

Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees And Safety Representatives: **An Overview**

This slideshow is intended to support safe and healthy workplaces in Nova Scotia.

It is an information and awareness resource that links to the Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Division, the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia, and the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety websites. Hyperlinks to these sites are in blue and underlined.

This slideshow may be downloaded and used to help begin the conversation about workplace health, safety and injury prevention.

Welcome!

Being aware of and understanding the role of joint occupational health and safety committees (JOHSC) and of safety representatives helps us to keep ourselves and others safer at work.

This slideshow includes information about safety committees and safety representatives. If you're not sure which should be in place at your organization, [click here](#) to see what Nova Scotia safety law says about the need for [JOHSC](#) and for [safety reps](#).

If your work is federally-regulated, [click here](#).

Internal Responsibility System (IRS)

The IRS is the legal foundation of safety law. It says everyone at the workplace has and shares responsibility for health and safety. It is a part of Nova Scotia safety law, which says everyone shares responsibility for health and safety, to the extent of their workplace authority and ability to do so.

Having Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees (JOHSC) and Safety Representatives are two ways that workplaces show the IRS in action!

Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee

JOHSC's are required in workplaces with 20 or more employees who work for more than four weeks in a row. With multiple work sites, locations may be considered as separate workplaces that need more than one committee or representative for effective representation.

<https://novascotia.ca/lae/healthandsafety/JointHealthSafetyCommittee.asp>

A JOHSC is a cornerstone of the IRS. It provides:

- Opportunity to exercise safety rights and responsibilities
- An important reason for why we work together
- An important way for how we can work together
- A model for getting to safety compliance and culture

JOHSC Composition and Rules

Size of the JOHSC agreed to by workers, union/s and the employer

A JOHSC must have rules of procedure

Must have co-chairs; one selected by employee members and one selected by other members

Members are chosen by workers they represent, or the union that represents them

Members' time for meetings, training, functions, is paid

Committees meet monthly

At least 50% of members must be non-management employees

JOHSC members should have/be/show:

- Willingness to listen, learn, work together, analyze, do!
- Experience that reflects the group they're representing
- Commitment to workplace health and safety
- Positive attitude to training and education
- Agreeable/skilled working in groups
- Comfortable interacting with peers & other members
- Open communication skills



Required functions of the JOHSC include:

Involve employer and employees together.

Advise, provide recommendations to employer for policy, programs and improvements.

Co-operatively identify hazards and effective response.

Co-operatively audit compliance to OHS requirements.

Take, investigate, promptly deal with matters, complaints.

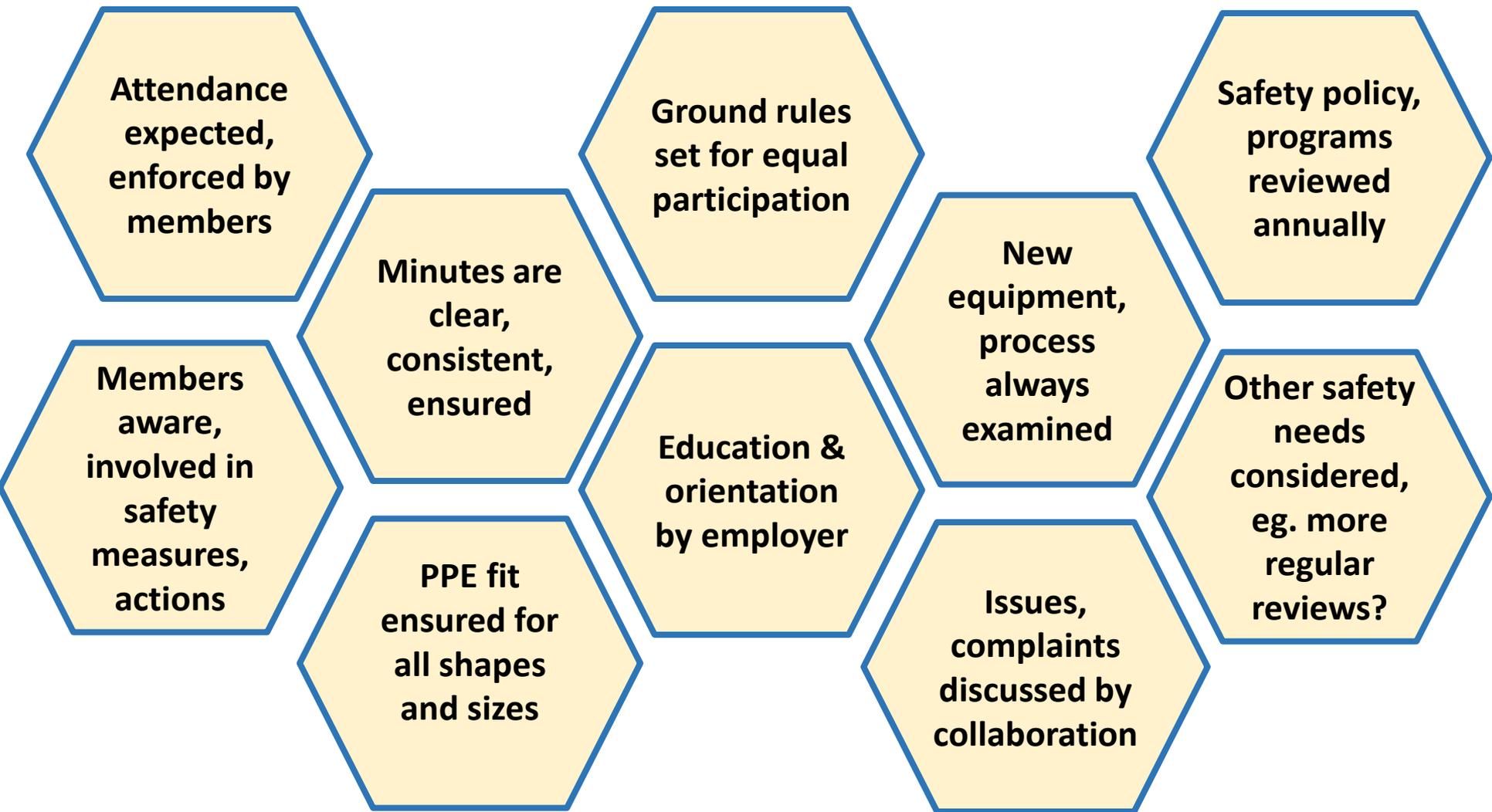
Participate in inspections, inquiries and investigations.

