

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

ADVICE FOR WORKERS

Workers have the following basic legal rights in Canada

There are two main factors which affect whether chemicals in the workplace are likely to harm health:

- » Right to a safe and healthy workplace;
- » Right to refuse unsafe work;
- » Right to be informed of actual and potential dangers in the workplace; and
- » Right to participate in workplace health and safety activities.

Right to a safe and healthy workplace

Occupational health and safety law requires employers to ensure, as far as a reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers. Employers have a responsibility to:

- » See that safety is maintained at the workplace;
- » Make sure you are trained and have the proper skills to perform your job safely; and
- » See that you know your duties and responsibilities for keeping the workplace safe.

Right to refuse unsafe work

If you are in a situation of imminent danger, you are required to stop work. Explain to your employer why you stopped work. Your employer must then investigate the situation and take action to correct the danger. If your employer is not at the work site, you should take whatever steps are necessary to contact him or her, as soon as possible. Your employer can assign you to other work until the problem has been investigated and is fixed. Or, your employer can assign someone else to do the work if that person is trained to handle the danger. You can not be disciplined or fired for refusing to do unsafe work.

Right to be informed of actual and potential dangers in the workplace

You have the right to get information about hazards in the workplace. If your employer doesn't tell you, ask. Find out where the potential hazards are at your workplace. In the case of chemical hazards, WHMIS legal requirements prescribe the type and methods of getting chemical hazards information. Your employer is required to:

- » Ensure safety data sheets are available for hazardous materials at your workplace;
- » Ensure containers and vessels that contain hazard materials are labelled; and
- » Provide education to workers on how to use the information provided to work safely.

Right to participate in workplace health and safety activities

If your workplace has a Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) or a designated worker health and safety representative they have a responsibility to:

- » Handle workers' concerns;
- » Inspect the workplace and investigate accidents; and
- » Investigate when someone refuses to do work they believe is unsafe.

If your supervisor is unable to help with your safety concerns, discuss them with your occupational health committee or your occupational health and safety representative. Even if you do not have a committee you should always be working with your employer to ensure a safe workplace.



CONTROLLING CHEMICAL HAZARDS

Guidance Sheet

Workers have legal obligations too. You must

- » Co-operate with your employer by following the health and safety rules they establish for the job. For example, you are required to use a safety belt or similar equipment when doing certain kinds of work. You must use personal protective equipment, such as footwear, eyewear, head protection and hearing protection.
- » Work safely, in a manner that does not endanger yourself or others

YOUR RIGHTS

- The right to safe and healthy workplace.
- The right to refuse unsafe work.
- The right to be informed of actual and potential dangers in the workplace.
- The right to participate in workplace health and safety activities.

YOUR OBLIGATIONS

- Follow health and safety rules established by your employer.
- Work safely and do not endanger others.