Safety Moment

Updates to the OHS Act Coming this Fall

University of Calgary | VP Services | Environment, Health and Safety

Published: June 2022
Updates to the OHS Act Coming this Fall

Changes are coming to the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act that may affect members of the university community including contractors engaged in work for the university. The exact date when the updated Act will be proclaimed is not known but it is almost certain to be this fall.
Key Changes

- The need to address psychological and social hazards in the workplace remains in the OHS Act, and has been positioned in the stated purpose of the legislation, rather than directly in the definition of 'health and safety.'

- Prime contractor requirements have been further defined and made more specific. Prime contractors are responsible for coordinating safety for all employers and workers on their construction worksites.

- The role of the Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committee (JWHSC) has been narrowed in scope. Key remaining activities of the Committee are:
  - The receipt, consideration, and dispensation of worker health and safety concerns.
  - Participation in hazard assessments.
  - Making recommendations to the university on health and safety matters.
  - Review of worksite inspection results.
Key Changes

• The definition of ‘dangerous work’ has been clarified and there have been changes to the work refusal process in support of a worker’s right to refuse dangerous work.

• Potentially serious incidents (serious near misses) are no longer required to be reported to Alberta OHS. They are still required to be investigated internally.

• Some sections of the Act are being moved to the OHS Code, where the majority of the specific safety rules are normally found. The Province has not yet published the new Code.

• The required elements of an organization’s health and safety program will no longer be spelled out in the OHS Act. Some of this detail may appear in the Code.
Key Changes

• Most of the changes to the Act are a relaxation of requirements. The EHS department is updating our EHS management system to comply with the changes. The changes will not likely directly impact faculty or staff unless they are involved in a safety incident or issue.

• The OHS Code is a companion document to the OHS Act and contains most of the specific safety rules. Updates to the Code will be announced when the updated Act is proclaimed. The Environment, Health and Safety department will review these changes and will update the university community as the need arises.