



Labour

Work Place Inspections

A Matter of Health and Safety

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Work Place Inspections

A Matter of Health and Safety

What are Work Place Inspections?

Work place inspections are an essential component of your prevention program. The process involves carefully examining work stations on a regular basis with a view to:

- identifying and recording actual and potential hazards posed by buildings, equipment, the environment, processes and practices;
- recording any hazards requiring immediate attention;
- determining whether existing hazard controls are adequate and operational;
- recommending corrective action where appropriate.

A prevention program includes several types of inspection.

- *Spot inspections* are carried out on occasion in order to meet a range of responsibilities with respect to work place health and safety. They focus on a specific hazard associated with a specific work station or work area for example, noise made by a shredder, operation of a pump, pressure from a boiler or exposure to a solvent.
- *Pre-operation inspections of special equipment and processes* are often required before starting the inspection itself, such as equipment checks before working under water or entering a closed area.
- *Critical parts inspections* are regular inspections of the critical parts of a machine, piece of equipment or a system that have a high potential for serious accidents. These inspections are often part of a preventive maintenance program or hazard control program. Checklists can be used for forklifts, tractor semi-trailers and aircraft, for example.
- *New equipment inspections* involve series of specific tests and checks that are carried out before starting up any new piece of equipment. This means that prior to starting to operate a recently acquired air compressor, the manufacturer or installer checks to ensure that all the parts are in the right place and are working properly.
- *Routine inspections* are inspections carried out on a regular basis in a given work area. They cover all working conditions, including work hazards, processes and practices.

This pamphlet covers mainly routine, regular and planned inspections. However, the principles that apply in these types of inspections can easily be adapted to other types of inspections.

Legal Requirements

Under Part II of the *Canada Labour Code*, employers have a duty to protect the health and safety of any person in their employ or to whom they provide access to the work places they are responsible for. The *Code* also enumerates a series of specific obligations that employers must meet. Regular work place inspection and compliance with minimal requirements prescribed in the *Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations* are probably the two best ways of fulfilling those responsibilities.

In fact, employers must ensure that all or part of the work place is inspected every month by the work place committee or the health and safety representative, so that the entire work place is fully inspected in the course of each year.

It is important that relevant sections of the *Regulations* be consulted prior to and during the inspection. For example, for inspections of machinery and equipment, the standards set out in Part XIII of the *Regulations* entitled “*Tools and Machinery*” should be reviewed. Inspection of electrical material is explained in Part VIII, “*Electrical Safety*”.

Important points to remember:

- Routine inspections are a critical component of a good accident prevention, occupational disease and fire prevention program.
- Routine inspections help to ensure that work places are in compliance with the requirements laid out in the *Canada Labour Code* and the *Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*.

Role of Routine Inspections in a Prevention Program

The goal underlying routine work place inspections must be part and parcel of a comprehensive prevention program that focuses on health and safety. Far from being isolated, this function is directly related to the main program objectives, which are:

- to identify health and safety hazards in the work place;
- to develop health and safety standards and procedures;
- to establish preventive controls;
- to monitor the effectiveness of controls.

When correctly performed, routine inspections serve to support and improve other elements of the program components. They should not be seen as an isolated or one-time activity. To be effective, they must be performed regularly and be an integral part of a systematic accident prevention program.

As with any other aspect of a prevention program, it is important for senior management to demonstrate its commitment to inspections and the goals they are intended to achieve. The first step to making that a reality is to develop and disseminate a prevention policy that places special emphasis on inspections. The form and content of that policy can vary according to your business's requirements, but the following are all points to be considered when developing such a written policy:

- senior management's commitment to inspections and recognition of their importance;
- the role of inspections in carrying out the general aims of the company with respect to work place health and safety;
- the designation of individuals who will be responsible for ensuring the proper operation of the inspection system;
- measures required on the part of both the employer and employees to abide by the spirit and intent of the *Code* and its *Regulations*.

