



What is Occupational Health and Safety?



As Canadian Occupational Safety celebrates 50 years, here's a look at major events in occupational health and safety over the last 5 decades.

Fifty-two years ago, a workplace tragedy that killed five immigrant workers became the catalyst for reforms on occupational health and safety.

The Hogg's Hollow disaster of March 1960 sparked public outcry that caused the Ontario government to modernize safety regulations, leading to the enactment of the Industrial Safety Act in 1964. In the same decade, the federal government passed the Canada Labour (Safety) Code, setting out laws and regulations for safety of workers in the federal jurisdictions.

Around the same time as these major developments, Canadian Occupational and Safety magazine was born. The very first issue of COS magazine hit the streets in March 1963, and was published by Cash Crop Farming, a small publishing firm in Delhi, Ont.

A lot has happened since then, and in honour of the 50th anniversary of the magazine the Canadian OHS community has come to rely on for their regular dose of health and safety information, we're looking back at some of the most unforgettable events in safety history in the last half-century.



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

1964



1964: Safety Defined

The Industrial Safety Act is enacted replacing the Factory, Shop and Office Building Act. Safety is defined as %freedom from injury to the body or freedom from damage to health.+Employers were required to take such precautions as are reasonable to ensure worker safety.



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

1968



1968: Canada Labour (Safety) Code takes effect

The code prescribes laws and regulations pertaining to occupational health and safety of workers in the federal jurisdiction.



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

1972



1972: Saskatchewan Leads

In passing its own Occupational Health and Safety Act, Saskatchewan institutes the concept of internal responsibility system by making health and safety a joint responsibility of employer and employees and requiring the establishment of joint health and safety committees. It enshrines three fundamental rights of workers; the right to know about the hazards in the workplace; the right the to participate in health and safety discussions at work; and the right to refuse unsafe work.



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

1974



1974: Striking Miners

Uranium miners in Elliot Lake, Ont. Stage protests unsafe working conditions and high incidence of lung cancer and silicosis. In response, the Ontario labour ministry establishes a Royal Commission led by Dr. James Ham, to study and make recommendations to improve health and safety of mine workers.



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

1976



1976: Beyond the mines

The Royal Commission publishes the Ham Report with over 100 recommendations. The occupational health and safety division is formed with four branches: mines safety, construction safety, industrial safety and occupational health. The Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals is formed as a certification body for safety practitioners.



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

1978



1978: Ontario responds

The Ontario Health and Safety Act passes, incorporating the internal responsibility system and recommendations from the Ham Report.



What is Occupational
Health and Safety?

1978



1978: CCOHS is born

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) is established, providing health and safety information, training and education.



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

1985



1985: Remembering the fallen

Canada Labour Congress declares April 28 as a Day of Mourning, an annual day of remembering workers who are killed on the job.



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

1986



1986: JHSC goes national

Canada Labour Code requires joint health and safety committees for every organization.



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

1988



1988: WHMIS established

Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) is established and requires education workers about chemicals in the workplace and how to protect themselves from the hazardous materials.



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

1992



1992: Westray tragedy

Explosion at Westray coal mine in Pictou County, Nova Scotia, kills 26 miners. An inquiry follows the tragic incident and finds negligence and abuse on the part of mine owners and government inspectors. Criminal charges are filed against Westray owner Curragh, Inc. and four of its managers. Ministry of Labour officials, including the minister, are dismissed and replaced.



What is Occupational
Health and Safety?
1997



1997: NAOSH Week is born

The first North American Occupational Safety and Health Week is celebrated.



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

1998



1998: WSIB is born

New Conservative government disbands Ontario's Workplace Health and Safety Agency, revamps the workers' compensation system and creates the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB).



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

1999



1999: Young workers

A series of workplace fatalities involving young workers result in the establishment of the Young Worker Awareness Program spearheaded by the Industrial Accident Prevention Association and Workers' Health and Safety Centres.



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

2001



2001: 9/11

Terrorists hijack two passenger planes and crash them in the north and south towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City. Minutes later, another hijacked plane crashes in the Pentagon, and another on the ground near Pennsylvania. More than 3,000 people are killed in these terrorist attacks, including firefighters, police officers and other emergency responders. The event changes the world's view on safety and security.



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

2004



2004: Criminal liability

Bill C-45, a provision amending the Criminal Code, passes into law. The bill imposes criminal liability of occupational health and safety violations resulting in injury or death. It allows for criminal prosecution of organizations, including corporations, their representatives and those who have authority to direct the work of other. Bill C-45 is also known as the Westray Bill, after the Westray mine explosion of 1992.



What is Occupational Health and Safety? 2008



2008: Four years later...

Quebec firm Transpave Inc. becomes first company to be convicted of criminal negligence under Bill C-45 following the death of a young worker. Transpave ends up with a \$100,000-fine. It would be three years until Canada sees another Bill C-45 conviction.



What is Occupational Health and Safety? 2009



2009: Workplace violence

Ontario passes Bill 168, a legislation amending the Occupational Health and Safety Act to include provisions for the prevention of workplace violence and harassment. Ontario joins other provinces, including British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Prince Edwards Island, in addressing workplace violence and/or harassment through regulations.



What is Occupational Health and Safety? 2010



2010: Confined space

Canadian Standards Association releases the first national standard on the management of work in confined space. CSA Z1006 is a voluntary standard that defines best practices for confined space work, and was developed with input from industry sectors such as energy and mining.



What is Occupational Health and Safety? 2010



2010: Tony Dean reports

The Ontario health and safety review panel, headed by University of Toronto professor Tony Dean, releases its recommendations to improve the province's health and safety prevention and enforcement system. Included in the recommendations are: the appointment of the first-ever Ontario chief prevention officer; the creation of a multi-sector Prevention Council; and the transfer of prevention functions from the WSIB to the Ministry of Labour.



What is Occupational Health and Safety?

2011



2011: Canada's Safest Employers

Canada's Safest Employers Award honours outstanding companies that are making a difference in promoting the health and safety of their workers. Five companies emerged as the inaugural winners, earning the honour of being Canada's Safest Employers.



What is Occupational Health and Safety? 2012



2012: Canadian Occupational Safety turns 50!

Celebrating 50 years as Canada's premier source of information for the health and safety community, COS magazine continues to find better ways to engage health and safety professionals, providing relevant information in print, online and in person.