

Workplace Safety Inspections



SAFETY PROGRAM: WORKPLACE SAFETY INSPECTIONS

PREAMBLE

Workplace inspections are a key element of the MRU Environmental Health & Safety Management System. An effective workplace inspection program ensures that hazards in the workplace are identified and addressed as a proactive way to prevent incidents. They do not replace hazard assessments, but serve as a means of monitoring the effectiveness of hazard controls that have been implemented.

Regular inspections will:

- Proactively identify potential hazards that may have not been previously noted
- Confirm the effectiveness of hazard controls already in place
- Demonstrate commitment to health and safety through employee participation and a formal reporting/monitoring process

This safe work procedure was developed to supplement the MRU EHS policy and meets provincial legislation requirements regarding workplace incident reporting.

SCOPE

This procedure applies to all Mount Royal University Faculties/Units, Departments, Divisions, Institutes, Programs and Centres, including common areas and workplaces that may be unique to a Faculty or Department (e.g. laboratories, workshops, or theatre spaces).

This procedure does not apply to tool and equipment inspections, which are addressed in the [Tools and Equipment Safety Program](#).

Facilities Management also performs an annual space audit of all spaces within the University, including shared or common spaces. Though the focus of the inspection is usage and asset condition, FM personnel also identify hazards in the area (particularly those related to assets or use) and submit corrective actions. Further information on the annual space audit can be obtained through Facilities Management.

LEGISLATION

Regular workplace inspections are legislated under the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act Part 5, Section 37.

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RESPONSIBILITIES

Executive (President, Vice-Presidents)

- Provide management support and leadership necessary to provide a safe and healthy working environment for employees and students, in compliance with the Mount Royal Health and Safety Policy.
- Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement corrective measures identified in workplace inspections.
- Provide means and procedures for employees to report on workplace investigations.
- Require compliance with the inspection procedures.
- Consult and cooperate with EH&S and the MRU Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee to ensure that safety issues and concerns are addressed appropriately and in a timely manner.

Associate Vice-Presidents, Deans, Directors, and Department Managers

- Ensure that Safety Advisory Group inspections are being completed as outlined in this program.
- Ensure implementation of corrective actions to address deficiencies identified in the workplace inspections.

Supervisors, Chairs

- Provide time for Safety Advisory Group members to complete quarterly inspections of assigned work spaces.
- Review and approve workplace inspections, including corrective actions, and ensure that copies are submitted to EH&S.
- Ensure corrective actions are completed in a timely manner.

MRU Employees (Staff, Faculty, or Volunteers)

- Participate in workplace inspections, when available or approached by Manager, to assist in identifying risks, hazards, and/or addressing action items.

Safety Advisory Group (SAG) Members

- Perform inspections of assigned work areas prior to each quarterly meeting.
- Suggest corrective actions to address identified deficiencies, including due dates and responsible parties.
- Report any high risk hazards immediately to those directly affected by the hazard and the Department head.

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- Submit the inspection report to Department Supervisor for review and approval before submitting copies of the completed inspections to EH&S.
- Participate in workplace inspection training.

Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee (JOHSC) Members

- Perform inspections of identified high risk areas or areas of concern, prior to each quarterly meeting.
- Review SAG workplace inspections and provide recommendations as necessary.
- Escalate recommendations from inspections to the President's Executive Committee as required.
- Participate in workplace inspection training.

Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S)

- Administer the workplace inspection program and oversee the completion of workplace inspections.
- Provide workplace inspection training to SAG and JOHSC members and to other employees of MRU as required (e.g. Managers, Supervisors, and Chairs).
- Provide technical and best practice advice pertaining to workplace inspections and corrective actions.
- Work with departments to develop inspection checklists for work areas on campus.
- Review all workplace inspection results and monitor completeness of action items.
- Notify the Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee (JOHSC) of workplace inspection findings, when necessary.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

Key hazard types that should be looked for during an inspection are outlined in the [EH&S Hazard Management Safe Work Procedure](#) and include biological, chemical, physical and psychosocial hazards.

To identify hazards, look at potential sources:

- Environment
 - Consider the temperature, lighting, noise and ventilation of the area.
 - Look at the condition of walking pathways and areas where work is completed.
- Equipment
 - Look at the tools, equipment and materials that are used.
 - Consider the condition of building assets (windows, doors, etc.), furniture, carpeting, electrical outlets and panels.
 - Are electrical breaker boxes accessible?

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- Processes
 - How do employees interact with other elements in the area (e.g. furniture, equipment)?
 - What kinds of tasks are completed in the area and how might they affect employees?
- Lifesaving Devices
 - Are devices such as fire extinguishers and overhead sprinklers kept clear and accessible?
 - Are emergency exits kept clear?
 - Does the area have or need a first aid kit or Band-Aid dispenser? If so, does it need restocking?

