



Health and Safety Santé et sécurité



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Workplace-Related Diseases, Disorders and Injuries

Occupational related diseases, disorders and injuries cover a wide range of medical conditions that result from exposure to various hazards in the workplace. This includes a number of medical conditions such as Alzheimer's Disease, various cancers, latex allergies, tendon disorders and many others ranging from mild to debilitating.

The causes of these conditions are as diverse as the conditions themselves but the most important thing to remember is that they are almost all preventable. Some conditions are caused by the chemicals and various substances we work with, others by our working conditions and environment, and many are caused by how we perform our work. Often it is a combination of all these factors.

A key tool in effective prevention is following the hierarchy of hazard prevention from the Canadian Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, Section 19.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

19.5 (1) The employer shall, in order to address identified and assessed hazards, including ergonomics-related hazards, take preventive measures to address the assessed hazard in the following order of priority:

- (a) the elimination of the hazard, including by way of engineering controls which may involve mechanical aids, equipment design or redesign that take into account the physical attributes of the employee;
 - (b) the reduction of the hazard, including isolating it;
 - (c) the provision of personal protective equipment, clothing, devices or materials; and
 - (d) administrative procedures, such as the management of hazard exposure and recovery periods and the management of work patterns and methods.
- (2) As part of the preventive measures, the employer shall develop and implement a preventive maintenance program in order to avoid failures that could result in a hazard to employees.
 - (3) The employer shall ensure that any preventive measure shall not in itself create a hazard and shall take into account the effects on the work place.

- (4) The preventive measures shall include steps to address
 - (a) newly identified hazards in an expeditious manner; and
 - (b) ergonomics-related hazards that are identified when planning implementation of change to the work environment or to work duties, equipment, practices or processes.
- (5) The employer shall ensure that any person assigned to implement ergonomics-related prevention measures has the necessary instruction and training.

Policy Health and Safety Committees need to develop policies to protect and educate our members and to ensure the employer is always in compliance with the *Canada Labour Code, Part II*.

Local OSH Committees need to be vigilant and ensure that the employer is taking the necessary steps to protect their employees and that management is adhering to its responsibilities under the *Canada Labour Code, Part II*.

Exposure to a specific hazard does not mean that you will necessarily develop a disease or disorder but you are definitely increasing your risk. Read Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and labels, and follow the precautions listed. Wear your personal protective equipment (PPE) correctly and use any and all devices that are recommended. Taking the time to do a Job Hazard Analysis, and developing a Safe Work Procedure are the first steps in protecting yourself and your co-workers. Follow all safety precautions and advise management and your OSH Committee of any hazards immediately.

For more information visit these websites:

<http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/diseases/>
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/diseases.html> (USA)