



Do you know what it takes to be a good supervisor?

Supervisors are the employer's representative on a construction site. They monitor the progress of the project, plan the work, assign tasks, and ensure the health and safety of workers. Having a competent supervisor on site is one of the keys to reducing fatalities and injuries in Ontario's construction industry.

In 2011, violations involving supervisors were among the top 10 orders issued by MOL inspectors under the OHSA.

In September and October, Ministry of Labour (MOL) inspectors will be visiting construction sites to ensure workers are receiving adequate supervision. Supervisors need to know their duties and responsibilities under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and the construction regulations. They need to carry out those duties and take every precaution reasonable under the circumstances to protect their workers. Here are some best practices for supervisors.

1 Be familiar with the hazards.

Although training is important, there's no substitute for experience. Dealing with incidents in the past enables a supervisor to anticipate problems in the future. Also, workers will respect a supervisor who has been where they are and who knows the industry.

2 Be familiar with the legislation.

Keep up-to-date with changes to the construction regulations by visiting the e-laws or MOL website regularly. Learn about other applicable legislation (e.g., *Environmental Protection Act*, *Technical Standards and Safety Act*, *Ontario Traffic Manual's Book 7*, *Ontario Fire Code*, and First Aid regulations).

3 Ensure the site is supervised at all times.

Supervisors should appoint a competent person to take over when they can't be there. This includes on weekends and after hours. Make sure the workers know who's in charge when the supervisor is not around.

4 Document what happens on the site.

Supervisors should keep a log book to record daily events on a jobsite. It not only demonstrates due diligence but also helps you remember what happened in case of a dispute. All documentation must be kept for at least one year after the completion of a project.

5 Know the emergency response procedures.

Having an emergency response plan is just the first step. Supervisors need to stay calm and assign duties during an emergency. To prepare, do a practice run-through. Consider all the variables. Is there room for emergency vehicles to get through? What is the company's policy regarding the media?

6 Have good people skills.

A good supervisor is approachable and trustworthy. Workers need to feel comfortable pointing out a problem—and if they do, that the problem will be addressed.

7 Have good communication skills.

Communication is key to maintaining safety on a jobsite. Advise workers of any actual or potential danger. If necessary, provide workers with oral or written instructions on any measures and procedures to be taken for their protection. Inform management if additional safety precautions need to be taken. Also, make sure workers know the procedure for reporting safety problems on the jobsite.

8 Conduct regular unplanned inspections.

Work with the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) or health and safety representative to ensure problems are identified and addressed. Inspect tools and equipment to ensure proper maintenance has been done. Document any action that was taken to correct the problems.

9 Conduct employee orientations.

Any worker coming to a project for the first time or one who is assigned to a new job on the site should be considered a new worker and given a workplace orientation by the supervisor. Don't forget about sub-trade workers and supervisors.

10 Take action.

A good supervisor does not put the job before the safety of workers. Be willing to spend the time and money to fix the problem or to correct the situation.

11 Create a culture of safety.

The workplace itself is often a reflection of the supervisor. A clean, well-organized site indicates that health and safety are important. Remind workers about safety every day by doing five-minute safety talks. Find creative ways to recognize safe work practices and discourage unsafe ones.

12 Enforce the rules.

A good worker is not always a safe worker. And this person can set a bad example for others. Make sure the worker understands the rules and use progressive discipline for repeated violations.

13 Rely on other workplace parties.

Supervisors must rely on workers to identify day-to-day problems on a site and on management to support them in fixing the problems. Health and safety representatives, JHSCs, and other supervisors can also help create a safe workplace.

14 Consider public safety.

Restrict public access to the site as much as possible and make sure it has proper lighting, grates, signs, and barriers—even when there are no workers around.

15 Know where to find the answers when you need them.

It's impossible to expect a supervisor to know everything. Create a list of contacts (e.g., IHSA consultant, people in the industry) and keep reference material on site (e.g., operator manuals, MSDSs, and IHSA's *Construction Health and Safety Manual*).

Supervisors should know their responsibilities and also be aware of their accountability if something goes wrong. IHSA has created a web page to help supervisors fulfill their due diligence requirements, and more. Go to the Topics & Hazards section of ihsa.ca and click on Supervisors. There you'll find resources to help ensure competent supervision on your jobsite.

Find it all online!



Supervisor Log Book (RF008)

Member \$24.95 Non-Member: \$49.95

A competent supervisor keeps a record of daily events on the job. IHSA's Supervisor Log Book contains safety talks, inspection checklists, a job safety analysis (JSA) form, a due diligence checklist, and other helpful resources. 240 pages. Visit ihsa.ca

