

Chapter Twelve – Self Notes  
**PROMOTING SAFETY AND HEALTH**  
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## SUMMARY

**OUTCOME 1** Occupational health and safety legislation is designed to ensure, so far as possible, safe and healthful working conditions for every working person. In general, these acts extend to all employers and employees. This legislation sets standards, ensures employer and employee compliance, and provides safety and health consultation and training where needed. Both employers and employees have certain responsibilities and rights under these acts. Employers not only are required to

provide a hazard-free work environment but also must keep employees informed about legislative requirements and must require their employees to use protective equipment when necessary. Employers are required to keep employees informed of hazardous substances and instruct them in avoiding the dangers presented. Employees, in turn, are required to comply with safety standards, report hazardous conditions, and follow all employer safety and health regulations.

**OUTCOME 2** To provide safe working conditions for their employees, employers typically establish a formal program that, in a large percentage of organizations, is under the direction of the HR manager. The program may have many facets, including providing safety knowledge and motivating employees to use it, making employees aware of the need for safety, and rewarding them for safe behaviour. Incentives such as praise, public recognition, and awards are used to involve employees in the safety program. Maintenance of required records from accident investigations provides a basis for information that can be used to create a safer work environment.

**OUTCOME 4** Along with providing safer and healthier work environments, many employers establish programs that encourage employees to improve their health habits. Wellness programs that emphasize exercise, nutrition, weight control, and avoidance of harmful substances serve employees at all organizational levels.

**OUTCOME 3** Job conditions that are dangerous to the health of employees are now receiving much greater attention than in the past. There is special concern for toxic chemicals that proliferate at a rapid rate and may lurk in the body for years without outward symptoms. Health hazards other than those found in manufacturing operations—such as VDTs and cumulative trauma disorders—present special problems many firms are addressing with ergonomic solutions.

**OUTCOME 5** An important dimension of health and safety is stress that comes from physical activity and mental or emotional activity. Many sources of stress are job related. Employers can develop stress management programs to help employees learn techniques for coping with stress. In addition, organizations need to redesign and enrich jobs, clarify the employee's work role, correct physical factors in the environment, and take any other actions that will help reduce stress on the job. Unchecked, stress can lead to depression, alcoholism, and drug abuse, which, if severe enough, can be regarded as disabilities. Managers need to be aware of the signs of these diseases and be prepared to help employees via EAPs or counselling and by making reasonable accommodations for the employees' treatment.

### **OUTCOME ONE: SAFETY AND HEALTH – IT'S THE LAW**

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- Occupational health and safety is regulated by the federal, provincial, and territorial governments.
- All HR managers should become familiar with the occupational health and safety laws that apply to their organization.
- **Occupational Injury:** Any cut, fracture, sprain, or amputation resulting from a workplace accident or an exposure involving an accident in the work environment.

- **Occupational Illness:** An abnormal condition or disorder, other than one resulting from an occupational injury, caused by exposure to environmental factors associated with employment.
  - An occupational illness can be acute or chronic; it can result from inhaling, absorbing, ingesting, or directly contacting an illness-causing agent.
- The fundamental duty of every employer is to take every reasonable precaution to ensure employee safety.
  - **Duties of Employers**
    - Provide a hazard-free workplace.
    - Comply with the applicable statutes and regulations.
    - Inform employees about safety and health requirements.
    - Keep records to compile an annual summary of work-related injuries and illnesses.
    - Ensure that supervisors are familiar with the work and its associated hazards.
    - Provide safety training and be prepared to discipline employees for failing to comply with safety rules.
    - Establish a comprehensive occupational health and safety management system; provide competent supervision, training, and instruction; and taking every reasonable precaution in the workplace for the health and safety of employees.
  - **Duties of Workers**
    - Comply with all applicable acts and regulations.
    - Report hazardous conditions or defective equipment.
    - Follow all employer safety and health rules and regulations, including those prescribing the use of protective equipment.
  - **Duties of Supervisors**
    - Advise employees of potential workplace hazards.
    - Ensure that workers use or wear safety equipment, devices, or clothing.
    - Provide written instructions where applicable.
    - Take every reasonable precaution to guarantee the safety of workers.
  - **Duties of Joint Health and Safety Committees**
    - Most jurisdictions require that health and safety committees be set up, with both union and management representation.
    - Establish a non-adversarial climate for creating safe and healthy workplaces.
    - In Ontario, at least one management representative and one worker representative be certified.
      - The certification program provides training in safety laws, sanitation, general safety, rights and duties, and indoor air quality.
- Penalties for violating occupational health and safety regulations vary across provinces and territories.

