

WORKPLACE INSPECTIONS

IDENTIFY

Inspections go a long way toward preventing work-related injuries and illness. They might be demanded and conducted by regulatory authorities in response to complaints or serious incidents — or they can be a key component of an organization's workplace safety and health (WSH) program.

Regularly scheduled, well-managed inspections can:

- Identify potential problems/hazards.
- Identify deficiencies in equipment and/or machinery.
- Assess and determine the degree of compliance.
- Demonstrate management support for the safety and health program.

Implementing regular inspections is also one way an employer's general legal duties can be met, as outlined in the WSH Regulation Part 2.4(1).

Effective inspections examine all factors (equipment, process, materials, buildings, environment, and procedures) that have the potential to cause injury or illness, and identify where action is necessary to control hazards.

The range of items to inspect can vary greatly, depending on the activities undertaken by the organization.

Inspections should be conducted by a team consisting of both management and worker representatives.

Those conducting the inspection should be familiar with the workplace, task, or job and be knowledgeable about the kinds of hazards that might be present. They should also be aware of the legal requirements that apply, as well as an organization's WSH requirements.

COMMUNICATE AND CONTROL

All personnel involved in inspections should receive training on how to perform an inspection, what to look for, developing corrective actions, assigning corrective actions to the appropriate people, target dates for completion, and follow up.

Workplace hazards range from faulty or inadequately guarded equipment to unsafe work practices. They can be:

- **Biological** – caused by organisms such as viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites.
- **Chemical** – caused by solid, liquid, vapour, gas, dust, fume, or mist.
- **Ergonomic** – caused by anatomical, physiological, and psychological demands on the worker, such as repetitive and forceful movements; vibration; temperature extremes; and awkward postures arising from improper work methods and improperly designed workstations, tools, and equipment.
- **Physical** – caused by noise, vibration, energy, weather, heat, cold, electricity, sharp tools, pinch points, struck by, slips trips, falls, radiation, and pressure.

To ensure that all items are covered during the inspection, it is useful to use checklists. These should never be considered as permanent but reviewed and revised as necessary. Many different checklists are available from a variety of sources and are usually generic, so they might need some alteration to meet the needs of a specific workplace, task, or job.

Forms also can be obtained to help ensure that the information collected is recorded properly so it can be analyzed and put to use. To that end, someone should be designated to take responsibility for the analysis and determine what action is required.

The report should state exactly what has been detected and accurately identify its location. A priority level can be assigned to the hazards observed to indicate the urgency of the corrective action required.

After each listed hazard, the recommended corrective action and correction date should be specified. Corrective actions should be assigned to people who have the authority within the organization to complete them. Each inspection team member should review the report for accuracy, clarity, and thoroughness.

COMMUNICATE AND CONTROL

The report should describe problems in a concise, factual way so management is able to understand and evaluate them, assign priorities, and reach decisions quickly.

If permanent correction will take time, a temporary measure should be implemented immediately, such as roping off an area, locking out equipment, or posting warning signs.

The WSH committee or worker safety representative should review progress of the recommendations, especially when they pertain to the education and training of employees.

THE QUIZ

- Workplace inspections should only be conducted when regulatory authorities demand them:
TRUE _____ FALSE _____
- Workplace inspections can help determine how well an organization is complying with WSH legislation:
YES _____ NO _____
- Which of these are among the items examined in workplace inspections?
 - Equipment
 - Materials
 - Processes and procedures
 - Buildings
 - All of the above
- It is NOT necessary for anyone conducting an inspection to be familiar with the workplace, tasks or jobs involved, or with the hazards that might be present:
TRUE _____ FALSE _____
- Which of these are the types of hazards that might exist in the workplace? (Circle all that apply.)
 - Biological
 - Physical
 - Psychological
 - Chemical
- Inspection checklists should be reviewed regularly and revised when necessary:
TRUE _____ FALSE _____
- What should recommend corrective action and a correction date for each hazard found in an inspection?
 - Checklists
 - Inspection report
 - Workers' Compensation Board
 - All of the above
- Inspections should be conducted by a team consisting of both management and worker representatives.
TRUE _____ FALSE _____
- Does your workplace undergo regular, planned inspections?

ANSWERS:

1. FALSE; 2. YES; 3. e; 4. FALSE; 5. a,b,c,d; 6. TRUE; 7. b;
8. TRUE; 9. Site-specific answer