

2025 HR Risks to Look Out For



Below is a month-by-month outline of potential “hazards” (risks, pitfalls, or key issues) that Canadian HR leaders should keep on their radar. These items go beyond day-to-day HR tasks and address typical compliance, safety, and workforce management challenges. Of course, every organization and province may have unique considerations, so adapt these suggestions to your specific context.

January

1. New Legislative Changes

- **Potential Hazard:** Missing newly effective laws or regulations (e.g., updates to minimum wage, Employment Standards changes, new provincial/federal leave entitlements).
- **Mitigation:** Check official government websites or subscribe to HR/legal updates. Confirm your policies and employee communications are updated.

2. Inclement Weather & Winter Safety

- **Potential Hazard:** Slip-and-fall accidents in icy parking lots, scheduling disruptions due to snowstorms.
- **Mitigation:** Remind managers and employees about inclement weather policies, including remote work or office closure procedures. Ensure facilities are well-maintained (salted walkways, etc.).

3. Post-Holiday Stress/Burnout

- **Potential Hazard:** Increased sick leave or burnout following the holiday rush.
- **Mitigation:** Promote Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and flexible scheduling where possible.

February

1. T4 Slip Preparation and Distribution

- **Potential Hazard:** Non-compliance with the end-of-February T4 deadline, resulting in fines or employee frustration.
- **Mitigation:** Partner with Finance/Payroll early to validate data and ensure on-time delivery.

2. Valentine's Day & Harassment/Workplace Romance

- **Potential Hazard:** Inappropriate workplace behaviour or perceived conflicts of interest.
- **Mitigation:** Issue friendly reminders on respectful workplace policies; encourage employees to disclose any conflicts (e.g., manager-subordinate relationships).

3. Cold/Flu Season

- **Potential Hazard:** High absenteeism and potential spread of illness.

- **Mitigation:** Encourage sick employees to stay home, emphasize hygiene practices, and review short-term disability or sick leave policies.

March

1. Budget Announcements & Fiscal Changes

- **Potential Hazard:** Federal/provincial budgets can bring changes to payroll taxes, EI premiums, and employer obligations.
- **Mitigation:** Monitor budget announcements, adjust payroll processes, and communicate impacts to employees if needed.

2. Employment Standards & Human Rights Changes

- **Potential Hazard:** Overlooking mid-year adjustments or clarifications in legislation (e.g., new codes of practice for harassment and violence).
- **Mitigation:** Conduct a quarterly policy review to ensure alignment with any newly released government guidelines.

3. Mental Health Continuity

- **Potential Hazard:** Ongoing winter blues leading to reduced productivity.
- **Mitigation:** Offer mental health training for leaders, continue promoting EAP resources, and explore flexible work arrangements.

April

1. Federal Fiscal Year Start (April 1)

- **Potential Hazard:** Federal policy changes or program funding that could affect your sector or federal contracts.
- **Mitigation:** Track relevant government programs or grants; adjust HR budgets and staffing accordingly.

2. Data Privacy & Cybersecurity

- **Potential Hazard:** With tax season ending, HR data (T4s, SINs) can be a prime target for cybercriminals.
- **Mitigation:** Reinforce data handling and cybersecurity best practices, ensure secure online portals, and conduct phishing awareness training.

3. Employee Records Audit

- **Potential Hazard:** Outdated or incomplete files, which could breach privacy laws or create compliance gaps.
- **Mitigation:** Conduct a formal audit of employee data, confirm compliance with privacy legislation (PIPEDA or provincial equivalents).

May

1. Mental Health Awareness Month

- **Potential Hazard:** Not addressing ongoing mental health issues can impact retention, productivity, and legal compliance.
- **Mitigation:** Increase awareness initiatives, facilitate mental health workshops, and encourage open discussions.

2. Ontario's WSIB Rate Adjustments (Province-Specific Example)

- **Potential Hazard:** Changes in Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB) premium rates can affect budget if not anticipated.
- **Mitigation:** Monitor announcements and incorporate changes into financial planning.

3. Summer Student & Intern Preparations

- **Potential Hazard:** Non-compliance with youth labor laws (e.g., hours of work, rest periods).
- **Mitigation:** Train supervisors on the specific rules for interns/students, including fair compensation and safety requirements.

June

1. Heat Stress & Outdoor Work

- **Potential Hazard:** Dehydration, heat stroke, or sun exposure if you have employees working outdoors or in warm conditions.
- **Mitigation:** Provide regular breaks, shaded areas, water stations, and training on recognizing heat-related illnesses.

2. Mid-Year Reviews & Performance Gaps

- **Potential Hazard:** Unaddressed performance issues can escalate into conflicts or terminations without due diligence.
- **Mitigation:** Prompt managers to conduct documented check-ins, implement performance improvement plans (PIPs) as needed.

3. Vacation Scheduling Conflicts

- **Potential Hazard:** Operational disruption due to uncoordinated time-off requests.
- **Mitigation:** Use a central scheduling or HRIS tool, communicate “peak vacation blackout” dates if relevant.

July

1. Summer Events & Alcohol Use

- **Potential Hazard:** Company gatherings with alcohol can lead to harassment claims, impaired driving, or injuries.
- **Mitigation:** Have a clear policy on alcohol consumption, offer safe-ride programs, and ensure managers are trained to handle misconduct.