The checklists used for the inspection should prompt inspectors to consider items such as those listed, as well as others in the area that could be or may become hazardous. A sample general inspection checklist for office spaces is included in [Appendix A](#). Some areas, such as workshops and laboratories will require more site-specific checklists. Departments should work with EH&S to ensure that they are using a checklist appropriate for their area.

INSPECTION TYPES**INFORMAL INSPECTIONS**

Informal inspections are non-documented inspections performed on an on-going basis by management, supervisors, EH&S, JOHSC members and employees. These are casual assessments of the workplace for unsafe acts and conditions, which are corrected at the time or reported through Frontline to a qualified employee to address.

Examples of informal inspections also include:

- A manager/supervisor walking through a work area and confirming that employees are following safe procedures, using safety equipment, or following healthy work procedures, and provide feedback on their safety performance.
- An employee conducts a routine check of their tools, ensuring they are in good working condition, prior to starting work each day.

Informal inspections should be happening regularly within each department.

FORMAL INSPECTIONS

Three types of formal inspections are completed at the University:

SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP (SAG) INSPECTIONS

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Local SAGs perform quarterly inspections of their assigned areas. These are to be completed before the quarterly meeting, so that the results can be reviewed. The meeting is also a chance for the SAG to discuss any corrective actions that were not able to be developed and assigned at the time of inspection.

The SAG quarterly inspection includes:

- Administrative spaces assigned to a SAG, including but not limited to: offices, reception areas, internal corridors, conference rooms, photocopier rooms, storage areas/rooms, and kitchen spaces
- Department-specific workspaces such as laboratories, retail spaces and workshops

SAGs are not responsible for formally inspecting shared areas such as common hallways or classrooms, though members may perform informal inspections of these areas at any time and submit any identified concerns to EH&S or Frontline.

SAG inspections are submitted to the local Manager / Dean for review and approval. The final report shall be submitted to EH&S, who will forward the report to JOHSC if JOHSC assistance is required to complete any corrective actions.

JOINT OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE (JOHSC) INSPECTIONS

The University JOHSC also performs inspections quarterly, before each quarterly meeting.

JOHSC inspections shall be focused on higher risk areas or areas associated with a high number of incidents or concerns. The area(s) to be inspected shall be identified a minimum of two weeks before the scheduled meeting, to give members time to perform the inspection, complete the report, and bring any concerns to the meeting.

PERFORMING AN INSPECTION

PRE-INSPECTION PLANNING

Prior to starting a workplace inspection, the inspectors must understand the sources of hazards and the types of hazard they may encounter during the inspection. Review whether any personal protective equipment is required.

Information on hazard assessments, including the types and sources of hazards can be found in the [EH&S Hazard Management Procedure](#).

Key information to review prior to performing a workspace inspection includes:

- Floor plan, work space diagram, or room numbers to be inspected.

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- Equipment inventory
 - Know what type of equipment or machinery is present and what kind of workplace conditions are required for their safe use (e.g. signage indicating required PPE, grounding equipment, fire protection equipment).
 - Review technical data sheets or manufacturer's safety manuals (when appropriate).
- Chemical inventory
 - Know what chemicals are in the area, i.e. consumer chemicals such as office cleaning supplies and / or regulated hazardous material that must be managed as per WHMIS legislation.
 - Ensure that workers have received education and training in how to safely work with the chemicals in their work area.
- Past inspection reports
 - Review to determine what hazards have been previously identified and what corrective actions should be in place.
- Inspection item checklist
 - Knowing ahead of time what you will be looking for makes it simpler to complete the checklist.

PERFORMING THE INSPECTION

Ensure you are wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to address any hazards you may encounter.

Complete the inspection, filling in the checklist as you go. Ensure the date, time and names of inspectors are entered on the form.

Pay particular attention to items that are or are most likely to develop into unsafe or unhealthy conditions because of stress, wear, impact, vibration, heat, corrosion, chemical reaction or misuse. Include areas where no work is done regularly, such storage areas or locker rooms in the inspection, when applicable.

Questions that require interaction with employees, such as those asking about secure in place locations or what to do in an emergency, do not need to be completed with every employee. Spot-check the item by asking one or two people each time the inspection is done. Try to catch different people each time, to ensure you're getting a range of feedback.

If you have questions about the use of equipment, ask a trained employee to review the equipment with you, focusing on safe use and controls that are in place.

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If you identify a hazard that requires immediate attention, talk to employees and the area supervisor to stop work in the area until the hazard is addressed. Note the hazard in the report, with a comment on whatever immediate corrective actions are applied.