To ensure the effectiveness of your inspection system, the second step is to develop specific procedures identifying:

- the frequency of inspections;
- the work places requiring inspection;
- responsibility for conducting inspections, reviewing recommendations and implementing corrective measures;
- the qualifications of the individuals who will be carrying out the inspections, that is those who have the necessary experience, training and knowledge of the work stations and operations involved.

There are four steps to setting up a good work place inspection program:

1. Planning the action to be taken.
2. Physical inspection of premises.
3. Writing reports.
4. Following up on recommendations.

Step One: Planning the Action to be Taken

Ideally, routine inspections should be performed by a team consisting of the work place manager, the floor supervisor, an employee with a good knowledge of the various processes and procedures, and an employee who is a member of the work place committee or the work place representative.

The composition of the team can vary depending on which work stations are to be inspected and specific technical requirements. When inspecting equipment and work processes and practices, the team should be able to rely on an expert, such as an engineer, an electrician, a mechanic or a material handler.

The effectiveness of an inspection depends on the ability of the team members to identify hazards. This requires a good knowledge and understanding of:

- the nature of industrial processes, tasks and operations;
- the relevant safety requirements and standards, whether they are identified in the *Regulations* made under Part II of the *Canada Labour Code*, were developed by your organization or are derived from other sources;
- the full range of hazards associated with equipment, machines, processes and the work environment;
- previous accidents and work areas that are problematic from the standpoint of work place health and safety.

If you don't already have them, we strongly recommend developing "floor plan guides" to enable you to identify the main pieces of equipment, workflow and storage and traffic areas; it is also important to note any information that may be relevant for inspection purposes, for example, the location of first aid kits, fire extinguishers, ventilation outlets, sewers, etc. You should also identify work areas that are problematic and pose specific hazards.

Appendix A provides a sample floor plan layout. This guide can also be used for other purposes, such as introductory training for new employees, investigations or the preparation of accident reports.

Step Two: Physical Inspection of Premises

No work place can be considered perfectly safe. As a result, all work places including offices, storage areas and maintenance areas need to be inspected. You should also inspect areas that are not generally used as work places, such as parking facilities, cafeterias and locker rooms. When determining the number of inspections to be performed and how often they will occur, the following points should be considered:

- the number and scale of the processes, operations or tasks to be inspected;
- hazardous equipment requiring inspections at fixed intervals;
- processes that pose a significant hazard, requiring separate and more frequent inspections;
- the number of shifts, because work activities may vary from one shift to another;
- introduction of a new process or new machine in the work place, requiring a special inspection.

It is important to remember, however, that the entire work place must be inspected *at least once a year*.

To ensure consistency and avoid possibly disastrous oversights, it is recommended that you prepare checklists that identify all potential hazards. These lists should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they reflect changes to equipment or processes, as well as accident reports.

Appendix B presents a sample checklist. The most effective lists are those that relate to a particular process, activity or work station. In the case of small businesses, they can even address a particular task or worker. In our view, each work station should have its own checklist.

They are developed gradually, with repeated inspections, so that after several years of intensive effort, all business processes are covered. Your organization should design its own lists, based on the processes in place and the experience it has gained. It is important to remember that your work environment can present unique hazards. Your checklists are your points of reference, but do not limit yourself to the items on the lists. When other hazards are identified, they have to be recorded and appropriate steps taken to address them. Once you have done that, your inspection will be complete.

In conducting inspections, the following basic principles should be considered.

- Although they may need to ask questions, members of the inspection team should not unnecessarily interrupt the work of employees or in any way seek to assign blame for hazards that may have been identified.
- It is important to draw people's attention to any hazard that may exist. Less important hazards can await the final report. There are "risk tables" that can be used to that end (CSA Z796-98).

