National Construction Safety Officer (NCSO®) and National Health and Safety Administrator (NHSA™)

Study Guide

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the unified National Construction Safety Officer (NCSO®) and National Health and Safety Administrator (NHSA™) study guide. This comprehensive guide has been created by analyzing study materials from construction safety associations across Canada to assist you with your preparation to write the national NCSO®/NHSA™ exams.

If you are reading this guide, it means you have completed all required mandatory and elective training courses and have met the requirements needed to obtain the NCSO®/NHSA™ designation. You are ready to test your knowledge related to health and safety in the construction industry.

This guide incorporates best practices and common elements while maintaining the national standards established by the Canadian Federation of Construction Safety Associations (CFCSA).

2. Purpose of the Study Guide

This study guide is a tool that helps organize the information you need to review to prepare for your exam. This guide assists with:

- Identification of resource materials
- Prioritizing the importance of each resource
- Review of each resource in an organized manner
- How to locate key information and ideas
- How to find and apply supporting evidence (examples or definitions)
- Understanding how the exam is structured
- Explaining what types of questions you will be asked
- What happens on exam day

Important Note: This guide will only fulfill its intended purpose if you are committed to spending time and effort applying the recommendations it contains. It is designed to make "how" you study more effective. The guide will not contain enough specific information on health and safety to let you complete the exam successfully. That information can only be found in the resource materials from your training courses.

3. Certification Validity

- The NCSO®/NHSA™ designation expires after **three years**
- Maintenance is required to renew your designation
- All compulsory courses must be kept current
- Practical requirements must be maintained

4. Purpose of Examination

The purpose of the National NCSO®/NHSA™ examinations is to confirm that candidates comprehend key health and safety concepts and can apply their knowledge in both general and specific situations related to the construction industry.

Provincial Exam

Due to differences between jurisdictions, each province or territory could have an exam specific to its Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations. This ensures the NCSO®/NHSA™ is familiar with the provincial legislation they will use to create, implement, and enforce their safety program.

5. Examination Structure

National Exam Format

- 120 multiple-choice questions
- 2 hours to complete
- 75% minimum passing grade
- Closed-book exam

6. Types of Questions

Multiple Choice Questions

The most common format used in testing. These questions determine if you can identify the "right" or "best" answer from a list of choices based on your knowledge.

Example: Which of the following is an example of a step in the field-level risk assessment?

a) Stop and Think
b) Walk the Talk
c) Identify Hazards
d) Complete training

Tips for Multiple Choice:

- Read the questions and all the options carefully
- Eliminate obviously wrong answers
- If unsure of the answer, leave the question unanswered, move on to the next question, and then come back to it.
- Be sure to review your answers before submitting the exam.

7. Overview of National Exam Topics

Health & Safety Programs	Elements and implementation Management systems Program effectiveness
Hazard & Risk Assessment **Hierarchy of Controls**	Hazard identification processes Risk evaluation methods Control measure selection and implementation
Training and Orientations	Training needs assessment Program development and delivery Documentation and verification
Inspections	Types of inspections Inspection procedures Follow-up and corrective actions
Investigations	Investigation processes Incident causation models Causal analysis
Audits/Auditing	COR® audit processes Audit preparation and execution Action plan development
Documentation	Record keeping requirements Documentation systems Legal compliance
Emergency Preparedness/First Aid	Emergency response planning First aid requirements Emergency procedures
Adopted Standards	Industry standards Best practices Compliance requirements
WHMIS	Classification systems Labeling requirements Safety Data Sheets Worker education
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	Selection criteria Use and maintenance Training requirements

8. Examination Preparation

Study Planning

Create a structured study plan that includes:

- When you will study (specific times)
- Where you will study (quiet, distraction-free environment)
- What you will study (specific topics and resources)
- How long will it take to study each topic

Recommended Study Approach:

- Focus on Compulsory Courses first from your provincial jurisdiction's application
- **Review Elective Courses from your provincial jurisdiction's application**
- **Practice with Sample Questions**:
    - Practice questions as below
    - Review incorrect answers
    - Investigate why answers are correct/incorrect
    - Time yourself to answer questions in an average of 1 minute per question.

Exam Day Tips:

- Arrive 15 minutes early
- Listen carefully to instructions
- Read each question completely
- Manage your time effectively
- Review answers if time permits

9. Key Terms and Definitions

Accident: An unplanned, undesired event that results in property damage, injury, death, or occupational illness.

Audit: An evaluation of a health and safety program measuring its effectiveness and efficiency against given standards.

Certificate of Recognition (COR®): An accreditation given to an employer's health and safety management system that has been evaluated by a certified auditor.