Advise on protective devices, equipment & clothing.

Maintain committee records, minutes; able to provide on request to an OHS Officer.

Other duties assigned by the Act and regulations, or as agreed to by employer, employees or union.

Required JOHSC functions can look like:



Health and Safety Representatives

In workplaces with more than four workers and no Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee, Health and Safety Representatives are part of the employer's and employee's responsibility and right to participate. Duties ...are similar to (a) Committee, except records, minutes and other issues that pertain to meetings are not required.

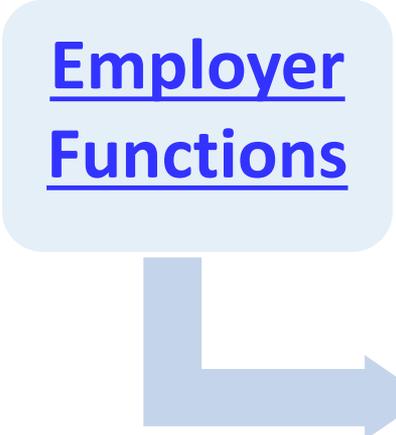
<https://novascotia.ca/lae/healthandsafety/JointHealthSafetyCommittee.asp>

The success of safety representatives directly depends on the employer's level of support and commitment.

Safety representatives should have/be/show:

- Willingness to listen, learn, work together, analyze, do!
- Experience, understanding of group/s they represent
- Commitment to workplace health and safety
- Positive attitude to training and education
- Agreeable and comfortable to work with all parties
- Open communication skills

