

How to Write an OHS Policy



In most jurisdictions (all but Québec and Yukon), employers are specifically required to have something called an OHS policy, i.e., a written statement signed by management expressing the organization's commitment to health and safety and listing who's responsible for different safety functions. Complying with this requirement isn't as simple as it sounds.

OHS Policy Can't Just Be Hot Air

Just sticking your OHS policy into a binder that gathers dust isn't enough. The policy must be a living, breathing document that evolves over time and that people in the organization actually know about and refer to when doing their jobs. Adding to the complexity is the fact that OHS policy requirements vary by jurisdiction.

10 THINGS TO DO TO MEET OHS POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Here's a Checklist of the 10 things you need to do to meet OHS policy requirements.

1. Put OHS Policy in Writing []

The OHS policy must be in writing and can't be oral or informal.

2. Ensure EHS, HR & Employee Collaboration []

It's important to get the right people at your organization involved in putting together your OHS policy.

3. Use Clear & Simple Language []

BAD	GOOD
Legislative health and safety requirements	Health and safety laws
Prior to	Before
Comply/adhere to safety requirements	Obey safety rules
To the extent that	If
In order to	To
Encourage and promote the participation of workers	Get workers involved
Conduct inspections	Inspect

Review on a regular basis	Regularly review
Integrate good occupational safety practices into all their daily activities	Act safely at work and away from the workplace

4. Express Management Commitment []

Including a statement of management commitment to protect health and safety is either expressly required or a Best Practice.

5. List Health and Safety Responsibilities []

Another legally mandated OHS policy element is the listing of safety responsibilities of various workplace stakeholders, including the employer, supervisors and employees.

6. Include All Other Right Information []

There are other elements the government requires or recommends be in an OHS policy, including a statement of the organization's intention to treat OHS law requirements as a minimum standard and its commitment to provide the resources necessary to effectively implement and monitor the OHS policy.

7. Get OHS Policy Signed []

The OHS policy must be signed and dated by a high management official.

8. Communicate OHS Policy []

It's important to disseminate the OHS policy to the appropriate people in your organization at the appropriate times, e.g., after you first draft it and each time you change it.

9. Review and Update OHS Policy []

You must review and revise the OHS policy on a regular basis.

10. Get People to Follow OHS Policy []

Writing the OHS policy is the easy part; getting managers, supervisors, employees and others to take it seriously is the big challenge. The only way to make that happen is to make compliance with the OHS policy part of the job or, to use fancy language, integrate its requirements into their work regimes.

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