

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

ESSENTIAL OUTCOMES

After completing the lesson on this chapter, if nothing else, students should be able to explain the importance of occupational health and safety. They should be able to describe how OH&S affects everyone in society and consider the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups in OH&S. Further, they should consider how OH&S is enacted in organizations by OH&S professionals and human resources managers.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this chapter, students should be able to:

- explain how occupational health and safety affects us all
- define occupational health and safety, occupational injury, and occupational illness
- describe the financial and social costs associated with occupational injuries and illnesses
- discuss the development of modern models of health and safety management
- list and describe the roles of the major stakeholders in occupational health and safety
- explain the connection between human resource management and occupational health and safety
- describe the links between human resource practices and health and safety

KEY CONCEPTS

- Occupational health and safety has evolved over time, beginning in Canada in the late 1800s and becoming formalized through the implementation of legislation such as the Canadian Labour (Standards) Code and the Canadian Labour (Safety) Code in the 1970s.
- The attitude towards responsibility for health and safety has shifted from the worker to a more balanced responsibility shared by the employer and the employee.
- Health and safety is important to employers, employees, and the general public because workplace accidents and injuries have significant economic, legal, and moral/ethical implications.
- The major stakeholders in occupational health and safety include government, employers, employees, and organized labour.
- Health and safety professionals and human resources professionals play key roles in the administration and implementation of occupational health and safety programs and services.

STUDENT MOTIVATION

Students who are taking this course as part of a human resources management program will be interested in learning through this introductory chapter about how occupational health and safety

fits within the HRM framework, and may be motivated enough to consider making occupational health and safety their HR specialty. Students taking the course as a stand-alone course or for other reasons may be motivated to learn about the history and development of occupational health and safety by contemplating their own safety concerns as workers, and by comparing their own experiences to those of workers who have gone before them without the health and safety benefits and safeguards they currently enjoy.

BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Students who have never worked in sectors with significant or obvious health and safety risks (manufacturing, construction, mining/forestry, etc.) may have some difficulty relating directly and personally to the issues introduced in this opening chapter. Even so, use of broad examples of the types of hazards present in jobs such as retail or clerical functions can help students relate to the material.

Other students may have some perceived bias (either positive or negative) relating to labour unions, which are described in this opening chapter as key stakeholders in occupational health and safety. This possibility presents an opportunity for instructors to poll or otherwise engage their class in a discussion about their views, and to encourage learners to reflect on (and perhaps challenge) their assumptions and attitudes.

Additionally, some students may find the topic “boring” or dry and therefore have a diminished sense of importance. It is important to have the students be fully engaged at the outset of the course and as such it is often helpful to ask students about their hobbies, and extracurricular activities, especially for those who may never have held a job. Have the students consider how this material might apply to those activities, in particular for people who may be considered professionals and get paid for performing such activities. Alternatively, it is often helpful to have students think of someone they look up to or consider a leader and then discuss how OH&S might apply to their roles.

Finally, some students may come to this class with the mindset that responsibility for occupational health and safety “belongs to someone else,” such as their employer, the government, or a health and safety agency. Through this introductory chapter, be sure to reinforce the central concept that occupational health and safety is a shared responsibility of multiple stakeholders, inclusive of each and every working individual.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND LESSON PLAN

1. Engaging Students at the Outset

- a. Learning Objective:** *At the completion of this activity, students will have identified factors that contribute to a safe learning environment, and will have related those aspects to the topic of creating safe work environments.*

As this is likely the first meeting of the class, during the first 10 minutes use the major lesson theme of safety to help set the tone for creating a safe and effective learning environment. Using either a “think–pair–share” approach or an “image map” handout (a page with random clip art images students can use as representative symbols), ask students to identify things that to them

represent an effective learning environment. After sufficient contributions have been recorded on a flip chart or white board, look for themes and use them to create a “class charter” with which you and the students will co-create and share responsibility for creating and maintaining this positive and safe environment for learning. For example, “charter” items that may emerge could include things like “it feels safe to ask questions,” “we will respect time by starting and ending class on time,” “we will talk one at a time, unless working on group activities,” and so on. (Note: Be sure to record the charter for electronic posting or to print and distribute at the beginning of the next class.) By placing an emphasis on co-creating a safe environment for learning, you can effectively link this exercise to the importance of co-creating and maintaining a safe working environment, thus creating an excellent bridge to the course topic.

