

Part B. Effective committees and representatives

For a list of the 10 ingredients of effective workplace safety and health committees, see CP. 20 in the Committee Process Toolbox. This is based on lessons learned from the New Eyes Project.

B.1 What helps groups to work?

Effectiveness is the combination of quality (how well) and quantity (how much). Effective committees do their work in the time allowed, fulfil all their responsibilities and keep track of their progress. Individual members also need the time required to prepare for meetings and to do other aspects of their “job” as a **committee member** or **rep**.

To ensure that **process** is valued and followed during meetings and conversations, an effective committee needs some help or building blocks. To start, review the discussion of:

- stages of group development;
- roles within groups; and
- facilitation skills.

Stages of group development

Consider how your committee is developing as a **group**. Any group goes through a process as the individuals involved learn to work together. The stages of group development are:

- Forming - why are we here?
- Storming - how do we work through our differences?
- Norming - what’s our regular process or way of doing things?
- Performing - how well do we perform according to our agreements?


Groups go through these stages repeatedly. They can go through several in one meeting or over a period of time. Groups also can get stuck (e.g. at storming) until verbal and nonverbal agreements are reached, about how the committee functions.

Committee member - workplace safety and health committee member.

Group - two or more people. A group becomes a committee when its purpose is clearly defined.

Process - how things are done.

Rep - a worker safety and health representative, designated in workplaces where a committee is not required but there are 10 - 19 workers.

	COMMITTEE ACTIVITY
<p>List examples of behaviour at each stage of your group’s development.</p> <p><i>What do you notice in the current meeting?</i></p> <p><i>What helps you move from one stage to another?</i></p> <p>Use these questions in a discussion at the end of a committee meeting to evaluate your stage of group development. Come back to them regularly.</p>	


Roles

Whatever stage you're at, people play various roles in groups, not just the ones they are assigned. Other roles people may play are listed in the table:

Role	Behaviour
Active listener	supportive, nonverbal behaviour
Central negative	constantly challenges leader, starts disagreements, can be effective in evaluating ideas
Information provider	has information or research to share
Questioner	seeks clarification, asks probing questions
Recorder	structured, needs to be rotated
Self-centred follower	works in own interest
Silent observer	doesn't say much, needs asking
Social-emotional leader	handles interpersonal situations well, looks after the "heartbeat" of the group
Task leader	expert, well-educated, good at problem solving
Tension releaser	uses humour to diffuse a situation

Individuals play several roles, depending on what's needed for the task. Core roles for each committee member and rep are:

- active listener
- information provider
- questioner
- task leader, when the expertise is needed.

	COMMITTEE ACTIVITY
	<p>Answer these questions on your own at first. Then discuss them at a committee meeting.</p> <p><i>At your committee meetings, what roles do you and others play?</i></p> <p><i>Do you or others switch roles as needed?</i></p> <p><i>How do the different roles help or hinder the committee's discussions?</i></p>

Facilitation

Facilitation helps to keep a group on task, on time and focused on the desired outcomes. Everyone can be a facilitator.

Good facilitation skills are based on these principles:

- a co-operative attitude
- listen
- ask good questions
- suggest alternatives
- challenge behaviour
- paraphrase what the group is saying
- summarize what has been said
- name the different perspectives in the room
- equalize participation
- give and take feedback
- clarify meaning
- focus discussion
- work with resistance
- protect others from interruption
- constantly evaluate how the group is doing

These facilitation skills will help the committee do its job well. The more committee members with facilitation skills, the more easily the meeting will flow. When others use facilitation skills, it can effectively support the chairperson, whose job it is to keep on task and on time.

Combined with an understanding of roles and the stages of group development, facilitation skills will help your committee be more effective. However, you still need some practical tools to manage the committee and its activities.


B. 2 Committee basics

Before you start solving problems, the question is:

How do we manage ourselves as a committee so we can deal with a problem when it comes up?