- Most health and safety acts provide for fines up to \$500,000, and offenders can be sent to jail.
- Bill C-45, also known as the corporate killing law, makes it possible for criminal charges to be brought against coworkers, supervisors, and executives when a worker is killed or injured on the job.
- **Workers' Compensation:** Where injured workers can receive benefits in the form of a cash payout (if the disability is permanent) or wage loss payments (if the worker can no longer earn the same amount of money).
  - Goal is to return the employee to his or her job as soon as possible.
  - Includes unlimited medical aid along with vocational rehabilitation, which includes physical, social, and psychological services.
  - **Industrial Disease:** A disease resulting from exposure to a substance relating to a particular process, trade, or occupation in trade.
  - **3 groups of stress-related disabilities:**
    1. **Physical injuries leading to mental disabilities**
      - Ex. Clinical depression after a serious accident
    2. **Mental stress resulting in a physical disability**
      - Ex. Ulcers or migraines
    3. **Mental stress resulting in a mental condition**
      - Ex. Anxiety over work-load or downsizing leading to depression

## **OUTCOME TWO: PROMOTING A SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT**

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- Employers are required by law to provide safe working conditions for their employees.
- The HR department coordinates the safety communication and training programs, maintains safety records required by legislation, and works closely with managers and supervisors in a cooperative effort to make the program a success.
- The success of a safety program depends largely on managers and supervisors of operating departments.
- **Creating a Culture of Safety**
  - Exists when everyone within an organization consciously works to improve its safety and health conditions.
  - HR managers can create a culture of safety within an organization by encouraging supervisors to incorporate safety into their interviews with job candidates through behavioural-type questions.
  - **5 important topics of a safety training program:**
    1. First aid
    2. Defensive driving
    3. Accident prevention techniques
    4. Hazardous materials
    5. Emergency procedures

- **Enforcing a Safety Rules**
  - Specific rules and regulations concerning safety are communicated through supervisors, bulletin board notices, employee handbooks, and sign attached to equipment.
  - Safety rules are also emphasized in regular safety meetings, at new-employee orientations, and in manuals of standard operating procedures.
  - Penalties for violations of safety rules are usually stated in the employee handbook.

**FIGURE 12.2**

**STEPS IN A SUCCESSFUL SAFETY INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

- Obtain the full support and involvement of management by providing cost benefits.
- Review current injury and health statistics to determine where change is needed.
- Decide on a program of action and set an appropriate budget.
- Select a realistic safety goal such as reducing accidents by a set percentage, improving safety suggestions, or achieving a length of time without a lost-time injury. Communicate your objectives to everyone involved.
- Select incentive rewards on the basis of their attractiveness to employees and their fit with your budget.
- Develop a program that is both interesting and fun. Use kickoff meetings, posters, banners, quizzes, and/or games to spark employee interest. Give all employees a chance to win.
- Communicate continually the success of your program. Provide specific examples of positive changes in behaviour.
- Reward safety gains immediately. Providing rewards shortly after improvements reinforces changed behaviour and encourages additional support for the safety program.

- **Investigating and Recording Accidents**
  - Every accident, even those considered minor, should be investigated by the supervisor and a member of the safety committee.
  - Employers are required to keep certain records and to compile and post annual summaries of work-related injuries and illnesses.
  - From these records organizations can compute their incidence rates (Ex. number of injuries and illnesses per 100 fulltime employees during a given year).
    - 200,000 = the base for 100 fulltime workers who work 40 hours a week, 50 weeks a year.

$$\text{Incidence rate} = \frac{\text{Number of injuries and illnesses X 200,000}}{\text{Total hours worked by all employees during period covered}}$$

**OUTCOME THREE: CONTROLLING AND ELIMINATING HEALTH HAZARDS**

- Occupational health and safety legislation was clearly designed to protect the health and safety of employees.