Step Three: Writing Reports

If it becomes necessary to take steps to mitigate or eliminate a risk, management must be made aware of the problems in a concise and factual manner. Good reports make it easier to obtain management's support for observations made as a result of inspections. While the *Canada Labour Code* does not spell out what an inspection report should contain, we recommend that you develop and use a form for that purpose (Appendix C).

Inspections will only be truly effective if the findings are quickly passed on to stakeholders and corrective action is immediately contemplated and implemented.

It is important to identify those persons who will be receiving inspection reports.

They may include:

- work place manager;
- department managers;
- supervisors;
- members of the work place committee;
- work place health and safety representative;
- health and safety coordinator;
- maintenance manager.

Step Four: Following up on Recommendations

In order for inspections to be a meaningful part of any prevention program, the information collected must be analyzed and put to use. To that end, a person must be designated to take responsibility for analyzing the situation and determining what action is required.

No matter how well conducted, an inspection will only be worthwhile if the concerns noted by the team are carefully examined and appropriate corrective action is taken.

The reporting and the skill levels of the individuals given this responsibility will vary from one organization to the next, but it is important to remember the following points when assigning responsibility for reviewing inspection reports.

- Analyzing of inspection reports is one of the primary functions of the work place committee and the work place health and safety representative.
- At least one of the persons responsible for reviewing inspection reports should have the authority to take or determine the necessary corrective measures and to delegate that authority, as appropriate.
- Certain issues may require the opinion of an expert, such as an engineer or an industrial hygienist.
- It is important to inform those performing the inspections of any follow-up measures that are to be taken, in order to boost their motivation.
- If, during an inspection, concerns are raised that pose an immediate danger, these concerns should be immediately reported to the responsible supervisor or manager, and corrective action should be taken at once.

It is just as important to ensure that those who are responsible for performing inspections receive timely feedback. Clearly, if there is no feedback or demonstration of interest, they will quickly conclude that inspections are a pointless exercise.