Employer Functions



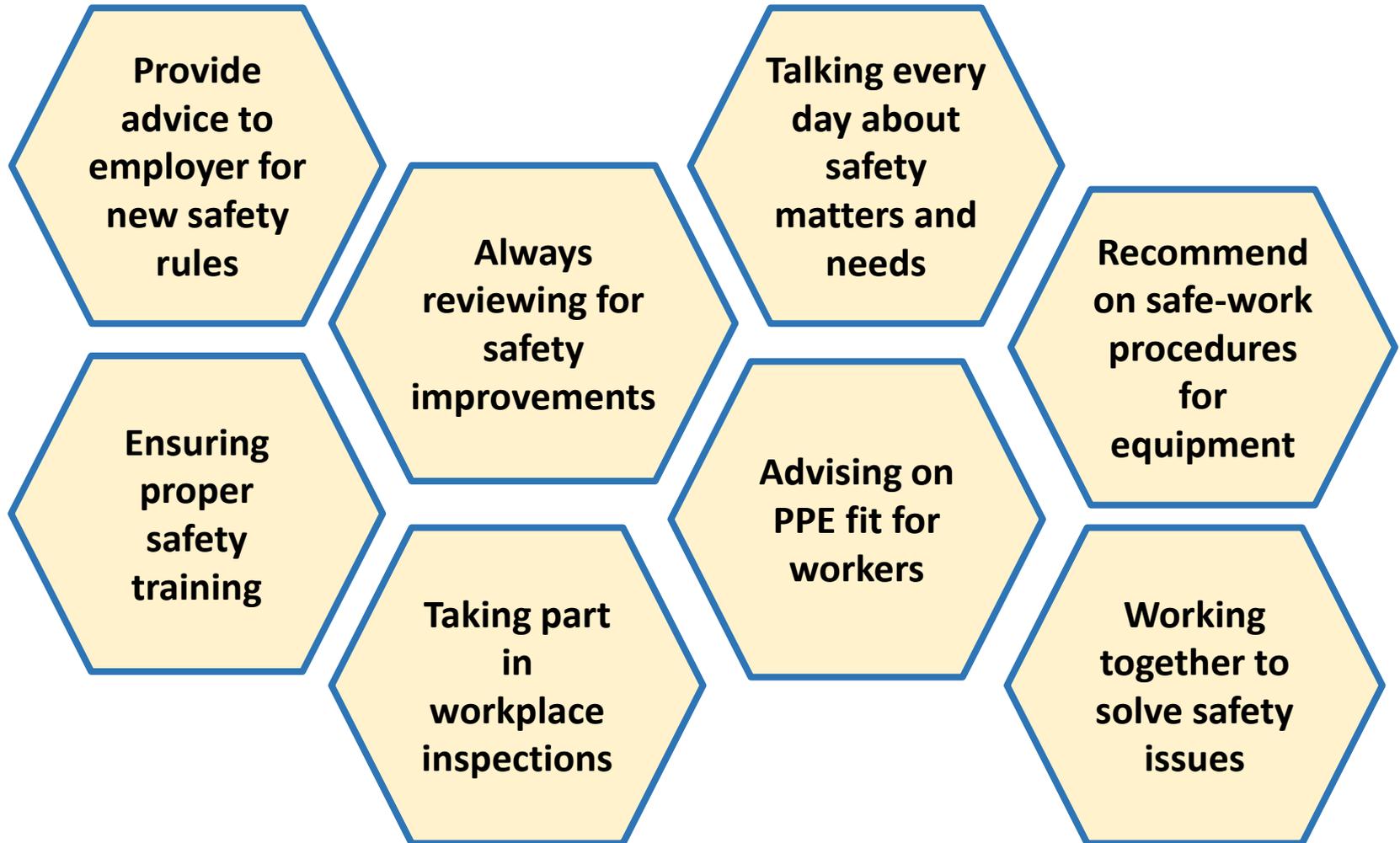
- ✓ Ensure workers select at least one safety rep (not management)
- ✓ Ensure time for rep's safety function is paid
- ✓ Ensure work with safety representative is co-operative
- ✓ Ensure completion of other duties as required by safety law or worker/union agreements.
- ✓ Ensure all safety records are accurate and maintained

Safety Rep Functions



- ✓ Advise, provide recommendations on policy, programs, improvements
- ✓ Work with employer to investigate, deal with matters received
- ✓ Participate in inspections, inquiries, investigations.
- ✓ Advise on protective devices, equipment & clothing
- ✓ Co-operatively identify hazards and effective response.
- ✓ Co-operatively audit compliance to OHS requirements.

Safety rep's cooperative functions can look like:



A healthy JOHSC or Safety Rep system:

- Reflects state of the workplace's IRS
- Exercises safety rights and responsibilities
- Increases and can improve communication
- Shows what's working and what needs help
- Supports improvements:
 - worker-management relationships
 - problem-solving
 - operations and business
 - community connections
- Can increase resiliency, adaptability in times of change



To learn more about JOHSC, safety reps and workplace health and safety law, please visit:

[Nova Scotia LAE Safety Branch and OHS Division](#)

[NS OHS Act and Regulations](#)

[Government of Canada](#)

Employment & Social Development (ESDC)

What's next?

What changes could be made in your workplace with this information?

If you'd like more information about workplace health and safety please view our other injury prevention resources or email info@wcb.ns.ca.

References and Resources:

WCB Nova Scotia : www.worksafeforlife.ca

WCB Nova Scotia: www.wcb.ns.ca

Call toll-free Halifax 1-800-870-3331

Sydney 1-800-880-0003

[Small Business Safety Toolkit](#)

[Small Business Safety Toolkit Cost Calculator](#)

NS LAE - Safety Branch: OHS Division:
www.novascotia.ca/lae/healthandsafety

View OHS News: www.gov.ns.ca/lae/healthandsafety/ohsnews.asp

Email: ohsdivision@gov.ns.ca

Call toll-free: Nova Scotia 1-800-952-2687 and 902-424-5400

Canadian Centre Occupational Health & Safety: Nova Scotia E-Learning:
http://www.ccohs.ca/catalog/courses_list_nova.php