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Inspect the Workplace for Safety and Health Hazards

You can identify hazards and hazardous situations by observing operations, inspecting your facility, and talking with workers. Set aside time to regularly inspect the workplace for new and existing safety and health hazards and to address them before incidents occur. Involve workers in both your initial inspection and routine inspections.

To-Do

- Do an initial inspection of all work areas with your workers.
- Create checklists and a schedule for regular inspections.
- Follow up to correct hazards and hazardous situations

Step 1. Do an initial inspection of all work areas

Conduct an initial workplace inspection. Done right, this will help you fix problems before incidents occur. Involve workers and talk with them during the inspection. (See Worksheet 1a for questions you can ask.) Workers know how things are actually done. They also know about past issues, incidents, and close calls that may not be obvious.

Workers or supervisors leading inspections should be trained on questions to ask and what to look for (see the Education and Training worksheets). Consider getting help from third parties like insurance carriers or OSHA's [On-Site Consultation Program](#), especially if the person doing the inspection will need specialized knowledge.

During your inspection, consider:

- **Chemical hazards.** Check Safety Data Sheets and product labels. Identify chemicals that have low exposure limits, are very volatile, or are used in large amounts or closed spaces. Identify activities that might lead to skin exposure.
- **Physical hazards.** Look for problems like slip, trip, and fall hazards; electrical hazards; sources of excessive noise; extreme heat or cold; confined spaces; machine hazards; vehicle/traffic hazards; and sources of radiation.
- **Biological hazards.** Determine whether workers could be exposed to infectious diseases, mold, toxic or poisonous plants, or animal material that could cause allergic reactions or asthma.

- **Ergonomic risk factors.** Examine activities that involve heavy lifting, work above shoulder height, repetitive motions, and/or significant vibration.
- **Exposure assessments.** When possible, use air sampling or direct reading instruments.
- **Medical records.** Look through records for cases of injury, skin irritation, hearing loss, or lung disease that may be workplace-related.

One approach is to ask workers to draw a simple map or diagram of work areas, then mark hazards on it. Have them map out *all* work areas, including support areas such as utility spaces, shipping/receiving areas, and offices. Use the map to create checklists for regular inspections. (But remind your team that they shouldn't limit themselves to the checklists. They should question anything that seems unsafe.)



Put together information from checklists, injury and illness records, trainings, and process and equipment records (such as maintenance logs and failure incident reports) to find problems at the workplace.

Pro Tip

For sample checklists, see OSHA's *Small Business Safety and Health Handbook*:
<https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/small-business.pdf>.

Step 2. Set up routine inspections

Don't just inspect your workplace once. Your inspections should be regular, because:

- **The workplace is constantly changing.** Your business makes changes to compete and keep up with the market. Workers make changes when they face things like poor workplace layout, production pressure, or not having the right equipment.
- **New hazards can appear.** Processes change. Equipment or tools wears out. Maintenance might be neglected, or housekeeping practices might decline.

Set up an inspection schedule that makes sense for you. For example, your schedule might say how often you'll inspect specific equipment or work areas (see examples below). It's a good idea to designate specific supervisors and workers to inspect certain items as part of their job.

Document the results of your routine inspections. This will help you choose hazard prevention and control measures to implement.

Also remember that workers and supervisors should always be looking for hazards and hazardous situations as they perform their daily activities.

Item, process, or area to be inspected	Frequency	Who will inspect
Vehicles	Weekly	
Chemical storage areas	Weekly	
First aid supplies	Monthly	
Washrooms	Daily	
Powered vehicle traffic	Daily	
Assembly line ergonomics	Monthly	