes identified during investigations.
 - Perform studies or bring in outside expertise to study or review a specific issue when the committee members believe they do not have appropriate expertise.
- All recommendations should:
 - Be made in written form.
 - State the facts about the health and safety concerns.
 - Give the reason or rationale for the recommendation.
 - Describe the intended immediate outcomes and the intended long term impacts.
 - Point out potential legal non-compliance with H&S laws.
 - Be dated and signed.

- Committee recommendations must be tracked on the minutes of the committee meeting. They should be on the agenda until they are resolved or there is a response from management/the employer.
- To help tracking, it's a good practice to maintain a single document of all recommendations, sorted by topic, noting if they are "resolved" or "in progress".
- Not all jurisdictions have legislation or regulations which provides specific timelines an employer must follow when they receive a recommendation from the committee. However, no matter what jurisdiction you are under, if you don't receive a written response in thirty days, follow up with the employer.