2. Lesson Engagement Strategies

- a. Learning Objective:** *At the completion of this activity, students will have considered how occupational health and safety affects us all.*

To help students to understand the societal impact of occupational health and safety, discuss some major occupational health and safety incidents in Canada, such as the Lac-Mégantic rail disaster described in OHS Today 1.1. Prompt students to brainstorm on the varied impacts disasters of this type have on the community, its services, and the people who live there.

A further discussion on the broad-reaching importance of OH&S is to discuss the job experiences of people close to the students in this class. Considering how hazard exposure can affect loved ones can help to impress upon students the value of a safe workplace. A resource that may help to generate discussion are the advertisements developed by the Worker’s Compensation Board of Nova Scotia’s “Workplace Injuries Hurt the Most at Home” campaign. The videos associated with this campaign can found at <http://www.worksafeforlife.ca/Home/Injury-Prevention/Prevention-Campaigns/Impact-of-Workplace-Injuries>. The video emphasizes that family relationships are a motivation to work safely. The Threads of Life organization is also a helpful resource, and one that was instrumental in the development of the advertisements used by the WCB in Nova Scotia. This organization provides programs and resources to those who are impacted by workplace injuries, illnesses, and fatalities. More information can be found at <https://threadsoflife.ca/>

- b. Learning Objective:** *At the completion of this activity, students will have identified with the issue of workplace injury and put a human face on workplace injury statistics.*

In introducing this chapter, Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2 illustrate important statistics on the prevalence of **workplace injuries and deaths in Canada**. To help make these statistics more real to students, instigate some form of polling to find out how many students have at some point in their working lives themselves been injured, and/or personally know someone who has been injured while at work. This could be accomplished through a simple show of hands or the use of “clickers,” or by asking students to pair up and interview each other on the topic.

- c. **Learning Objective:** *At the completion of this activity, students will have reflected on the economic cost of work-related injury and considered how a work-related injury might affect them personally.*

When discussing the **economic costs of work-related injury**, ask students to reflect on what the financial impact on them might be if they suddenly found themselves unable to work and therefore earn money, and discuss with a partner. How might a complete or partial loss of income affect them? How might it affect others who depend on them? It is also helpful to ask students if they have had anyone in their family support unit provide financial support to them during school and, if so, how they might be impacted if those were injured or developed a workplace illness and were unable to work. Encourage the students to put themselves in the place of an injured worker, or of an employer who depends on the productivity of a worker who is no longer available due to an injury at work. This reflective activity will help to put a human face on the statistics discussed earlier in the chapter.

- d. **Learning Objective:** *At the completion of this activity, students will have identified the various responsibilities for workplace health and safety borne by each of the major stakeholder groups identified in the chapter.*

In the section “**The Stakeholders**” prepare and post a separate flip chart sheet for each stakeholder group. You may limit this to the groups discussed in detail in the text (i.e., government, employers, employees, organized labour) or include more of the groups identified in Table 1.1. Have students freely move from chart to chart recording their thoughts and understanding of health and safety responsibilities for each group. When their ideas are exhausted, review the charts comparing their contributions to the information in the text, and discuss/comment on any additional or missing aspects. Draw students’ attention to the Internal Responsibility System (OH&S Notebook 1.1) and the manner in which stakeholder groups share overall responsibility for occupational health and safety.

- e. **Learning Objective:** *At the completion of this activity, students will have discussed the four major aspects identified in the chapter related to the role of human resources in occupational health and safety.*

When reviewing **the role of human resources in health and safety**, have students pair up and briefly discuss the three areas described. To reinforce the growing role of occupational health and safety in the field of human resources management, show the class one or two current job postings for occupational health and safety specialists (possibly from <http://www.Monster.ca> or <http://www.Workopolis.ca>). Have the students further consider how occupational health and safety professionals complement the roles of HR professionals in the OH&S domain.

3. Lesson Plan Notes

A. Introduction—Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Stakeholders

Engage students in a discussion about the three principal rights that provide the basis for much of the health and safety legislation in Canada. Employers and employees both play a vital role in

the fulfillment of the basic right to participate in knowing, identifying, and correcting OH&S problems.

- The right to refuse dangerous work without penalty.
- The right to participate in identifying and correcting health and safety problems.
- The right to know about hazards in the workplace.