DEVELOPING CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

Once the inspection is completed, corrective actions must be developed for each deficient or hazardous item identified.

A corrective action:

- Should be a reasonable response to the deficiency
- Reduce the risk of injury to as low as reasonably achievable
- Must be provided a timeline to be completed
- Must be assigned to a responsible party

Deficiencies identified should be ranked based on the potential risk level of the hazard. Risk is the chance of injury, damage or loss due to a hazard. It's determined by estimating the likelihood that something could go wrong because of the hazard, and the potential severity of the consequences if it does. Though subjective, it can still help departments to prioritize corrective actions.

Table 1: Risk Matrix

Severity	Likelihood		
	1	2	3
1	1	2	3
2	2	4	6
3	3	6	9

Low Risk

Medium Risk

High Risk

Likelihood:

- 1 – Incident is unlikely
- 2 – Incident might happen
- 3 – Incident is highly likely

Severity:

- 1 – Hazard could cause minor / first aid injury or illness
- 2 – Hazard could lead to medical treatment / lost time, including hospitalization
- 3 – Hazard could cause permanent or fatal injury or illness

Hazards estimated to have a high risk should be given a high priority and addressed immediately. For example, boxes or furniture placed in front of an emergency exit that prevents the exit from being used would be a high priority hazard and must be immediately corrected.

Hazards estimated to have a moderate or low risk are less urgent and can be corrected immediately or at a later time, as outlined in the table below. For instance, a broken cupboard door is a low to moderate hazard (depending on the likelihood of injury when using the door), and can be corrected in a few weeks.

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Estimated Risk	Recommended Timeline
Low	Action required in next 6 months
Medium	Action required within 3 months (before next inspection)
High	Action required immediately – 24 hours to 7 days

All corrective actions must be assigned to a responsible party. Hazards that are under Department control can be addressed internally. Minor hazards can even be addressed immediately by the inspectors (e.g. housekeeping issues or the improper use of power bars).

Building or facility deficiencies should be submitted into [Frontline](#). Record the Frontline work request number on the inspection checklist form or interim inspection report.

EH&S is available to assist with the development of corrective actions as required.

FOLLOW-UP AND MONITORING

After corrective actions are implemented, they must be monitored to ensure they are effective at correcting the hazard. If the corrective action is ineffective, alternative solutions should be investigated.

Supervisors/Chairs of departments are responsible for following up on inspection findings. Analysis of inspection reports may include the following:

- Priorities for other corrective actions
- Need for improving safe work practices
- Need for education or training in certain areas
- Areas and equipment that require more in-depth hazard analysis

EH&S and the JOHSC shall also review inspections, identify trends, and monitor the progress of recommendations and corrective actions.

COMMUNICATION OF INSPECTION RESULTS

The results of inspections shall be shared with employees in the area through a means that is suitable to the Department (e.g. posted on information board, shared through email, etc.). Sharing the results and corrective actions promotes and supports the employees' right to know and right to participate, as outlined in the Alberta OHS Act.

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TRAINING

Training on conducting workplace inspections is provided by EH&S and may be formal training or informal (mentoring and coaching by EH&S).

All individuals designated to conduct laboratory, workshop, or department-specific inspections must have sufficient knowledge, experience, and training of these work areas and the potential hazards to be able to identify deficiencies and assign appropriate corrective actions.

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT AND RETENTION

EH&S will retain copies of all inspection records for a minimum of three (3) years. The records must be readily available as per legislation and for audit purposes.

DEFINITIONS

Employee: Volunteers or individuals who are engaged to work for the University under an employment or apprenticeship contract, including Faculty, Staff, exempt Employees, Management Employees, and Undergraduate, Graduate or Postgraduate students carrying out work for the University.

Employer: A person who employs one or more workers, including volunteers, or a person designated by an employer to be the employer's representative. At MRU, this includes all Management Employees as defined herein.

Hazard: A situation, condition or thing that may be dangerous to the safety or health of workers or the presence of an agent or environmental condition that could cause harm to people, property or the environment.

Hazard Controls: Procedures and/or processes and/or mechanized equipment intentionally used to protect the worker from hazards in the workplace. Common hazard controls fall under engineering controls (e.g. ventilation), administrative controls (e.g. training, signage), and personal protective equipment (e.g. safety glasses).

Incident: An unplanned, undesired event that resulted in or had the potential to cause physical injury or illness to a person, damage to property, or damage to the environment. Includes events that result in injury or damage and close calls, where injury or damage could have occurred but is avoided.

Inspector: The individual leading the workplace inspection.