- Pressure from the federal government and unions, as well as increased public concern, has given employers a definite incentive to provide the safest and healthiest work environment possible.
- **4 types of safety hazards and issues:**
  1. **Fatigue**
    - Fatigue is more of a problem in organizations that operate around the clock or have night shifts.
    - The regulations in certain industries limit the number of hours employees can work per shift.
  2. **Distracted Driving**
    - People who send text messages while driving are 3 times more likely to crash than other drivers, and distracted driving accounts for 80% of all accidents.
  3. **Workplace Violence**
    - Physical assault
    - Threatening behaviour, such as shaking fists or throwing objects
    - Verbal or written threats
    - Harassment – any behaviour that demeans, embarrasses, or humiliates
    - Verbal abuse, including swearing, insults, or condescending language
    - Physical attacks, including hitting, shoving, pushing, or kicking
  4. **Workplace Emergencies**
    - An unforeseen situation that threatens employees, customers, or the public; disrupts or shuts down operations; or causes physical or environmental damage (Ex. chemical spills, explosions, fires, tornadoes).
    - **Emergency Action Plan:** A plan an organization develops that contains step-by-step procedures for dealing with various emergency situations.
      - Must include, among other things, procedures for reporting a fire or other emergency, evacuating a facility, and accounting for employees after an evacuation.
- **Crisis Management Teams:** Composed of both hourly and managerial employees – conducts initial risk assessment surveys, develops action plans to respond to violent situations, and performs crisis intervention during violent, or potentially violent, encounters.
  - Required to perform crisis intervention through positive counselling techniques in the event of violent incidents (Ex. death of a worker causes an employee to experience shock, guilt, resentment, etc..).

**FIGURE 12.4**

**CALMING AN ANGRY EMPLOYEE**

If you try to defuse a tense situation, remember that anger frequently results from a person's feeling of being wronged, misunderstood, or unheard. Keep the following tips in mind to guide you:

- Strive to save the employee's dignity during an angry confrontation. Do not attack a person's rash statements or continue a muddled line of thinking.
- Hold all conversations in private. Do not allow the employee to create an embarrassing public situation for himself or herself, yourself, or other employees.
- Always remain calm. Anger or aggressiveness on your part will trigger a similar response in the employee.
- Listen to the employee with an open mind and nonjudgmental behaviour. Give the employee the benefit of hearing him or her out.
- Recognize the employee's legitimate concerns or feelings. Agree that the employee has a valid point and that you will work to correct the problem.
- If the employee is very emotional or if the engagement seems out of control, schedule a delayed meeting so people can calm down.
- Keep the discussion as objective as possible. Focus on the problem at hand, not the personalities of individuals. A cornerstone of conflict resolution is to "attack the problem, not the personality."
- If the employee appears overly aggressive, withdraw immediately and seek professional help before any further discussion with the employee.
- If your efforts fail to calm the employee, report the incident to your manager, security, or HR personnel.

Source: Adapted from professional literature on crisis management and seminars attended by the authors.

**OUTCOME FOUR: CREATING A HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT & BUILDING BETTER PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH AMONG EMPLOYEES**

- **Ergonomics:** Focusing on ensuring that jobs are designed for safe and efficient work while improving the safety, comfort, and performance of users.
  - Designing equipment controls to be compatible with both the physical characteristics and the reaction capabilities of the people who must operate them and the environment in which they work is critically important.
- **Cumulative Trauma Disorders:** Injuries involving tendons of the fingers, hands, and arms that become inflamed from repeated stresses and strains.
- **3 groups of computer workstation issues:**
  1. **Visual difficulties** – Blurred vision, sore eyes, burning and itchy eyes, and glare.
  2. **Muscular aches and pains** – Pains in the back, neck, and shoulders.
  3. **Job stress** – Eye strain, postural problems, insufficient training, excessive workloads, and monotonous work.
- **3 elements of Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS):**
  1. **Labels** – Designed to alert the worker that the container holds a potentially hazardous substance.
    - The supplier and workplace labels must contain specified and regulated information, including product identifiers and data on safe handling and material safety.

- 2. **Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs)** – Identifies the product and its potentially hazardous ingredients and suggests procedures for handling the product safely.
  - Must be comprehensive and be in both French and English.
- 3. **Training** – Workers must be trained to check the labels and to follow specific procedures for handling spills.
- **Smoking and Tobacco Smoke** – Health care costs are higher for smokers; for this reason, some employers are charging smokers more for extended health insurance or are reducing their benefits. Many employers, however, prefer positive reinforcement through wellness programs to encourage employees to stop smoking.