B. The Importance of the Management of Occupational Health and Safety in Organizations

Engage students in a discussion about the factors that underlie the need for human resource managers and others in organizations to understand and implement effective OH&S policies and programs. Have the students discuss the importance of open and strong communication between HR departments that do not necessarily have the safety department within their portfolio of responsibilities.

- New technologies have led to new health and safety concerns (e.g., repetitive strain injury)
- The public's decreased tolerance for work-related hazards.
- Rising direct and indirect costs associated with workplace injuries and illnesses.
- Organized labour ensuring both the proper management of workplace safety and bringing emerging OH&S issues to management's attention.
- Legislation requires employers to take every reasonable precaution to ensure the safety of their employees (due diligence).
- Employers have a moral obligation to employees, their families, and the community to provide a safe work environment.
- Safety departments are often closer to frontline employees who are frequently exposed to hazards
- Safety departments' initiatives can often have an impact on some of the various functions of HR including performance management and employee engagement, and it is important that these do not work against each other or negatively impact the work that happens within each department.

C. Historical Development of Modern OH&S

Discuss historical examples of injuries and illnesses that brought world attention to industrial and technological hazards. Engage the students in a discussion about historical work-related concerns that occurred before and during the Industrial Revolution, leading to a discussion of new workplace injuries and illnesses due to the advent of new technologies. You can show pictures, tell stories, and give examples of early tragedies (e.g., in *Alice in Wonderland* “Mad Hatters” were men who became mad due to mercury poisoning while manufacturing felt hats; Japanese families living in fishing villages ate fish contaminated by mercury dumped into the water by manufacturing companies, resulting in their children being born with physical and mental birth defects; and exposure to chemicals and dust in manufacturing companies led to severe respiratory and skin diseases). These historical events brought the world's attention to workplace hazards. Ask students for examples of current workplace injuries or illnesses that are in the news.

Refer to OH&S Today 1.2, “A Predictable Path to Disaster at Westray,” as an example of how the focus of OH&S is expanding to encompass broader views of workplace health.

Give an overview of the development of Canadian OH&S standards and legislation that grew out of society’s emerging concern (historical tragedies) about workplace OH&S. Use PowerPoint slides.

In 1889, the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labour in Canada made several recommendations about improving OH&S, including these:

- Establishment of standards and mandated regular inspections.
- A system for compensating victims of industrial accidents, regardless of fault.
- That a labour bureau be created to oversee these activities.

In 1974, the Royal Commission on the Health and Safety of Workers in Mines, formed by the Ontario government, was the first to articulate the three principal rights of workers that continue to be enshrined in current legislation. These rights provide the basis for much of H&S programming in Canada.

- The right to refuse dangerous work without penalty.
- The right to participate in identifying and correct OH&S problems.
- The right to know about hazards in the workplace.

In 1988, legislation was passed that established the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS).

In 2004, Bill C-45 (also called the Westray Bill—the Act to amend the Criminal Code) became law in Canada and established a duty in criminal law (criminal liability of organizations) to protect the health and safety of everyone in the workplace. (Refer to the text OH&S Today 1.4, “Direct and Indirect Costs of Injury”). CBC has a video on the Westray Disaster.

More recent developments in OH&S in Canada include an increased focus on prevention of incidents, illness, and injury and a focus on mental, as well as physical, health at work.

In conclusion, highlight that the result of continued improvements to OH&S legislation has led to a continued decline in the number of workplace accidents.

D. Changing Perspectives on Risk and Liability

Ask the students if they believe certain individuals are more likely to be involved in accidents than others (i.e., accident proneness). Engage students in a discussion about how historical attitudes and thinking about OH&S and liability have changed over time. Before the early 1900s, the *assumption of risk* stated that when a worker accepted employment, he or she also accepted the risks associated with that job and workplace. The attitude of both employers and employees was that occupational injuries were caused by *worker carelessness*, *accident proneness*, and the worker’s failure to act safely. Few workers were compensated unless it was solely the

responsibility of the employer. Modern OH&S attitudes, thinking, and liability recognize that enhancing OH&S requires cooperation and a *shared responsibility* among multiple stakeholders, such as government, employers, and workers. Following the First World War, federal and provincial governments began to enact legislation to protect workers that included compensation, employer liability, and workplace practices to prevent accidents and illnesses. Bill C-45 established organizational liability under the Criminal Code.