At this point we will focus on meetings, the place where issues are discussed and recommendations made. Committee members do things outside meetings, such as inspections and investigations; these are covered in more detail elsewhere in the manual. Committees, and their members, need:

- ground rules
 - terms of reference
- (cont'd)

	COMMITTEE ACTIVITY
	<p>At a meeting, assign one or two people who don't expect to participate much to be observers. Their task is to keep track of how the chair and others facilitate discussions and decision-making.</p> <p>Allow about 15 minutes at the end of the meeting to talk about what they saw and heard. Try using these questions to guide the evaluation:</p> <p><i>What worked well? Why?</i></p> <p><i>What needs to improve? How can we do that?</i></p> <p><i>What is one thing each committee member will do at the next meeting to help facilitate?</i></p> <p>At the next meeting, review how things go. Repeat the process as need be, at least once a year.</p>

- orientation of new members
- effective chairing
- focused agendas
- time to prepare for meetings

Ground rules

Ground rules are a list that guides how a committee works together. Everyone in the group needs to agree to play by these rules. Ground rules can be changed by consensus, if need be. They could include:

- ✓ arrive and end on time
- ✓ everyone has an opportunity to participate
- ✓ avoid side conversations
- ✓ listen to each other with respect
- ✓ criticize/argue about ideas, not people
- ✓ vibrate your cell phone if it must be left on
- ✓ “confidential” means confidential always!

See the *Ground Rules for Committees* in the Committee Process Toolbox (CP.8).

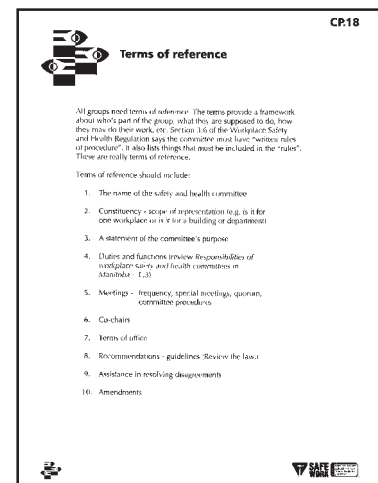
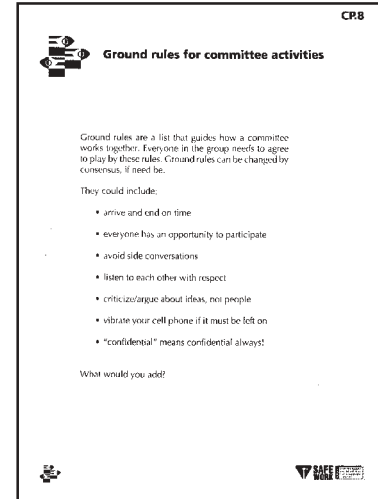
Terms of reference

Before a committee begins its work, set a “terms of reference”. They should include:

- ✓ ground rules
- ✓ expectations about attendance
- ✓ frequency of meetings a year (regular dates help)
- ✓ who’s on the committee (who’s responsible for naming representatives, etc.)
- ✓ term of office (how long are people on the committee?)
- ✓ what committee members do (including having time for these activities), etc.

It is important to do this before you get into conflict. Groups rarely have the skills to agree in stressful situations, unless the ground rules are set already.

There’s a copy of this list in the Committee Process Toolbox (CP.18).



Orientation

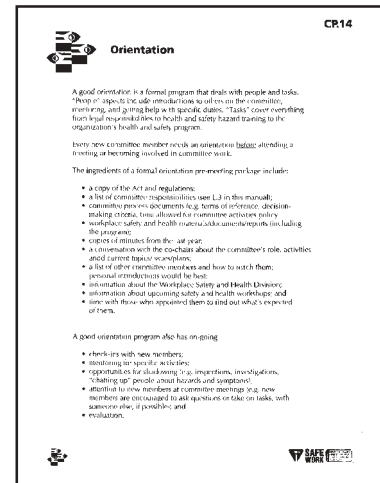
New safety and health committee members may not know much about health and safety, the law or effective committees. As a new member, there is a steep learning curve to becoming an effective part of the committee.

To assist the new member and help the committee during the transition, an orientation for new committee members just makes sense. It's respectful and practical. It improves committee effectiveness and overall functioning. When committee activities are taken seriously, all new members get an orientation that prepares them to make informed decisions and take appropriate actions. They are not left to figure things out on their own.

A good orientation is a formal program that deals with people and tasks. "People" aspects include introductions to others on the committee, mentoring, and getting help with specific duties. "Tasks" cover everything from legal responsibilities to health and safety hazard training to the organization's health and safety program.

Every new committee member needs an orientation before attending a meeting or becoming involved in committee work. The ingredients of a pre-meeting package should include:

- ✓ a copy of the Act and regulations;
- ✓ a list of committee responsibilities (see L.3 in this Manual);
- ✓ committee process documents (e.g. terms of reference, decision-making criteria, time allowed for committee activities policy);
- ✓ workplace health and safety materials/documents/reports (including the program);
- ✓ copies of minutes from the last year;
- ✓ a conversation with the co-chairs about the committee's role, activities and current topics/issues/plans;
- ✓ a list of other committee members and how to reach them; (personal introductions would be best);
- ✓ information about the Workplace Safety and Health Division;
- ✓ information about upcoming health and safety workshops; and
- ✓ time with those who appointed them to find out what is expected of them.