2. Seasonal High Turnover

- **Potential Hazard:** Employees may job-hunt or relocate during summer, creating staffing gaps.
- **Mitigation:** Monitor engagement levels, offer retention incentives or career development opportunities, and be proactive with recruitment.

3. Bill C-65 (Workplace Harassment & Violence)

- **Potential Hazard:** Federal sector or federally regulated workplaces can face penalties for incomplete compliance.
- **Mitigation:** Update your workplace harassment and violence prevention policy, ensure mandatory training is current and documented.

August

1. Policy & Handbook Updates

- **Potential Hazard:** Neglecting to incorporate legal changes from earlier in the year (e.g., flexible work, vaccination policy changes, statutory leave expansions).
- **Mitigation:** Conduct a thorough mid-year review of the employee handbook; circulate revised policies.

2. Back-to-School Preparations

- **Potential Hazard:** Employees juggling childcare or school schedules may see increased absenteeism or stress.
- **Mitigation:** Offer flexible work hours or remote options if feasible, remind employees of available family/parental leaves.

3. Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) Audit

- **Potential Hazard:** Summer months might see changes in staff or job roles that cause OHS plan gaps.
- **Mitigation:** Revisit hazard assessments and ensure training is provided to new or reassigned employees.

September

1. Strategic HR & Budget Planning

- **Potential Hazard:** Missing deadlines or failing to justify HR initiatives during budgeting can result in underfunded programs.
- **Mitigation:** Work closely with Finance to present ROI for training,

recruitment, and DEI programs; secure leadership buy-in.

2. Flu Season Preparations

- **Potential Hazard:** The fall wave of illness can affect staffing levels and productivity.
- **Mitigation:** Promote flu shots, clarify remote work or sick leave policies, and encourage hygiene practices.

3. Campus Recruitment Launch

- **Potential Hazard:** Losing top talent to competitors if campus strategies are not well-executed.
- **Mitigation:** Solidify your co-op/intern program details, build strong relationships with university/college career centers.

October

1. Open Enrollment & Benefits

- **Potential Hazard:** Errors in communicating plan changes or missing open enrollment deadlines cause employee dissatisfaction and compliance issues.
- **Mitigation:** Provide clear timelines, host info sessions, and confirm final benefit selections well ahead of the renewal date.

2. Fall Weather & Slippery Conditions

- **Potential Hazard:** Wet leaves, early frost, and reduced daylight hours leading to accidents.
- **Mitigation:** Remind employees of safety measures when commuting; maintain facilities and outdoor walkways.

3. Workplace Harassment & Violence Training

- **Potential Hazard:** Complacency in training can lead to escalated incidents or liability under Canadian federal/provincial regulations.
- **Mitigation:** Schedule annual refreshers, track attendance, and address any reported issues promptly.

November

1. Year-End Performance & Compensation Discussions

- **Potential Hazard:** Managerial bias or inconsistent evaluations can lead to employee grievances and pay equity concerns.
- **Mitigation:** Train managers on fair evaluation techniques, maintain documentation, and ensure compliance with pay equity legislation.

2. Winter Weather Preparedness

- **Potential Hazard:** Snowstorms or extreme cold can cause operational shutdowns or health/safety issues for on-site employees.
- **Mitigation:** Revisit emergency closure procedures; communicate guidelines for remote work or flexible scheduling during severe weather.

3. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

- **Potential Hazard:** Diminished daylight can increase depression and absenteeism.
- **Mitigation:** Promote well-being initiatives (light therapy lamps, mental health support), encourage a supportive work environment.

December

1. Holiday Parties & Potential Liabilities

- **Potential Hazard:** Harassment claims, impaired driving, or injuries if alcohol is served; inadvertent exclusion of non-celebrating employees.
- **Mitigation:** Create inclusive celebrations, offer taxi/ride-share vouchers, enforce respectful behavior guidelines.

2. Year-End Compliance Deadlines

- **Potential Hazard:** Missing final payroll runs, statutory holiday pay calculations, or ignoring cutoff dates for benefits.

- **Mitigation:** Align with Finance/Payroll to finalize all calculations, communicate thoroughly with employees about holiday pay or closures.

3. Record-Keeping & Documentation

- **Potential Hazard:** Going into the new year with incomplete performance records, missed termination paperwork, or unarchived employee files.
- **Mitigation:** Conduct a final records audit; ensure all performance reviews, bonus decisions, and policy acknowledgments are filed.

Final Tips

- **Stay Informed:** Each province and territory has unique laws and holiday rules; set up alerts or subscriptions to official government channels.
- **Use HR Insider:** Use our shared calendars and month-in-review to track key legislative deadlines.
- **Proactive Communication:** Send monthly reminders or updates to leadership and employees about upcoming compliance tasks, policy changes, or seasonal safety tips.
- **Document Everything:** Comprehensive documentation is the best defence against disputes, audits, or legal issues.

By anticipating these potential hazards and weaving mitigation strategies into your HR planning, you'll help safeguard your organization and foster a resilient, compliant, and inclusive workplace. Stay safe all year round with HRInsider!