



Occupational Health
Clinics for Ontario
Workers Inc.

Centres de santé
des travailleurs (ses)
de l'Ontario Inc.

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What to do when you leave your job: An Occupational Health Perspective

Many Ontarians are now faced with the decision to stay at their current job or to move on to something new. For some, this comes as a new opportunity or retirement; for others, this is not a choice as much as it is a necessity, whether it is because of a layoff or termination. Whatever the reason for leaving, there are a few things you should do to protect yourself in the event you develop health problems related to the job you are leaving.

You must first compile your complete personal file by obtaining copies of the company's records of any health and safety issues you may have faced. Your personal file should include copies of your company health records as well as any records of any incident forms or of any injuries you may have sustained while working. If you were ever injured at work, an injury report and a claim with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) will have been filed. Have records of the names of supervisors and anyone else you dealt with during any incident. Examples of incidents include exposure to hazards, near misses or workplace violence or stress. You must also have copies of notes that detail plans for your return to work or any personal accommodations the company may have made. Ensure you have updated medical reports indicating any medical restrictions to the work you can perform. You will also want copies of your complete work history with the company, job descriptions, and physical demands analysis for the jobs you performed.

Secondly, make a list of the hazards to which you were exposed. Hazards are physical (loud noises, heat, cold, vibration, etc.), biological (blood or other body fluids, fungi, mould, animal and bird droppings, etc.), ergonomic (improperly adjusted work station, frequent lifting, bending or kneeling, repetitive movements, etc.), and chemical (cleaning products, vapours or fumes, gases, solvents, etc.). Attempt to quantify your exposure to these hazards. Was your exposure daily, weekly, monthly, annually? Was the exposure intense or very minor? Material safety data sheets (MSDS) and industrial hygiene reports provide a wealth of information. Copies of these should be obtained before leaving. Finally, you can request to see the company physician or your family physician for a complete medical/physical examination prior to leaving the company. If your job put you at risk for hearing loss, you should request a hearing test before or within 6 months of leaving. These will provide a baseline for your health and will provide you and your physician a health reference point with which you can compare. Many health problems like cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and heart disease require many years before they become symptomatic.

If you develop a disease that you believe may be related to your work, contact the Occupational Health Clinic for Ontario Workers (www.ohcow.on.ca), your union or the Office of the Worker Advisor (www.owa.gov.on.ca) for advice.

For more information on this topic, you can contact the Ontario Federation of Labour (www.ofl.ca), visit www.worksmartontario.gov.on.ca or you can contact the Occupational Health Clinic for Ontario Workers nearest you.

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