Documents can be put into an orientation binder or folder, and presented by the co-chairs or another committee member.

A good orientation has on-going check-ins with new members, mentoring (e.g. for inspections, investigations, “chatting up” people about hazards and symptoms), opportunities for shadowing, etc.

Some of this can take place at committee meetings. New members can be encouraged to ask questions or take on tasks (with someone else, if possible). The chair or someone else can spend time explaining the background to items on the agenda.

Finally, new members need to evaluate the orientation. Their feedback can improve the orientation programme and, therefore, the committee’s effectiveness. Also see CP.14 for an orientation list.

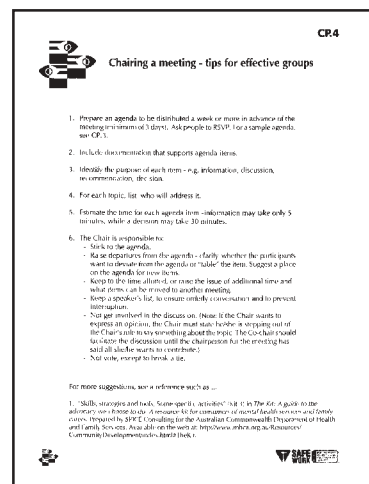
Effective chairing

Effective chairing comes from understanding groups and having particular skills. See Committee Process Toolbox for *Chairing a meeting - tips for effective groups* (CP.4).

Each workplace safety and health committee has a management and a worker co-chair. They are supposed to take turns chairing meetings. Regardless of who is chairing, the chairperson has a specific role which is essential for the committee to do its job well. It is to facilitate discussion and ensure the committee gets through the agenda.

Two procedural points. They are based on Article VII, section 40 of Robert’s Rules of Order, the rules that often are used for any kind of meeting.

1. The chair does not vote at meetings, except to break a tie.
2. Most rules of procedure say the chair may speak during a discussion **if** he/she turns over the chairing - for that item - to another person. At the same time, the chair should point out when he/she is speaking as chair or as a committee member with a specific point to make.

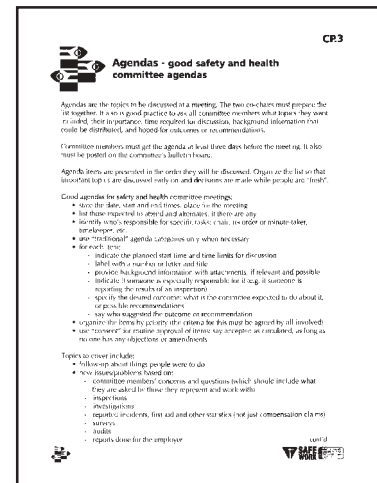


Agendas

Agendas are a list of topics that tell members what to expect at the next meeting. The law requires committee co-chairs to draft agendas. In practice, they also review previous minutes and ask other committee members what they want to put on the list.

The agenda must be distributed at least three days before a meeting; any materials to be discussed at the meeting should be attached or sent to committee members at the same time.

See *Agendas - good safety and health committee agendas* (CP.3) in the Committee Process Toolbox.



Preparation time

Committee members need to prepare for meetings. This time is well worth the investment; it leads to effective committees and effective, focused meetings.

Reading agendas and documents to be discussed at the meeting is essential. Preparation also includes:

- ✓ meeting with people in the workplace who have concerns or questions;
- ✓ subcommittee meetings (prepare a survey, review report, discuss and make recommendations on a specific topic);
- ✓ inspections and investigations;
- ✓ finding information about problems found during inspections or brought up by workers (some call this research), including possible solutions;
- ✓ meeting with other committee members to set priorities about topics to bring up, prepare information to present and develop ideas for solutions;
- ✓ reporting: worker reps to workers represented or union, employer reps to management; and
- ✓ following up about recommendations and discussions at committee meetings (plus commitments to do certain things).

(cont'd)

The authors' wording presented above does not replace the Province of Manitoba's legislated Act and Regulations. The official versions can be found on-line at <http://www.gov.mb.ca/labour/safety/actregnew.html> or by contacting the Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Division office.

It's often difficult for worker representatives to get this included in their work time. However, the law says that all committee members must be paid for the time they put in for committee work. It's discriminatory if they are not paid. Therefore, the committee's terms of reference should be clear that this is a legitimate request.