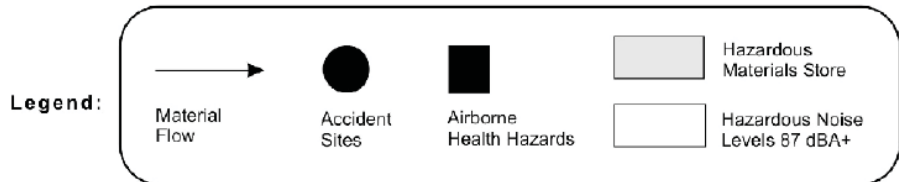
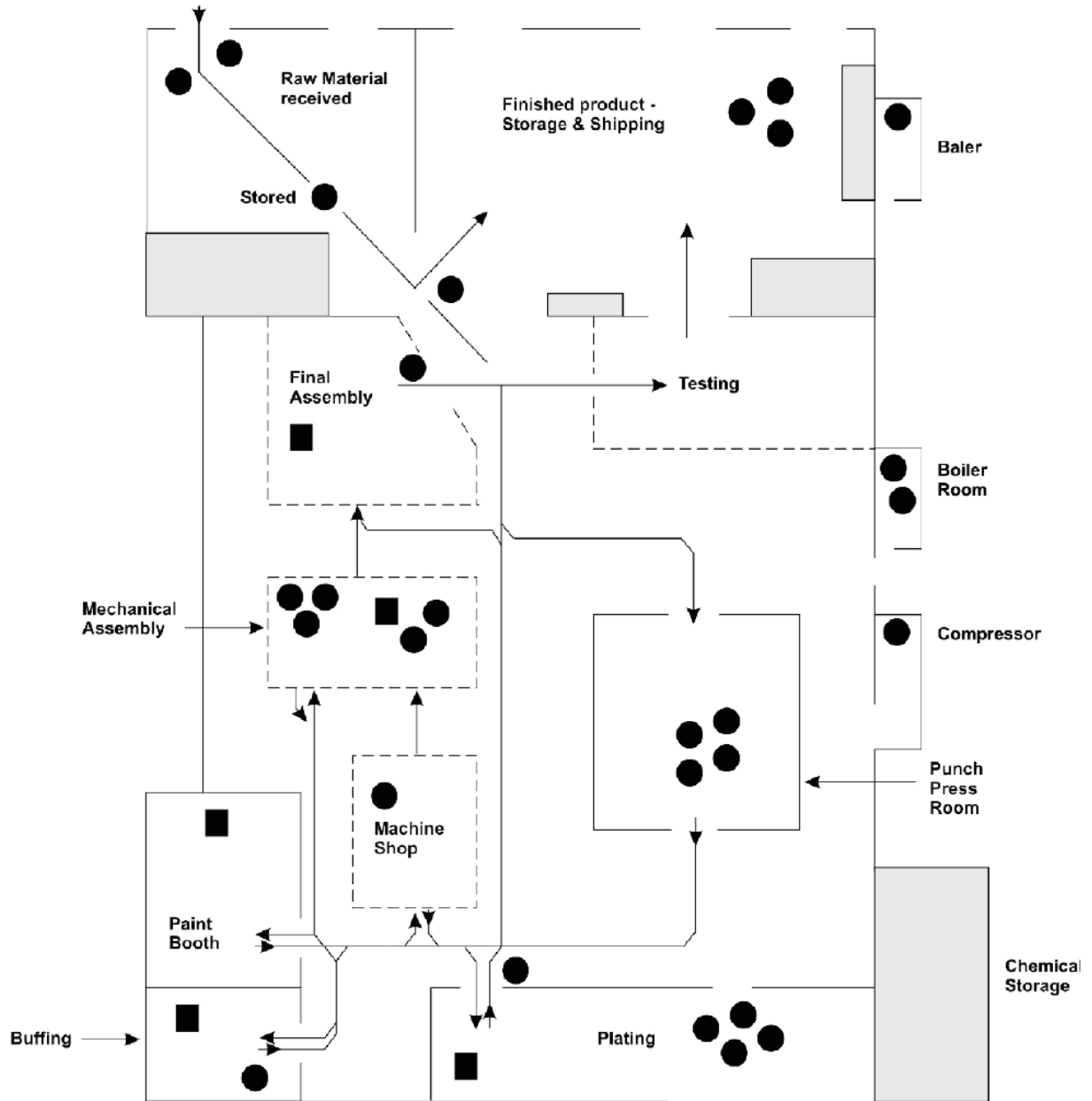
Finally, information obtained from regular inspections should be subject to a comprehensive analysis in order to determine which areas are in need of general corrective measures, and to identify trends as part of the effectiveness auditing program. Diligent analysis of inspection reports has the potential to accomplish, in particular, the following:

- identify the need for training in certain areas;
- explain why certain types of accidents occur in certain areas;
- establish an order of priority for corrective action;
- help to establish healthy work methods or improve existing methods;
- identify areas, equipment, tasks, etc., for which a more in-depth risk analysis would be helpful.

The guidelines and basic principles laid out in this booklet deal with how to establish and perform effective work place inspections as part of a prevention program. Anyone responsible for carrying out work place health and safety inspections, particularly work place health and safety committee members and representatives, will find it useful.