Conclude by emphasizing that the change in attitudes, thinking, and liability about OH&S from the careless worker to the shared responsibility approach has led to improved workplace OH&S.

E. Health and Safety Financial and Social Costs

Ask students to list (and calculate if possible) the financial costs of an injury or illness in their workplace. OH&S Today 1.3 “The Healthy Workplace Movement” will help them to identify the types of costs involved. If the students have access to the Internet they can use the WorkSafeBC Small Business Safety Calculator or the Tourism and Hospitality Safety Calculator (<http://www.worksafebc.com>) to create their own accident scenario and calculate the accident costs for their industry, including incident, investigation, damage, replacement, and production costs.

Have students share their lists (and calculations). List all the financial costs in two columns (direct and indirect) on a white board/overhead/computer projector screen.

Examples of direct costs that can result from a work-related injury or illness:

- worker’s lost time
- investigation time
- finding/training replacement worker
- increased WCB premiums

Examples of indirect costs that can result from a work-related injury or illness:

- potential increase in WCB assessment
- potential fines and legal costs
- family impact/stress
- pain and suffering from long-term effects of injury
- employee stress

Refer again to the text OH&S Today 1.3, “The Healthy Workplace Movement,” to illustrate additional examples of indirect and direct costs that can result from a work-related injury. Expand on other costs such as these: unhealthy behaviour, work stoppages and strikes, negative publicity caused by a death or serious public health problem, failure to retain employees, emotional impact, and increased WCB insurance premiums. Refer to OH&S Today 1.1, “Rail Disaster at Lac-Mégantic,” and 1.2, “A Predictable Path to Disaster at Westray,” to provide illustrations of costs of workplace hazard exposure and the benefits of promoting a healthy workplace.

Ask students to discuss other reasons, besides economic, that should be considered in the control of workplace hazards. Engage the students in a discussion about the legal, moral, and social reasons to ensure workplaces are safe.

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

To quickly assess student learning against the chapter learning outcomes, at the end of the class:

- Ask for volunteers to recall the definitions of occupational health and safety, occupational injury, and occupational illness without referring to their notes or the text.
- Refer back to learning activity b and ask students to summarize the key points of their conversations.
- Conduct a brief pop quiz of the key events and legislative timelines described in the section, Developments in Canadian Legislation and OH&S Programs.
- Refer back to the stakeholder flipcharts created in learning activity d.
- Refer back to the student conversations during learning activity e, and ask a few students to reiterate their key take-away from the discussion.
- Ask students to reflect on at least one thing they have learned that has changed the way they view their current or past employment experiences.

REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING

Good teaching requires the practice of ongoing self-assessment and reflection. At the completion of this lesson, you may find it helpful to reflect on the following, and consider whether or not you want or need to make any adjustments for subsequent lessons.

- What worked in this lesson? What didn't?
- Were students engaged? Were they focused or did they go off on tangents?
- Did I take steps to adequately assess student learning?
- Did my assessments suggest that they understood the key concepts?
- What (if anything) should I do differently next time?
- How can I gather student feedback?
- How can I use this feedback for continuous improvement of my teaching?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Weblinks for Occupational Health and Safety specialists job postings:

- <http://www.monster.ca>
- <http://www.workopolis.ca>
- WCB Nova Scotia “*Workplace Injuries Hurt the Most at Home.*” This video depicts the impact that workplace illnesses and injuries have on the home life of those injured and their families. These advertisements will aid your discussion of Learning Activity “a” and can be found at: <http://www.worksafeforlife.ca/Home/Injury-Prevention/Prevention-Campaigns/Impact-of-Workplace-Injuries>
- *WorkSafe BC DVD. Lost Youth Video—Four Stories of Injured Young Workers.* Michael, Jennifer, John, and Nick all speak of losing their youth after suffering serious workplace accidents. Through dramatic recreations of these accidents and one-on-one discussions with

the young people and their parents, *Lost Youth* tells four stories of lives forever altered. The video can be downloaded from

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/videos/lost-youth-four-stories-of-injured-young-workers/full-version?lang=en>

- WorkSafe BC has an app that allows you to access OH&S relevant videos. It is available through iTunes and GooglePlay.

SUGGESTED ANSWERS TO CASES AND EXERCISES

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the following statement: Occupational health is a concern for us all.