Minutes

Minutes are a record of what happens at a meeting, and the main points made during a discussion. For each item listed, there should be significant information about the topic, key discussion points, the follow-up action required, if any, and by whom and what date. Recommendations should be clearly stated. Sometimes separate forms are useful, especially if there are detailed reasons behind it. For more about recommendations, see Part H and CP.15.

After an item is discussed and resolved (e.g. at the next meeting), the same issue should not be discussed again, unless it relates to a new item, or new information is available.

The Workplace Safety and Health Division has a prescribed form for minutes. They will accept other formats if the required information is included. See the *Minute Form* (CP.13B).

COMMITTEE MINUTE FORM PAGE ___ OF ___ **Manitoba** Labour and Immigration
 See instructions: www.manitoba.ca
 Phone (204) 945-3446
 FAX (204) 945-3228
 Workplace Safety & Health Division
 401 York Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2C 0P6
 T 204-945-3446 F 204-945-3228

Company Name and Address of Workplace	Employee Members (or all)	Occupation	Present	Absent
Name:				
Address:				
Meeting Date:				
Date of next meeting:				
Number of employees at the workplace:				

Date of Origin	Concept or Problem (the basis for committee activities)	Recommendation or Action To Be Taken	Action By (Who & When)

Other Business: _____

Chair/Chairperson Signature: _____ Please indicate by (X) in the brackets below who chaired this meeting.
 BCFR management and labour co-chairs (CP.13B, 13C, 13D, 13E) of the minutes when they agree that they in order are complete and accurate.
 If one or both co-chairs (CP.13B, 13C, 13D, 13E) of the minutes report, please attach reports on a separate page.

In my opinion, the above is an accurate record of this meeting.
 () First Name of Employer Co-Chair () First Name of Worker Co-Chair
 Signature: _____ Signature: _____
COMMITTEE MINUTE FORM PAGE ___ OF ___

B. 3 Communication skills

Two communication skills are essential for each committee member:

- active listening; and
- asking open questions.

Active listening

Active listening requires effort and keeping your ideas to yourself, for the moment. It's about focusing on the speaker and shutting off your immediate responses to what is being said.

“Active” implies doing something; in this case, it means just listening. This can be difficult. It helps to

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

At each of your next few meetings, have two members assigned to paraphrase what they hear others say about one topic. Take turns until everyone has had practice.

Then use the blank *Active listening - 10 Tips to help us* to make yourself a list of what helps you listen. It's CP.2 in the Committee Process Toolbox.

write down questions or ideas as someone speaks. This will allow you to let go of your own thoughts and focus on the underlying meaning of what is being said.

When the person has finished speaking, check to see if you actually heard what they meant to say. A useful method is to paraphrase what you heard, asking the speaker if you understood or heard them correctly. If the speaker says “yes”, you likely got it right. If you didn’t quite “get” something, the person has a chance to re-state their point and avoid misunderstandings.

One point: what someone says, and what you believe or know, may be two different things. What’s important is being clear about what individuals mean — what they are trying to say. After that, we can agree to disagree or discuss the accuracy of what’s said.


Asking open questions

Asking questions is a key skill for everyday life. We ask them to learn something new, find out what a person means (i.e. to clarify), or figure out “why?”.

In many cases, a “yes” or “no” answer doesn’t help. They give only two options when there may be others. They also cut off further conversation. That’s what you get from a “closed questions”.

Open questions lead to dialogue, understanding and increased chances of getting agreement. They also help in active listening. These “open questions” start with the five “W’s” and their friend “H”: who, what, where, why, when and how.

Interviews and informal conversations are other places where you can ask open questions. “What happened?” gets the whole story. “Did you...?” leads to a “Yes” or “No” response. It also may make people defensive. There are *Interviews and conversations* (CP.12A) for health and safety committee members and *Interviews and conversations - practice instructions* (CP.12B) in the Committee Process Toolbox part of this manual.



COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

Review *Interviews and conversations* (CP.12A). Divide the committee into groups of three or four. Use the *Interviews and conversations - practice instructions* (CP.12B). Discuss the questions at the end, in the whole committee.

Then talk about:

When could we use these skills?

What forms or other help do we need to have useful conversations about health and safety?

CP.12A

Interviews and conversations
Key tips for safety and health committee members*

Interviews are a way to collect information about people's knowledge, opinions, ideas, skills and experiences. Interviews can be formal or informal conversations. The information you get can be applied to new or be combined with information from surveys, monitoring results, inspection reports, etc.