Competent Person: A person qualified by knowledge, training, and experience to organize work and its performance, familiar with applicable legislation, and knowledgeable about potential hazards.

Due Diligence: The requirement of a company/employer to provide safe work conditions through taking reasonable steps to prevent incidents.

Hazard: A source of potential harm or adverse health effect on a person or persons.

Hazard Assessment: An evaluation used to assess and document hazards, prioritize them, and determine hazard controls.

Hierarchy of Controls: A system used to minimize or eliminate exposure to hazards, ranked from most effective to least effective:

Incident: An occurrence that resulted in or had the potential for causing injury, occupational disease, or damage.

Investigation: The systematic gathering and analysis of information about an incident to determine causes and prevent recurrence.

Job Hazard Analysis (JHA): A technique that focuses on job tasks to identify hazards before they occur.

Near Miss: An incident that did not result in injury or property damage but had the potential to do so.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause workplace injuries and illnesses.

Risk: The chance or probability that a person will be harmed or experience an adverse health effect if exposed to a hazard.

Supervisor: A person who instructs, directs, and controls workers in the performance of their duties.

Globally Harmonized System (GHS): An international approach to hazard communication using consistent criteria for classification and labeling.

Hazard Class: The nature of a physical or health hazard (e.g., flammable liquids, acute toxicity).

Hazard Statement: A phrase that describes the nature and degree of hazard.

Pictogram: A graphical composition that includes a symbol plus other graphic elements intended to convey specific information.

Precautionary Statement: A phrase describing recommended measures to minimize or prevent adverse effects.

Safety Data Sheet (SDS): A document that provides comprehensive information about a hazardous product.

Signal Word: A word used to indicate the relative level of severity of hazard (Danger or Warning).

10. National Exam Sample Questions

Disclaimer – NCSO® & NHSA™ Exam Preparation Questions

The practice questions provided in this resource are intended solely to support learners in preparing for the National NCSO® & NHSA™ Exam. These questions are not replicas of the official National Exam; however, they are similar in format, structure, and content.

This resource is not a complete exam and does not cover all topics, competencies, or question types that may appear on the official assessment. Learners should refer to and follow the official NCSO® & NHSA™ Exam Preparation Guide for comprehensive information on exam content, requirements, and expectations.

Use these questions as a study aid to reinforce understanding and build confidence, but do not rely on them as a representation of the full scope of the National Exam.

Below are some areas of study for the focus areas for each category. **Items may include, but are not limited to:**

To confirm your understanding of these topics, refer to your compulsory course materials.

Health and Safety Program Content:

- Elements/documents needed in a Health and Safety Program, for example, the COR® elements
- Levels of employees and their various health and safety responsibilities (Management, Supervisors, Workers)
- The different levels of law that pertain to a health and safety program, such as:
    - Criminal Code of Canada (Federal)
    - Workers Compensation Act/OHSR (Provincial)

Investigations and reporting

- The steps involved in investigations
- Documents, processes, and steps to take for corrective action
- Types of causes: direct, basic/indirect, and root
- Leading and Lagging Indicators
- Levels of responsibility for each of the causes

Training and Communications

- The steps involved in investigations
- Documents, processes, and steps to take for corrective action
- Types of causes: direct, basic/indirect, and root
- Leading and Lagging Indicators
- Levels of responsibility for each of the causes

Legislation and Responsibilities

- The Canada Labour Code
- The concept of the Internal Responsibility System
- The concept of Due Diligence

Supervisory Training

- Roles and Responsibilities

Emergency Preparedness and First Aid

- Preparing for an emergency
- Events that may require an emergency response plan
- The content of an emergency response plan

Hazard Identification, Analysis, and Control

- The purpose of conducting a hazard assessment
- The process for conducting a hazard assessment
- The hierarchy of controls
- The hazard ID process
- Types of hazards (hazard categories)

Inspections

- Principles and concepts of inspections
- The inspection process for formal and informal inspections
- Roles and responsibilities for those involved in inspections
- Steps to take for corrective action

Records and Statistics

- Leading and Lagging Indicators
- Records required to be maintained
- Measuring health & safety requirements

Auditing

- The purpose of an audit
- Auditor roles and responsibilities
- The 14 standardized elements of a COR® audit
- Steps of an audit process

WHMIS:

- Pictograms
- The purpose of WHMIS
- Label requirements
- Safety Data Sheets

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

- Types of PPE (basic and specialty)
- Adopted standards that apply to PPE- common standard-setting bodies in the country (e.g., who certifies all steel-toe boots?)

Example Questions

Below are some areas of study for the types of questions asked. This is just a sample, and not an exhaustive list of all question types and topics.

