



If There's Something Weird and It Don't Look Good, Who Ya Gonna Call? Your Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee!

Starting this September, the NSTU is encouraging NSTU representatives to sit on their schools'/campuses Joint Occupational Health and Safety (JOHS) committees. We want teachers and Community College members to have a strong voice on JOHS committees so proactive steps are taken to protect health and safety at work, and so NSTU members' health and safety concerns are quickly and effectively dealt with. We encourage teachers to reach out to their NSTU reps with concerns they have about workplace health and safety. Here is a short description of the role of JOHS committees and the important work they do.

Required when 20 or more People Employed

The Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Act requires a JOHS committee for every workplace where 20 or more people are regularly employed.

Equal Management and Non-Management

The Employer and the Unions at the workplace decide on how many people will be on the JOHS committee. However, management representatives can make up no more than 50 per cent of the members of the Committee. There must be a management co-chair and a non-management co-chair.

NSTU Representatives to be designated by NSTU

The NSTU is entitled under the Act to designate who will represent the interests of its members on the JOHS committee. In the past, administration has called for volunteers to sit on the Committee. Effective this September, the NSTU is asking NSTU reps to sit on their JOHS committee, and if they cannot, to speak with their colleagues to see who would be interested in sitting on the Committee. The NSTU wants a strong voice for members on the JOHS committees, and wants to ensure a direct line of communication between the JOHS committee representatives and the Union.

- ♦ Meetings at least once a month and names of committee members and minutes of meetings to be posted.

- ♦ The Act requires that the JOHS committee meets at least once a month. The Committee must keep minutes of those meetings, and the minutes and the names of the Committee Members must be posted.

- ♦ JOHS committees can enlist the assistance of the Occupational Health and Safety Division of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education if they have a concern about health and safety that is not being adequately addressed by the Employer.

Functions of JOHS Committees

Employee and management representatives on JOHS committees work together to:

- ♦ Identify hazards to health and safety and effective systems to respond.
- ♦ Audit compliance with health and safety requirements.
- ♦ Receive, investigate and promptly respond to complaints about health and safety.
- ♦ Participate in inspections and investigations concerning health and safety.
- ♦ Advise on protective devices and equipment.
- ♦ Advise the Employer on the policies and programs that the Employer is required to adopt under the Act.
- ♦ Maintain records and minutes of committee meetings.
- ♦ Make written recommendations to the Employer or make requests for health and safety information, and require a written response from the Employer.
- ♦ Receive reports from the Employer of health and safety inspections, monitoring and tests.
- ♦ Report to an Officer of the Division of Occupational Health and Safety if the Employer is not complying with its obligations under the Act.
- ♦ Observe health and safety monitoring and the taking of samples and measurements.
- ♦ Have input into the Employer's Violence Risk Assessment of the Workplace and any Workplace Violence Prevention Plan established by the Employer.

The Role of the NSTU

By having NSTU reps sit on JOHS committees, the NSTU hopes to encourage more frequent communication between the JOHS committee member and the NSTU. This will hopefully lead to a stronger voice for teachers on JOHS committees, and the ability of the NSTU to take proactive action if a workplace health and safety issue isn't being appropriately dealt with by the Committee or the Employer.

I Ain't Afraid of No Ghost!

Don't be afraid of speaking up for health and safety. Reach out to your NSTU representative on the JOHS committee.