Appendix A

Sample Floor Plan Layout



Appendix B

Sample Inspection Check Sheet

1. Ventilation	<input type="checkbox"/> Fumes <input type="checkbox"/> Vapors	<input type="checkbox"/> Dusts <input type="checkbox"/> Others	
2. Yards and Buildings	<input type="checkbox"/> Access <input type="checkbox"/> Structure condition	<input type="checkbox"/> Aisles <input type="checkbox"/> Roads	<input type="checkbox"/> Work areas <input type="checkbox"/> Housekeeping
3. Floors, Stairways and Walkways	<input type="checkbox"/> Condition <input type="checkbox"/> Housekeeping	<input type="checkbox"/> Guardrails <input type="checkbox"/> Illumination	<input type="checkbox"/> Handrails
4. Ladders, Scaffolds, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Suitability <input type="checkbox"/> Properly used	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Properly maintained	
5. Excavations	<input type="checkbox"/> Shored or sloped <input type="checkbox"/> Access	<input type="checkbox"/> Barricaded <input type="checkbox"/> Spoilage piles	
6. Illumination	<input type="checkbox"/> Day – Work areas <input type="checkbox"/> Night – Work areas	<input type="checkbox"/> Passageways <input type="checkbox"/> Passageways	<input type="checkbox"/> Cours <input type="checkbox"/> Cours
7. Electrical Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/> Condition	<input type="checkbox"/> Identification of controls	
8. Harmful Materials	<input type="checkbox"/> Storage	<input type="checkbox"/> Handling	
9. Personal Protective Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/> Adequacy <input type="checkbox"/> Availability	<input type="checkbox"/> Condition <input type="checkbox"/> Used	
10. Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/> Controls accessible <input type="checkbox"/> Condition	<input type="checkbox"/> Lock-out procedures <input type="checkbox"/> Operating procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Controls identified
11. Machine Guards	<input type="checkbox"/> Power Transmission	<input type="checkbox"/> Point of operation	
12. Hand Tools	<input type="checkbox"/> Condition	<input type="checkbox"/> Suitability	
13. Portable Power Tools	<input type="checkbox"/> Condition	<input type="checkbox"/> Suitability	<input type="checkbox"/> Grounded <input type="checkbox"/> Double insulated
14. Hoisting Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/> Controls layout <input type="checkbox"/> Safety devices	<input type="checkbox"/> Rigging <input type="checkbox"/> Records	<input type="checkbox"/> Signals
15. Materials Handling Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/> Condition <input type="checkbox"/> Controls	<input type="checkbox"/> Guards <input type="checkbox"/> Records	
16. Material Storage	<input type="checkbox"/> Stability	<input type="checkbox"/> Convenience	<input type="checkbox"/> Housekeeping
17. First Aid	<input type="checkbox"/> Supplies <input type="checkbox"/> Condition of Supplies	<input type="checkbox"/> Qualified attendant if required	<input type="checkbox"/> Records
18. Fire Prevention	<input type="checkbox"/> Equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Firefighting training	<input type="checkbox"/> Exits <input type="checkbox"/> Evacuation training	<input type="checkbox"/> Flammable materials controlled <input type="checkbox"/> Fire prevention training
19. Work procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Report each observation of unsafe practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Of faulty procedure	
20. Health and Safety Program	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Safety Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Part II of the Code posted	

- √ Indicates satisfactory condition.
X Indicates faulty condition. Give details on follow-up - see following page.

Follow-up Details Inspection Check Sheet

1. Ventilation:	
2. Yards and Buildings:	
3. Floors, Stairways and Walkways:	
4. Ladders, Scaffolds, etc.:	
5. Excavations:	
6. Illumination:	
7. Electrical Equipment:	
8. Harmful Materials:	
9. Personal Protective Equipment:	
10. Equipment:	
11. Machine Guards:	
12. Hand Tools:	
13. Portable Power Tools:	
14. Hoisting Equipment:	
15. Materials Handling Equipment:	
16. Material Storage:	
17. First Aid:	
18. Fire Prevention:	
19. Work procedures:	
20. Health and Safety Program:	

Appendix C

Sample Work Place Inspection Recording Form

Inspection Location:
Date of Inspection:
Time of Inspection:
Department/Areas Covered:

OBSERVATIONS

FOR FUTURE FOLLOW-UP

Item <i>(and Location of Item)</i>	Hazard(s) Observed	Repeat		Recommended Action	Responsible Person	Action Taken	Date
		yes	no				

Copies to:
Inspection by:
For action:
For information:

Notes
