

# Dropped Object Prevention Provincial OHS Regulatory Review Report

July 31, 2026

# 1.0 Executive Summary

This report reviews provincial Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legislative requirements related to dropped and falling object hazards across Canadian jurisdictions to identify common regulatory expectations and inform the development of a consistent, effective dropped object prevention practices.

The review found strong alignment among provincial and territorial OHS legislations in recognizing dropped objects as a significant workplace hazard requiring proactive management. Across jurisdictions, employers are required to identify hazards, assess risks, and implement controls using the hierarchy of controls, with engineering controls serving as the primary means of preventing incidents and personal protective equipment (PPE) functioning as the final layer of protection.

The analysis highlights several critical areas for effective dropped object prevention. These include comprehensive hazard assessments for overhead work, rigorous planning and control of lifting, rigging, and material handling activities, proper material storage and housekeeping, and the implementation of line-of-fire controls such as exclusion zones, barricades, and work sequencing to prevent worker exposure beneath overhead hazards. Regulations also emphasize the importance of competency through training, effective communication, and timely hazard reporting.

A consistent theme across all jurisdictions is that preventing dropped object incidents is a shared responsibility. Employers, supervisors, workers, contractors, prime contractors, and owners each have defined duties to establish safe work systems, communicate hazards, enforce safe practices, secure tools and materials, and coordinate activities where multiple employers are present.

Based on these findings, organizations should establish comprehensive dropped object prevention programs that integrate regulatory requirements into everyday operations. Such programs should include hazard identification specific to overhead risks, standardized preventive controls, competency development, inspection and maintenance processes, and clear accountability across all workplace parties.

Implementing these practices is expected to strengthen regulatory compliance, reduce the likelihood and severity of dropped object incidents, improve operational efficiency, demonstrate due diligence, and foster a stronger safety culture. Overall, the review confirms that effective dropped object prevention depends on systematic hazard

management, robust engineering and administrative controls, and coordinated commitment from everyone involved in the workplace.

This report summarizes and compares OHS requirements for information and prevention purposes. It does not constitute legal advice and should not be used as a replacement for the legislation, regulations, codes or official guidance applicable to a specific workplace or jurisdiction. Organizations should verify current requirements with the applicable regulatory authority and ensure their controls reflect the specific hazards and circumstances of their operations.

# 2.0 Objective

The objective of this report is to:

- Review Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legislative requirements related to dropped and falling objects across Canadian jurisdictions
- Identify consistent legal expectations for hazard identification, prevention, and control
- Establish key focus areas for improving dropped object prevention programs
- Support the development of standardized safety practices aligned with regulatory obligations

Across all jurisdictions, the primary objective of OHS legislation is to prevent incidents by eliminating or controlling hazards at the source, including hazards related to falling or dropped objects.

# 3.0 Key Findings

## 3.1 Dropped objects are recognized as a critical workplace hazard

All jurisdictions explicitly or implicitly classify falling or dropped objects as a serious workplace hazard.

Regulations consistently require:

- Hazard identification
- Risk assessment

- Implementation of controls

### 3.1.1 Strong emphasis on hazard identification and control

Hazard assessments are mandatory across jurisdictions. Employers must:

- Identify overhead hazards
- Assess risks from lifting, storage and elevated work
- Implement elimination or mitigation measures

Controls required include:

- Engineering controls (guardrails, toe boards, barriers)
- Administrative controls (procedures, exclusion zones)
- PPE (last line of defence)

### 3.1.2 Lifting, Rigging, and Material Handling are high-risk areas

Dropped objects frequently originate from:

- Cranes and hoists operations
- Improper rigging
- Unsecured loads

Key legal requirements include:

- Loads must be secured and controlled
- Proper rigging equipment must be used and inspected
- Workers must not be positioned under suspended loads
- Tag lines must be used where necessary to control loads

### 3.1.3 Material storage and housekeeping are critical

Poor storage practices are a major cause of dropped objects. Regulations require:

- Stable stacking
- Securing materials against movement
- Proper housekeeping and debris removal

### 3.1.4 Protection of workers below (Line of Fire control)

**All jurisdictions prohibit or control:**

- Working beneath suspended loads
- Exposure to overhead hazards

**Key controls:**

- Exclusion zones
- Barricades and signage
- Work sequencing (avoiding simultaneous overhead/below work)

### 3.1.5 PPE is mandatory but secondary

**PPE is recognized as:**

- A mitigation measure, not a primary control
- Hard hats are universally required where falling object risks exist

### 3.1.6 Shared responsibility across duty holders

**Dropped object prevention is not solely the employer's responsibility**

- Employers: hazard control, training, safe systems
- Supervisors: enforce compliance, communicate hazards
- Workers: secure tools, follow procedures, report hazards
- Contractors: coordinate multi-employer risks
- Owners: ensure safe structures and environments

### 3.1.7 Training, communication, and reporting are essential

**Workers must be trained on:**

- Safe lifting and rigging
- Securing tools and materials
- Recognizing overhead hazards
- Hazard reporting and right to refuse unsafe work are protected

# 4.0 Outcomes

## 4.1 Standardized dropped object prevention framework

**Based on the findings, organizations should implement:**

- Formal dropped object prevention programs
- Hazard identification specific to overhead risks
- Integrated controls aligned with the hierarchy of controls

## 4.2 Improved risk reduction

**Implementation of regulatory-aligned controls will:**

- Reduce likelihood of dropped object incidents
- Minimize severity of injuries (if incidents occur)
- Improve overall workplace safety performance

## 4.3 Enhanced compliance

**Organizations will:**

- Meet legal obligations across multiple jurisdictions
- Reduce risk of regulatory penalties
- Demonstrate due diligence in safety management

## 4.4 Stronger safety culture

**Expected cultural improvements include:**

- Increased hazard awareness
- Improved worker engagement in safety
- Better communication across teams

## 4.5 Operational benefits

- Fewer incidents lead to reduced downtime
- Improved planning for lifting and overhead work
- More efficient coordination on multi-employer sites

# 5.0 Conclusion

The review of OHS requirements confirms that dropped objects are a well-recognized, high-risk safety hazard across all jurisdictions. Regulations consistently require:

- Proactive hazard identification
- Use of engineering controls as the primary defense
- Strict control of lifting, storage, and overhead work
- Coordinated responsibility among all workplace parties

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- Collaborate with industry to drive continuous safety improvements.
- Provide safety and labour market data, insights and tools.
- Serve as the industry certifying partner for the Certificate of Recognition program.

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