Answer: This statement is illustrated by the rail disaster at Lac-Mégantic, an occupational health and safety incident, which left 47 people dead, and resulted untold psychological strain for the living who experienced the event as well as continued environmental concerns for the community. Several elements of occupational health and safety are highlighted in this incident including safety climate, safety management systems, regulatory oversight, and auditing, which are all indeed a matter of public safety. Furthermore, there are hazards associated with just about every job, and these have the potential to affect not just employees, but their customers and/or clients as well. Furthermore, OH&S incidents are costly to society from financial and social societal perspectives. For example, the costs of treatment for work-related illness are often borne by the public health care system. Further, when an individual is hurt at work, members of their family suffer as well.

2. Why have people historically been more concerned about work-related injuries than work-related illnesses?

Answer: The effects of industrial diseases often do not become apparent or visible for years, are indirect, and are complicated by many other factors, which can range from lifestyle to lack of knowledge/research to unsafe acts. Workplace injuries, on the other hand, are immediate, direct, and highly visible, often involving emergency situations.

3. How has our understanding of personal liability for accidents changed over the years?

Answer: Attitudes, thinking, and liability about OH&S historically were quite different from today. Before the early 1900s, the *assumption of risk* stated that when a worker accepted employment, he or she also accepted the risks associated with that job and workplace. The attitude and belief of both employers and employees was that occupational injuries were caused by *worker carelessness*, *accident proneness*, and the worker's failure to act safely. Few workers were compensated unless it was solely the responsibility of the employer. Modern OH&S attitudes, thinking, and liability recognize that enhancing OH&S requires cooperation and a *shared responsibility* among multiple stakeholders, such as government, employers, and workers. However, throughout the early part of the 20th century, federal and provincial governments

began to enact legislation to protect workers; these new laws addressed compensation, employer liability, and workplace practices to prevent accidents and illnesses. In 2004, Bill C-45 became law and established organizational liability under the *Criminal Code* and the possibility of criminal charges for some OH&S incidents.

4. For what reasons, besides humanitarian ones, should workplace hazards be controlled?

Answer: Beyond the moral/ethical imperatives to provide safe workplaces because it is the right thing to do, employers, employees, and the public should control workplace hazards for economic and legal reasons. Directly and indirectly, work-related injuries and illnesses cost Canadians billions of dollars annually, and these costs need to be minimized and managed by the human resource department and occupational health and safety professionals. Direct and indirect costs include incident, investigation, damage, replacement, and production costs. Other costs can include these unhealthy behaviour, work stoppages and strikes, negative publicity resulting from a death or serious public health problem, failure to retain employees, emotional impact, and increased WCB insurance premiums. Employers are legally responsible for ensuring the health and safety of all their workers. An employer must take all care and precautions that are reasonable in the circumstances to protect the well-being of workers or coworkers to meet the legal OH&S standard of due diligence. An ongoing OH&S program that controls specific hazards in the workplace forms the basis of due diligence. An employer that has all the OH&S program elements required by legislation, both in effect and working well, is acting with due diligence. The minimal OH&S program elements include these: statement of aims and responsibilities, inspection of premises, equipment, and work; written instructions; management meetings; investigation of accidents/incidents; maintenance of records and statistics; and instruction and supervision of workers.

5. Who are the stakeholders in health and safety? What roles do they play?

Answer: There are many stakeholders in OH&S. These groups include workers, families, communities, educators, and industry groups. Four predominant OH&S stakeholder groups are government, employers, employees, and organized labour (i.e., unions).

The two main goals of government OH&S legislation are (1) to ensure that injured workers receive compensation and that employers accept liability, and (2) to prevent incidents and illness by establishing safe work environments. Governments also provide platforms by which to share research and knowledge about OH&S. For example, the federal government created the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety (CCOHS) as a vital OH&S research and resource organization: visit <http://www.ccohs.ca>.

The employer, owner, or management team plays a critical role in OH&S because they have the authority and responsibility to ensure legislative compliance. They are responsible for the following: providing and displaying a written OH&S policy; providing and maintaining equipment, materials, and protective devices; ensuring and monitoring safe work practices; reporting occupational injuries and illnesses; establishing OH&S committees; and providing OH&S training for management and workers.

Employees have multiple roles, both as individuals and as members of organized groups. Workers are responsible for performing their duties and tasks in a safe and responsible manner, wearing protective equipment in compliance with company and legislative regulations, reporting defective equipment and other workplace hazards to the employer, and exercising the right to refuse to carry out a dangerous activity.