1. **Which of the following is NOT typically an element of a health and safety program?**

   a) Hazard identification and assessment
   b) Training and communication
   c) Financial planning
   d) Incident investigation

2. **Which legislation applies to federally regulated employers?**

   a) Canadian Occupational Health, Safety and Environmental Code
   b) Occupational Health & Safety Act
   c) Canada Labour Code
   d) Employment and Social Development Act

3. **What should be the first priority when an incident occurs?**

   a) Preserve evidence
   b) Ensure no further injury or damage occurs
   c) Contact management
   d) Begin investigation

4. **What should an incident investigator be able to determine upon completion of witness interviews?**

   a) What hazard controls were in place before the incident
   b) What caused the incident
   c) What could have been done to prevent the incident
   d) Incident costs, both insured and uninsured

5. **A worker on the 5th floor balcony of an apartment building under construction throws his coffee cup over the edge toward a pile of other garbage and debris. A worker on the ground looks up and gets drops of leftover coffee in his eyes. That worker reported to his supervisor that he cannot work today because of the incident. What is the direct cause of the worker injury?**

   a) The first worker throwing his cup over the edge
   b) The other garbage not being picked up
   c) The drops of leftover coffee
   d) The worker looking up

6. **What is the supervisor's responsibility to a worker who has been trained on a specific task?**

a) Stay beside the worker constantly to ensure they are performing the task properly
b) Leave the worker to perform the task without being observed
c) Assign another worker to observe their work and report back to the supervisor
d) Monitor the worker to ensure the task is performed safely

7. **What are the three (3) main goals of Emergency Response/Procedures?**

a) Protect Life, Protect Property, Resume Normal Operations
b) Protect Life, Protect Finances, Protect Timelines
c) Due Diligence, Protect Property, Protect Reputation
d) Due Diligence, Minimize Liability, Protect Equipment

8. **What is the intent of conducting a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA)?**

a) To determine the cost of performing a task
b) To identify hazards and establish appropriate controls
c) To establish time requirements for task completion
d) To determine worker qualifications

9. **According to the hierarchy of controls, which is the most effective method of hazard control?**

a) Personal Protective Equipment
b) Administrative Controls
c) Engineering Controls
d) WHMIS Training

10. **On a recent worksite inspection, the supervisor notices that a guardrail protecting an elevator shaft is damaged. Who is responsible for replacing the guardrail?**

a) The elevator company
b) The prime contractor
c) The supervisor doing the inspection
d) The site safety committee

11. **What should you be looking for during a worksite inspection?**

a) Assessing compliance with safe job procedures
b) Catching unsafe workers off guard
c) Ranking the hazards by severity
d) Evaluating worker productivity on site

12. Why is it important for your company's safety program to maintain accurate records and monitor trends?

a) You may need to provide this information during the bidding process
b) It is a way of demonstrating due diligence
c) You are required to keep training records and injury trends as a legal requirement
d) Records and trends must be provided to Human Resources if requested

13. What is the main purpose of a COR® Audit?

a) Achieve a Certificate of Recognition® so the company can bid on more jobs and reduce insurance costs
b) Find strengths and areas for improvement in the company's health and safety management system
c) Find gaps in the company's health and safety program so people can be held accountable
d) Demonstrate due diligence and provide a legal defence in case there are charges under OHS legislation

14. In WHMIS, what does a pictogram represent?

a) The chemical formula of a product
b) The specific hazard associated with a product
c) The manufacturer of a product
d) The price of a product

15. According to WHMIS, which term is used to describe the nature of the hazards associated with a product?

a) Product identification
b) Precautionary statements
c) Hazard statements
d) Pictograms

11. Answer Key

1. a) Financial planning
2. c) Canada Labour Code
3. b) Ensure no further injury or damage occurs
4. b) What caused the incident
5. c) The drops of leftover coffee
6. d) Monitor the worker to ensure the task is performed safely
7. a) Protect Life, Protect Property, Resume Normal Operations
8. b) To identify hazards and establish appropriate controls
9. c) Engineering Controls
10. b) The elevator company
11. a) Assessing compliance with safe job procedures
12. b) It is a way of demonstrating due diligence
13. b) Find strengths and areas for improvement in the company's health and safety management system
14. b) The specific hazard associated with a product
15. c) Hazard statements

12. Conclusion

This unified study guide represents the collective knowledge and best practices from construction safety associations across Canada. Remember that becoming an NCSO®/NHSA™ is not just about passing an exam—it's about becoming a competent safety professional who can make a real difference in protecting workers and creating safer construction workplaces.

Good luck with your exam and your career as a construction safety professional!