**FIGURE 12.6**

**COMPUTER WORKSTATION ERGONOMICS CHECKLIST**

Use the following list to identify potential problem areas that should receive further investigation. Any “no” response may point to a problem.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the workstation ensure proper worker posture, such as           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thighs in the horizontal position?</li> <li>• Lower legs in the vertical position?</li> <li>• Feet flat on the floor or on a footrest?</li> <li>• Wrists straight and relaxed?</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Does the chair           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjust easily?</li> <li>• Have a padded seat with a rounded front?</li> <li>• Have an adjustable backrest?</li> </ul> </li> </ol> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide lumbar support?</li> <li>• Have casters?</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Are the height and tilt of the work surface on which the keyboard is located adjustable?</li> <li>4. Is the keyboard detachable?</li> <li>5. Do keying actions require minimal force?</li> <li>6. Is there an adjustable document holder?</li> <li>7. Are armrests provided where needed?</li> <li>8. Are glare and reflections minimized?</li> <li>9. Does the monitor have brightness and contrast controls?</li> <li>10. Is there sufficient space for knees and feet?</li> <li>11. Can the workstation be used for either right- or left-handed activity?</li> </ol> |
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Source: The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), *Elements of Ergonomics Programs: A Primer Based on Workplace Evaluations of Musculoskeletal Disorders* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 1997).

**Building Better Physical And Emotional Health Among Employees**

- **Depression:** Negative emotional state marked by feelings of low spirit, gloominess, sadness, and loss of pleasure in ordinary activities.
  - Because depression lowers individual productivity, causes morale problems, increases absenteeism, and contributes to substance abuse, it is important for managers to identify signs of depression on the job and to learn to deal with depressed employees.
  - When confronted with depressed employees, managers and supervisors are encouraged to be concerned with the employee’s problem, be an active listener, and – should the depression persist – suggest professional help.
- **Alcoholism** is a disease that follows a fairly predictable course.
  - The first step in helping the alcoholic is to awaken the person to the reality of his or her situation.

- A supervisor should carefully document evidence of declining performance on the job and then confront the employee with unequivocal proof that the job is suffering.
- **Abuse of illegal drugs** can result in the loss of productivity, increases in number of accidents and injuries, and rising rates of employee theft.
  - Employees who abuse drugs often do not realize they have become addicted or how their behaviour has changed as a result of their addiction.
  - Human rights legislation prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, and drug and alcohol dependency is considered to be a disability.
  - Human rights laws prohibit pre-employment drug or alcohol testing or random testing of current employees.

### **OUTCOME FIVE: JOB STRESS AND BURNOUT**

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- **Stress:** Any adjustive demand caused by physical, mental, or emotional factors that require coping behaviour.
  - **Eustress:** Positive stress that accompanies achievement and exhilaration.
  - **Distress:** Harmful stress characterized by a loss of feelings of security and adequacy.
    - **Burnout:** The most severe stage of distress manifesting itself in depression, frustration, and lose of productivity.
- Stress places both men and women at risk for cardiovascular problems, depression, and increases employee susceptibility to infectious diseases.
  - All of these contribute to higher health care costs and can lower productivity, job satisfaction, and retention.
- **4 sources of job-related stress:**
  1. **High Demand:** Having too much to do in too short a time.
  2. **High Effort:** Having to expend too much mental or physical energy over too long a period.
  3. **Low Control:** Having too little influence over the way a job is done on a day-to-day basis.
  4. **Low Reward:** Receiving inadequate feedback on performance and no recognition for a job well done.
- **7 types of job stressors (not limited to):**
  1. Layoffs and organizational restructuring
  2. Disagreements with managers or fellow employees
  3. Prejudiced because of age, gender, race, or religion
  4. Inability to voice complaints
  5. Poor working conditions
  6. Lack of privacy
- Many employers have developed stress management programs to teach employees how to minimize the negative effects of job-related stress.

- A typical program can include instruction in relaxation techniques, coping skills, listening skills, methods of dealing with difficult people, time management, and assertiveness.
- All these techniques are designed to break the pattern of tension that accompanies stress situations and to help participants achieve greater control of their lives.
- Organizational techniques such as clarifying the employee's work role, redesigning and enriching jobs, correcting physical factors in the environment, and effectively handling interpersonal factors.