

Workplace Hazard Assessment Guide

A step-by-step process for identifying, assessing, and controlling workplace hazards under Ontario's OHSA.

[Hazard Assessment](#) [Risk Control](#) [OHSA](#) [Employer Duties](#) [Supervisor Tool](#) [PPE](#)

A workplace hazard assessment is a systematic process of identifying potential dangers and evaluating the risk they pose. Employers and supervisors have a legal obligation under Ontario's OHSA to identify hazards and implement controls before workers are exposed to harm. This guide walks you through the four-step assessment process.

What Is a Hazard?

A hazard is any source of potential harm — equipment, substances, procedures, or conditions that could cause injury or illness. Hazards are not always obvious. Supervisors must look beyond the physical environment to include procedural, ergonomic, and psychosocial risks.

Common Workplace Hazard Types

- Machinery and moving parts
- Chemical and biological substances
- Heavy lifting and ergonomic issues
- Slip, trip, and fall hazards
- Noise and air quality
- Violence and harassment

The Four-Step Assessment Process

Step 1 — Identify Hazards

- Walk through each work area systematically
- Observe tasks as they are actually performed
- Interview workers about their concerns
- Review past incident and near-miss reports

Step 2 — Assess the Risk

- Evaluate the likelihood of harm occurring
- Consider the severity of potential injury
- Prioritize high-risk hazards for immediate action
- Document findings for each hazard identified

Step 3 — Control the Hazard

Apply controls in this order — always start at the top of the hierarchy.

- Elimination — Remove the hazard entirely from the workplace
- Substitution — Replace with a safer material, process, or equipment
- Engineering Controls — Modify equipment, tools, or workspace design
- Administrative Controls — Change procedures, schedules, or training
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) — Last resort, never the first solution

Step 4 — Document and Monitor

Record all hazards identified, the risk level assigned, the controls implemented, and the person responsible for follow-up. Review your assessment regularly — at minimum annually, and immediately after any incident, near-miss, or significant change in work processes or equipment.

Getting Started

Use this checklist to launch your first hazard assessment.

- Assign a responsible person to lead the assessment
- Involve workers — they know the hazards best
- Use a hazard assessment form to document findings
- Prioritize and address high-risk hazards first
- Create an action plan with assigned owners and timelines
- Follow up monthly or whenever changes occur on site

A hazard assessment is not a one-time event — it is an ongoing process. The employer who identifies hazards early and controls them systematically protects workers and demonstrates due diligence under the OHSA.