OH&S committees and organized labour bring emerging OH&S problems and issues to the attention of governments and employers and pressure other stakeholders to take corrective actions.

Stakeholders can support safe working conditions by collaborating and sharing information, resources, and expertise with other OH&S stakeholder groups. Visit <http://www2.worksafebc.com/Topics/YoungWorker/Resources-YoungWorkers.asp>

6. What types of roles do occupational health and safety professionals play in workplaces? How does the organization benefit from hiring someone highly trained in OH&S?

Answer: OH&S professionals may differ in their particular educational backgrounds and areas of expertise but all are skilled in some area related to the practice of OH&S. Many are certified holding a designation such as the Canadian Registered Safety Professional (CRSP) designation. Occupational health and safety professionals can provide managers and human resource experts with the help they need to develop, manage, and evaluate an OH&S program and to engage in specialized OH&S activities in workplaces. For example, an industrial hygienist brings expertise in hazardous situations in workplaces. An ergonomist is able to provide advice on ideal workstation and work-positioned arrangements. It is a sound investment for organizations to hire someone highly trained in OH&S, as these professionals play a vital role in the creation and maintenance of healthy and safe workplaces.

Exercises

1. How do organizations treat occupational health and safety? Visit the websites of some major corporations in your area. Search them for information on health and safety. Who in the organization administers health and safety programs? What kinds of programs are in place?

Answer: Answers in this case will vary depending on the organizations the students review. OH&S is almost exclusively formally managed under the human resources function in large organizations and informally managed by management in smaller organizations. Health and safety is a critical responsibility of all human resource management for reasons such as the following:

- It is a people issue.
- It requires legislative compliance.
- It requires integration with other human resource functions.
- It increases OH&S benefits and decreases costs.
- It is about building a strong health and safety culture.

- It is part of the business plan.
 - It is about change management.
2. For one week, read the local newspapers and listen to the news. Make a note of the main topic of every article or item relating to occupational health and safety. What roles are the media playing? What OH&S issues are most likely to gain attention? Give reasons for your answers.

Answer: The media provide a wide range of programming (online, paper, and newscasts) that informs and enlightens citizens around the world about OH&S issues. They make a powerful impact on OH&S by bringing legal, environmental, and public health concerns immediately to the public's attention. They inform and help citizens deal with emergency situations. They help society exchange ideas, opinions, and information through news articles, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor. The media increase public awareness of OH&S issues and share the public's OH&S concerns, opinions, and perspectives.

3. Interview a human resources manager about occupational health and safety. What is HR's role in the effective management of occupational health and safety at work? What HR functions are involved in meeting health and safety requirements?

Answer: Occupational health and safety is usually managed under the HR function for these reasons:

- Safety is integrated in other HR functions.
- Safety requires legislative compliance.
- Safety decreases costs.

An HR manager's role is to understand and implement effective OH&S systems, policies, programs, and initiatives that are part of the organization's strategic approach. OH&S is an integral part of all HRM functions, including these: legislation review, job analysis (i.e., identify hazards of the job), change management, orientation and training, labour relations, benefits (i.e., provide benefits to support OH&S), performance management (i.e., make safety a performance criterion), disability management, claims management (i.e., employer OH&S affects costs), recruitment and retention, developing policies and procedures (safe work practices), accident inspections and investigations, safety leadership, climate and culture, motivating safety behaviour, wellness practices, retention and turnover (a healthy environment enhances recruitment and retention), and strategic management.

4. What types of programs and awards are available to support organizations to work towards and achieve their health and safety goals? Search the Internet to find out.

Answers will vary.

5. Find out more about the Westray mine disaster by searching the Internet for information on its history and how it has affected the community and the industry. Do you agree with Justice Richard that it was a "predictable path to disaster"?

Answers will vary.

6. Do a scan of job advertisements for OH&S jobs. What types of jobs are being advertised? What industries were they in? What are the educational and background requirements?

Answers will vary.

