



# OH&S STEWARDS BULLETIN

## Frequently asked questions about workplace inspections

HEU members often ask about the process of workplace inspections. This Q&A should address many of those questions.

### 1. Why are workplace inspections important?

Workplace inspections are done to help keep workers safe and healthy. One of the duties of the Joint OH&S (JOHS) committee is to plan and carry out inspections. Committees are required to keep track of each inspection.

### 2. How often does the OH&S committee conduct regular workplace inspections?

*WCB Regulations (Parts 3, 3.5 – 3.8)* state that inspections should be planned and done on a regular basis. Because health care is a high-risk industry, inspections should be done at least once a month. If there have been a lot of accidents/incidents in a work area, an inspection may need to be done more often than once a month.

### 3. What do you look for in a workplace inspection?

Inspections are about looking for things that could put workers at risk of illness or injury. Things to look for include:

- Physical hazards (such as burned out lights, crowded hallways, blocked exits, frayed electrical cords, blocked fire alarms/extinguishers, wet floors, etc.).
- How the work is being done. Are the workers at risk of an injury due to the way the work is organized? For example, does the job involve a lot of repetitive motion? Do workers have to reach over their head for heavy items, etc.?
- Are workers exposed to hazardous substances? Examples include industrial strength cleaners, blood and body fluids, asbestos, mold, formaldehyde, etc. If workers are exposed to these kinds of risks, have all necessary steps been taken to reduce the risk? Reducing risk factors includes substituting toxic cleaners with safer products, education, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), WHMIS, etc.
- Are workers exposed to excessive noise, heat or cold?
- Are workers exposed to stress from unsafe workload, bullying or violence?

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**4. What about WorkSafeBC Inspections?**

When WorkSafeBC does an inspection of the workplace, both a representative for the employer and union accompany the officer. The union representative should be a member of the JOHS committee or if they are not available, a union member appointed by the union must accompany the officer during the inspection. **(WCB Act Division 4, section 140)**