Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committee

• With the introduction of provincial OHS Act changes in 2018 there became a legislated requirement for workplaces such as the university to have a Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committee (Committee). The legislation is quite prescriptive on the make-up and functioning of the Committee.

• EHS worked with all of our employee groups to develop a Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Committee and the first meeting was held in December of 2018. This committee replaced the University’s Health Safety and Security Committee which had been in place since 2010.
Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committee

• The Committee is made up of seven employer representatives who are members of the SLT or MaPS, and 11 worker representatives who are members of AUPE, TUCFA, the Graduate Students Association and the Post Doctoral Association. Alternate members are identified as well.

• There are two co-chairs, one from the employer group and one from the worker group, and the chairing duties alternate.

• All Committee members are required to complete training that is mandated by Alberta Occupational Health and Safety. The university encourages alternates to take this training as well.

• The Committee meets quarterly and the EHS department acts as secretariat for Committee.

• The Committee conducts quarterly inspections and all members rotate through participating on inspections.
Standing Agenda Items

Standing agenda items for Committee meetings include:

- Safety Moment (alternates between employer and worker representatives)
- Health and safety performance
- Review of any serious incidents (reportable to OHS)
- Issues Log
- Interactions with OHS
- Inspection results and status of findings
Terms of Reference

• The TOR enables the Committee to strike sub-committees and there is currently one sub-committee operating. The Worker Consultation sub-committee has been struck to assist EHS with the development of a more formalized worker consultation process describing when and how workers will be consulted in the development of EHS programs, standards and procedures. The sub-committee is also assisting EHS with formalizing a procedure for individuals from the university community to raise issues to the Committee.
Safety Related Concerns

- Safety related concerns should normally be addressed to the satisfaction of workers by line management in the area of the university where the concern arises. If the concern cannot be addressed by line management, or if the issue is one that affects the entire university, the issue can be referred to the Committee. A list of Committee members who can be contacted with a concern is posted on the EHS website along with the minutes from the meetings. If an issue referred to the Committee cannot be resolved by the Committee, the matter can be communicated in writing to the VP F&S and there are legislated requirements governing the response process and timelines. Examples of issues that have been addressed by the Committee are:
  - Improvements to emergency evacuation pathways at Spy Hill
  - Improving visibility of stair risers in lecture halls
  - Improving access to fire extinguishers in laboratories

There is a good spirit of cooperation on the Committee and it has been effective in improving communication and addressing issues of concern which is helping to create a safer workplace for us all.