OH&S in Action

Answers will vary depending on the particular natural resources industry (e.g., fishing, mining, forestry etc.) on which students choose to focus. However, their press release or poster may incorporate elements such as the following:

- Aspects of remembrance of the fatalities, injuries, and illnesses that workers in that industry (and perhaps within the region covered by their association) have experienced. For example, a student focused on the mining industry may recall the Springhill or Westray Mine disasters.
- Elements of the impact of these losses on the communities and families involved. For example, a student focused on the fishing industry might reference memorials to lost fishers that exist in many coastal communities.
- Statistics on the lives lost and injuries/illnesses experienced by workers in that sector.
- Focus on the positive strides that have been made in safety in that industry to prevent future losses and suffering.
- Details on ceremonies taking place to commemorate the Day of Mourning.
- Images of workers in their chosen industry.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Production or Safety?

Students can review the case and answer the questions at the end of the case: Who is at fault here? What can be done to ensure that similar incidents will not occur in the future? *Or* they can approach the case from an inspection point of view and develop a list of critical questions (5 W's and How) to determine who was at fault and what can be done to ensure that similar incidents do not occur in the future. Ask students to identify which questions will help them recognize the root causes of the accident.

To determine who is at fault, and what can be done to ensure that similar incidents will not occur in the future, an inspection needs to be done by the plant manager. Asking the question “What can the owner, management supervisor, and employee do to prevent the accident from recurring?” can identify the root cause of the accident. The safety inspection must identify as many root causes as possible by including human (e.g., unsafe acts), situational (unsafe conditions), and environmental factors (i.e., physical, chemical, biological, ergonomic).

Inspections must be done on a regular basis. An important question to ask in this case is “Was additional care and attention paid to inspections due to the workplace changes resulting from increased production levels?”

Employers are legally responsible to ensure the health and safety of all their workers. They must establish a health and safety program that incorporates OH&S into the organization’s business planning, strategies, and systems, and they must establish plans, policies, and procedures to control hazards once they have been identified. An important question to ask in this case is “Was the owner and management team showing due diligence and a commitment to employee safety?” They should have been aware of the changing conditions to increase production and the various procedures necessary to carry out the work processes safely. Another important question to ask in this case is “Was there an OH&S program, and did supervisors receive training concerning the new workplace conditions?” Policies, procedures, inspections, health and safety committees, training, maintenance of records, and investigations are the core elements of an occupational health and safety program. A joint OH&S committee is required when 20 or more workers are regularly employed in the workplace. Was there a committee established to identify and resolve health and safety programs in the workplace?

The supervisors should do inspections continuously each time they pass through the production area. They are accountable for the safety of workers under their control, and they should have identified the risk factors involved in increasing production. They should have been constantly looking for and correcting any hazards that might arise, such as workers’ unsafe acts (e.g., not wearing protective equipment), unsafe conditions (e.g., the soldering process), and environmental factors (e.g., use of chemicals). Did the supervisor ensure that the employee was adequately trained and aware of all the health and safety hazards? The employee needs to understand his principal rights and responsibilities: to refuse dangerous work without penalty, to participate in identifying and correcting health and safety problems, and to know about hazards in the workplace. Was the employee aware of the risks and hazards involved in working with chemicals and neglecting to wear proper eye protection? Did the employee show a lack of precaution, poor judgment, or inappropriate behaviour? Did the employee deviate from standard job procedures or practices that would require disciplinary action from the supervisor (e.g., failure to use personal protective equipment)?

While the employer is ultimately responsible for the overall safety of all the employees, the supervisor is responsible for ensuring the OH&S of all workers under his or her supervision, and the employee is responsible for following safe workplace procedures and reporting health and safety problems to the Health and Safety Committee that is responsible for identifying and recommending solutions. A safe workplace is the shared responsibility of the employer, supervisor, worker, and Safety Committee.

Case Study 2: Do We Need Health and Safety?

This case is an example of a communication and interest conflict that has arisen due to lack of information and perceived or actual incompatibility of interests (different ways of managing workplace health and safety in an office work environment). This is a complex situation that requires understanding and developing strategies based on many workplace environment

variables, which can range from the organizational culture and context to leadership style to interpersonal relationships, power dynamics, and motivation.

The employee should approach this situation in a collaborative and cooperative way, with attention given to improving working relationships and increasing OH&S awareness and understanding, while reducing defensiveness and resistance, or the escalation of conflict. The employee would initially want to listen and seek out the manager's point of view, interests, and expectations concerning employee health and safety and then share her knowledge of the economic, legal, and moral importance of managing occupational health and safety. The employee should share some examples of specifically researched economic, social, and legal benefits associated with office injuries and illnesses (e.g., computer vision syndrome, repetitive strain and back injuries) and the importance of the identification, evaluation, and control of hazards (i.e., ergonomics) associated with office and computer workstation environments.

