

# The gold standard for health and safety



## How nationally recognized standards like COR® benefit industry, workplaces, and their workers.

What does it mean to set a standard? It means establishing clear expectations and benchmarks for performance, and determining how these will be measured—often in the name of consistency and quality. Businesses set standards for many things, including workplace health and safety.

Standards that prove beneficial over time are often adopted by others. They become recognized benchmarks for achieving excellence.

Across Canada, COR® is the health and safety benchmark for the industries IHSA serves. Since its introduction, the COR® standard has helped more than 10,000 Canadian businesses evaluate and improve their occupational health and safety management systems—and led to verified reductions in workplace injuries.

Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) is meant to do that, too. It creates an enforceable framework to achieve the goal of protecting workers from hazards.

Laws like the OHSA, however, represent the minimum requirements that must be followed. Standards don't just encourage compliance; rather, they raise the bar and inspire excellence. Choosing to work toward a standard promotes organizational improvement. Achieving it can boost workplace morale and enhance a company's reputation in the marketplace.

## The growth of COR®

Reputation plays an important role in the adoption of standards, too. COR® didn't become a national standard overnight. It first took shape in Alberta in the early 1990s. By the end of the decade, the standard had proved successful enough that members of the Canadian Federation of Construction Safety Associations (CFCSA) voted to adopt it nationally. They wanted to define a number of common audit elements for construction firms to meet in order to achieve or maintain a higher level of health and safety performance.

In the years since, the program has been recognized by jurisdictional health and safety associations, workers' compensation boards, and legislators from coast to coast. Its elements have been tweaked and harmonized.

Its effectiveness has been verified by multiple studies. According to 2022 research by the University of British Columbia, COR®-certified companies in Ontario have 28 per cent fewer lost-time injuries than non-COR® firms.

"It's a standard that was created by Canadians for Canadians and by industry for industry," says Chris McKean, Vice President of Programs and Strategic Development at IHSA.

Over time, as more companies have come to understand that fact—and have seen for themselves that COR® helps to improve health and safety outcomes—adherence to the standard has reached something of a critical mass.

"So now you have this pull effect, where people start to say, 'Well, I see there are 10,000 COR®-certified companies in Canada and those companies are proven to be safer. We should probably look into that.'"

## Benefits across the board

Of course, following what other companies do is hardly the only reason to recognize and work toward national standards. COR® in particular offers numerous benefits to firms across Canada. Among the most important are:

### ***Continuous health and safety improvement***

Just as the elements of COR® have been reviewed and revised over time, the COR® standard requires workplaces to evaluate and refine their own occupational health and safety management systems. This is done annually using the standardized 14-element COR® audit tool and the Plan-Do-Check-Act model of continuous improvement.

### ***Worker and organizational upskilling***

"When you work toward achieving a standard, it's really difficult to get 100 per cent," McKean says. "Especially when starting out with COR®, an organization is going to need to develop some competencies"—not only to go through the initial audit process, but to fill any health and safety gaps that the audit identifies.

Those competencies are gained through efforts like worker and supervisor training. Indeed, individuals can even work toward attaining National Construction Safety Officer (NCSO®) or National Health and Safety Administrator (NHSA™) certification, advancing their careers and contributing directly to the cycle of continuous improvement at their organization.

## Standardized data

As of 2022, COR® audits in Ontario are conducted using AuditSoft, an application that helps streamline the assessment, submission, and review process. Because everyone uses the same audit tool, it promotes consistency and generates standardized data sets. Companies can then access those data sets to see their audit results broken down by individual COR® elements and compare their results against overall industry performance.

## Jurisdictional consistency

In general, standards that are harmonized across jurisdictions (such as provinces and territories) help companies compete on a level playing field—and can help reduce the costs and “red tape” associated with compliance in different locations.

For example, if a COR®-certified company based in Northern Ontario wants to bid on work in Manitoba, it can rest assured that its workplace health and safety practices reach an acceptable standard in the latter province, proven through a national reciprocity process developed by the CFCSA.

## A reputational boost

There's a reason why so many companies proudly display the COR® logo on their vehicles, websites, and marketing materials. Firms that have achieved a national health and safety standard are seen as more credible, competent, and dependable in the Canadian marketplace. “COR® makes it easier for buyers of construction services to make decisions about the companies they want to work with,” McKean says. More than a dozen Ontario public-sector buyers now require COR® as a condition of contract.

## A place where people want to work

Businesses that commit to high health and safety standards show that they care about their employees. Workers who feel safe, supported, and protected are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs, which can lead to improved productivity and trust while reducing employee turnover. Standards can also clarify operational performance expectations, defining what success looks like: employees know what they're working to achieve and can have confidence that everyone is working toward the same goal. Ultimately, these efforts help to build a positive workplace culture focused on continuously improving health and safety performance.



## By the numbers



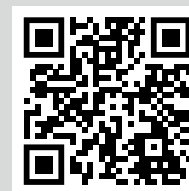
**LEARN** more about how the COR® national standard helps Ontario companies achieve a 28 per cent reduction in lost-time injuries: [ihsa.ca/28](https://ihsa.ca/28)

# Take your health and safety culture to the next level.

Show your workers why it's important for them to work safely and report workplace hazards every day. Our new **Keep Your Promise** posters and stickers spread the message that safety is a shared responsibility and remind



16" x 20" posters



2.5" stickers