



The OHCOW Team *Supporting Workers; Preventing Illness & Injury*

OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENISTS | ERGONOMISTS | OCC HEALTH NURSES & PHYSICIANS | CLIENT SERVICE COORDINATORS | OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH COORDINATORS

What Is Occupational Hygiene?

Occupational hygiene (also called industrial hygiene) is concerned with the prevention of occupational diseases and the preservation of good health. It anticipates potential hazards, recognizes hazards when they occur, evaluates exposure, and controls hazardous exposures.

The most common occupational hazards addressed by occupational hygienists include:

- **Biological hazards**, such as bacteria, mould, viruses
- **Chemical hazards**, such as benzene, diesel engine exhaust, silica
- **Physical hazards**, such as noise, ionizing radiation, extreme temperature

In their clinic work, OHCOW hygienists will investigate past occupational processes and occupational exposures as part of an interdisciplinary occupational health team. They review work history, including processes, and products used. They speak directly with the injured worker and their colleagues. Additionally, a hygienist will search the published occupational exposure monitoring results and databases, and complete systematic searches of peer-reviewed occupational hygiene and epidemiological studies. Based on the exposure data and occupational epidemiology, they produce retrospective exposure reports that outline the probable risks of developing occupational diseases.

(continued...)

Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc. (OHCOW) is dedicated to the identification and prevention of work-related illnesses. We offer information and inquiry services, ergonomic and hygiene assessments of workplaces, medical diagnostic services, outreach and education, research services and group services for Joint Health and Safety Committees and other worker groups.

Contact us

Phone: 1-877-817-0336

Email: ask@ohcow.on.ca

Visit our web site

www.ohcow.on.ca

Find us on social media



Prevention Through Intervention

Occupational Hygienists respond to inquiries and support JHSCs with advice regarding occupational exposures and occupational disease. They are available to explain hazards and suggest ways to reduce risk. Common topics include indoor air quality, noise, asbestos, heat stress, cold stress, VGDF (vapours, gases, dusts, fumes), diesel exhaust (DE), irritants and allergens, solvents, metal dusts and fumes, and any other workplace chemicals, biological agents, or physical agents.

OHCOW hygienists have developed a series of tools for workers to use in order to encourage healthy and safe working conditions. In November of 2023, OHCOW brought the **Silica Control Tool** to Ontario. Workers and employers in the Ontario Construction Industry have full access to the **Silica Control Tool**[™], its associated data, and outputs. The Tool's user interface has undergone a facelift for Ontario and has been fully customized to meet Ontario's health and safety regulation and standards.

The **Humidex-Based Heat Stress Calculator** is the main component of the **Heat Stress Toolkit**. This calculator is a web-based tool that uses temperature, humidity, and factors including location, clothing, work activity, moisture sources, and radiant heat to calculate estimated heat stress for a worker. Based on the results, the tool provides a response plan with control methods to protect workers. The **Heat Stress Toolkit**, updated in 2024, also contains infographics, guides, and videos for workers to equip workers with the knowledge and resources to best protect themselves in high temperatures.

OHCOW has also created the **Cold Stress Calculator**, a downloadable app that determines what precautions should be taken to protect workers from adverse health outcomes caused by cold temperatures.

For a list of all tools and services OHCOW's Occupational Hygienists visits [OHCOW's website](#).

Occupational hygienists evaluate exposures and compare them to **Occupational Exposure Limits** (OELs). OELs are the levels of acceptable exposure over a length of time (usually 8 hours/day or 40 hours/week) for chemical or physical hazards. With an increase in irregular shift work, OHCOW hygienists developed an **OEL Adjustment Tool**. This tool is designed for a worker to input their work hours; and the tool will properly calculate and adjust the OEL for a worker's specific situation.

Contact us

Phone: 1-877-817-0336

Email: ask@ohcow.on.ca

Visit our web site

www.ohcow.on.ca

Find us on social media