She would want to discuss the employees' right to and employer's responsibility for safe working conditions under provincial and federal legislation. She would begin the discussion by referring to the three principal employee rights and her legal responsibility to participate in identifying and correcting OH&S problems. Further discussions could focus on the legal requirement of due diligence, occupational health and safety programs, and the development of a Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

The goal would be to create an organization that supports workplace health and safety through the delicate balance of enforcement and empowerment.

Cumulative Assignment: Well-Mart

Welcome to Well-Mart!

1. Consider the Internal Responsibility System (see OH&S Notebook 1.1) when explaining why Well-Mart employees need mandatory health and safety training. Discuss the implications of a lack of mandatory OH&S program at Well-Mart.

Answer: Well-Mart employees need mandatory health and safety training because workplace incidents carry far-reaching effects for workers, companies, communities, and so forth. The core element of the IRS system is that everyone takes personal responsibility for safety. The notion of mandatory training ensures that each stakeholder understands the economic, legal, and moral obligations and outcomes of safety and workplace incidents. Mandatory training ensures there is a systematic and comprehensive approach to ensure everyone understands what it is they are responsible for and should feel obligated to do/perform. Furthermore, the notion of the system being "internal" means that health and safety should not be contingent upon external legislation, and that a company should not rely on outside organizations such as the ministry of labour or WCB to ensure a company has and maintains a safe work environment. Each person within the organization has specific and personal responsibilities for safety and training is required for each person to know and understand this.

2. What are the benefits of effective OH&S programs for both the employer and the employee?

Answer: Responses to this question can be organized around the imperatives for OHS: economic, legal and moral. From an employer perspective, the benefits of an effective OHS program could include lower direct and indirect costs. Direct costs would include things such as investigation time, damaged equipment, and finding/training a replacement worker. Indirect costs would include things like worker's compensation assessment increases, fines, negative publicity, loss in profits, and so forth. From a legal perspective, the benefits of an effective program include assurance that all legal standards are being met as there are not only potential financial penalties but also criminal ones. Finally, an effective OHS program would ensure that employers are providing the safest work environment possible. Similarly, the benefits for employees could fall under the categories of economic, legal, and moral. Workplace injuries and illness can result in wage loss or reduction even with WCB benefits; furthermore, there can be costs associated with healthcare and so forth. From a legal perspective, an effective OHS program can provide employees with assurance that an employer is meeting their legal requirements as well as ensure that employees are aware of their rights. Finally, an effective OHS program would support the effective and appropriate implementation of the IRS system wherein each individual takes personal responsibility for safety.

3. What are Well-Mart's duties and responsibilities as they relate to the commercial contractors such as the cleaning company?

Answer: Contractors are responsible for the health and safety of anyone at or near the worksite. For Well-Mart they must ensure that all contracted employees are provided with the same safety information as their non-contracted employees (e.g. site-specific information about on-site chemicals, location of safety equipment etc.). It is the responsibility of the contractor (Well-Mart) to ensure that the contracted company understands its legal requirements and moral obligations to ensure its employees are able to work safely at Well-Mart (e.g. employees must have the necessary training, equipment and so forth). Consequently, Well-Mart must perform its due diligence when awarding contractors to outside companies. There are more specific potential requirements discussed in Chapter 2.

4. As the store's health and safety manager, describe some of the barriers that you may encounter when implementing an OH&S program.

Answer: Generally, barriers can include the economic costs of an OHS program (e.g., resources required), the organizational culture (e.g., negative safety cultures do not support safety programs and initiatives—such as the relationship between companies and unions which can often have different perspectives or different needs and goals), and a lack of knowledge about how to go about implementing, monitoring, and evaluating a comprehensive program. Research quoted in the text indicates that some of the many factors that can influence the implementation of an OHS program can include bureaucracy, time pressures, and prioritization of production over safety. Because of the imperatives for health and safety, there are economic costs associated with workplace injuries, illness, and injury. As indicated in the research noted in the text, some

employers do not place a high value on safety and therefore the implementation of a program is challenged. In some situations, managers do not recognize unsafe conditions, or feel unable to do anything about those they do identify, therefore influencing the implementation of a program. Similarly, employers may be unaware of the methods and instruments by which rigorous monitoring of the workplace can be achieved.