JOHSC: Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee. A committee established pursuant to Section 16 of the Alberta OHS Act, consisting of employer and employee representatives that advise and provide health and safety recommendations to the President's Executive Committee (PEC).

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Laboratory: A dedicated room equipped for scientific experiments, research, or teaching.

Management Employee: The President, Vice-Presidents, Associate Vice-Presidents, Deans, Directors, Managers, Supervisors, Chairs, Team Leads and all Employees classified as management Employees by Human Resources.

Risk: The chance of injury, damage or loss. At MRU, risk is determined by estimating the likelihood of an undesirable event occurring and the potential consequences if it does occur.

Supervisor: A person who has charge of a workplace, or authority over a worker. Depending on the particular reporting relationship, a Supervisor includes, but is not limited to any of the following: Manager, Associate Dean, Director, Vice President or President.

Task: An activity that a worker does as a part of their job.

Unsafe Act: An action or inaction made in the presence of a hazard. E.g. failing to wear PPE, failing to secure work area, working on equipment without locking / tagging out.

Unsafe Condition: Aspects of the work environment or equipment used that may lead to an incident. E.g. poor housekeeping, inclement weather, congested work areas, lack of safeguarding on equipment.

Volunteer: Unpaid individual working under the direction of an Employee of the University. Volunteers do not receive course credits or grades, and the work is not a requirement of graduation.

Worker: Any paid or unpaid Employee or a volunteer.

Workshop: A space where work is performed using stationary tools such as a band saw, drill press, etc. Workshops at MRU are located in the Grounds building, the Building Operations' shop, Event and Theatre services, etc.

Workplace: Any space that work is performed, including but not limited to:

- Offices
- Lunch or copy rooms
- Workshops
- Retail locations
- Recreation facilities
- Laboratories
- Theater / event spaces
- Parking lots / outdoor spaces
- Classrooms
- Construction worksites

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REFERENCES

Canadian Centre of Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS). *Effective workplace inspections.*

REVISION HISTORY

Date	Revision	Notes
January 2021	01	Creation of Safe Work Program

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APPENDIX A: SAMPLE WORKPLACE SAFETY INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Below is a sample workplace safety inspection checklist. Current inspection checklists can be found on the EH&S website.

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**Workplace Safety Inspection Checklist
Offices / Administrative Areas**

Inspectors: _____

Date: _____ **Location Inspected:** _____

General / Housekeeping	Yes	No	Notes
Floors are clean, dry, free from debris, clutter or trip hazards			
Aisles/hallways are clear and unobstructed			
Doors are clear of obstruction			
Exits clearly marked, signs easy to see			
Stairs and landings are clean and unobstructed			
Offices and storage spaces are tidy, organized, no open food stored in area			
Kitchen areas kept tidy, food stored safely			
Equipment / Furniture	Yes	No	Notes
Furniture/office equipment: good condition, suitable for task, secure from tipping			
Materials/equipment safely and neatly stored, flammable materials (e.g. paper) kept away from heat sources			
Shelves are loaded only to capacity, no bowing or damage, heavy or awkward items on lower levels			
Filing cabinet drawers auto-lock to prevent tipping			
Carts and trolleys stored securely and safely when not in use			
Stepladders are in good condition and stored securely when not in use			
Electrical Safety	Yes	No	Notes
Power bars are plugged directly into the wall (no extension cords or daisy chaining)			
Outlets are not overloaded (total <15 amps)			
Small appliances all CSA or UL approved, good working condition, used as per manufacturer's specifications, in safe, approved locations			
Electrical panels have clear access, no material stored within 2 ft of panels			
Space heaters are plugged directly into walls, have timer and tip-over protection, unplugged when people not in the area			

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Hazardous Materials	Yes	No	Notes
Cleaning chemicals stored safely, away from food			
Safety Data Sheets (SDS) are available for hazardous chemicals			
Facility	Yes	No	Notes
Lighting: areas adequately lit, in good condition			
Heat registers and AC vents kept clear			
Temperature and humidity adequate			
Air quality adequate			
Noise levels appropriate			
Overhead sprinklers kept clear (min 0.5 m distance)			
Health and Safety	Yes	No	Notes
Emergency warden info posted			
Emergency alarms and lighting are audible/visible when activated			
Fire extinguishers charged, visible, accessible, in good condition, pins in place			
First aid kit or bandaid station posted in accessible location			
Secure in place locations available (in event of lockdown)			
Emergency response plan posted in accessible location			
Emergency exit plan posted in accessible location			
Employees know what to do in case of emergency (ask an employee)			
Employees know how to get first aid when needed (ask an employee)			
Employees know how to report an incident (ask an employee)			
Other	Yes	No	Notes

Action Items	Due Date	Responsible Party	Completion Date