These tips will help you, as will training and practice. See CP.12B for one way to practice "during people up".

Starting out

- find a quiet and private place to talk
- give people warning to make them feel comfortable
- wear a friendly smile all over
- explain what you're doing
- introduce yourself if the person doesn't know you
- whether or not you know the person, tell them why it's their voice we're hearing for the interview
- provide a short summary of the purpose, question, etc... that is the reason you're talking to them
- reassure the person that what they say will be treated confidentially
- explain what you'll do with the information: other workers to appear safer, tell the person when they can help out more
- get a copy of written reports
- tell the person how long you expect the conversation to take
- ask if the person minds your taking notes (ask them if they say "yes" - just explain why it helps you "get the story straight")

Things to ask about during the interview


- the name, job, etc.
- the situation they are dealing with (the facts, as best as possible)
- the people who are involved (and their background or career, facts and understanding (if possible))
- their views (if changes, if appropriate)
- asking "why" is a good way to understand the reasons something happened or was done a particular way that didn't sound like it was an easy, the person or something or think they're crazy)

Things to do during the interview

- be respectful and sensitive to the person and what they say
- listen actively - commit yourself to listening (even if you're not sure you like it) and open your eyes
- don't interrupt or interrupting or giving your opinions, even if you disagree strongly with something
- don't let disagreement or impatience show
- use positive body language (like smiling, nodding or slight)

CP.12B

Interviews and conversations - practice instructions




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Did you know?

Open questions use the 5 “W’s” and their friend “H”. Use them to ask open questions

- Who uses this chemical?
- What hazards do you have to deal with when working alone?
- Where are your aches and pains?
- Why is it difficult to wear a respirator when you do that job?
- When did you first have those aches and pains?
- How do we find “green” products?

B. 4 Working towards agreement

Effective committees and reps reach agreement about recommendations, amongst other things. It's an essential part of their work.

Reaching agreement means we see the same picture and are looking for the same results. But sometimes getting there is difficult. To make it easier, we can:

- use brainstorming and the *Six thinking hats* to develop ideas
- do a force field analysis to analyze situations
- recognize and deal with conflict
- use consensus to get agreement.

Brainstorming and the *Six thinking hats*

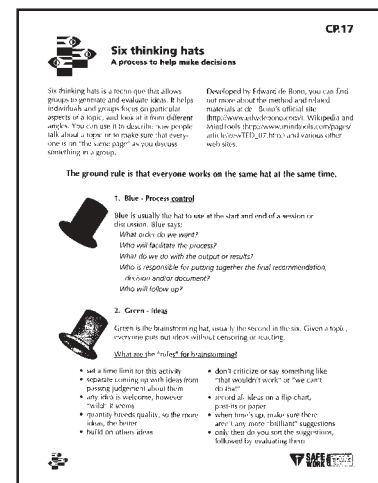
When a problem or situation comes up, a familiar reaction is that people jump to a solution that appears obvious or has been used in the past. In other situations, people may assume nothing can be done, or they censor themselves because of the workplace culture or past experience.


How can we interrupt these habits? What makes it easier to see the possibilities for change or options?

Brainstorming is one tool that helps groups be creative and imagine as many solutions as the members can dream of. The results can be very innovative and productive.

Like other processes, brainstorming works best by following some guidelines:

- set a time limit for this activity
- separate coming up with ideas from passing judgement about them
- any idea is welcome, however "wild" it seems
- quantity breeds quality, so the more ideas, the better
- build on others' ideas
- don't criticize or say something like "that wouldn't work" or "we can't do that"
- record all ideas on a flip chart or post-its or paper



 **Did you know?**

Find out more about the Six Thinking Hats method and related materials at various web sites including Edward de Bono's official site (<http://www.edwdebono.com/>) and Wikipedia and MindTools (http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_07.htm).

- when time's up, make sure there aren't any more "brilliant" suggestions
- only then do you sort the suggestions, followed by evaluating them

Brainstorming is a key part of the *Six thinking hats* process. See CP.17 in the Committee Process Toolbox for details.

A technique developed by Edward de Bono, the Six thinking hats method allows groups to generate and evaluate ideas. It helps individuals and groups focus on particular aspects of a topic, and look at it from different angles. You can use it to describe how people talk about a topic or to make sure that everyone is on "the same page" as you discuss something in a group.

The process has only one rule: Everyone is wearing the same hat at the same time. In brainstorming, this prevents having ideas shot down or too quickly evaluated.


Anyone can facilitate the brainstorming process. Try it the next time you need to identify possible solutions or strategies.

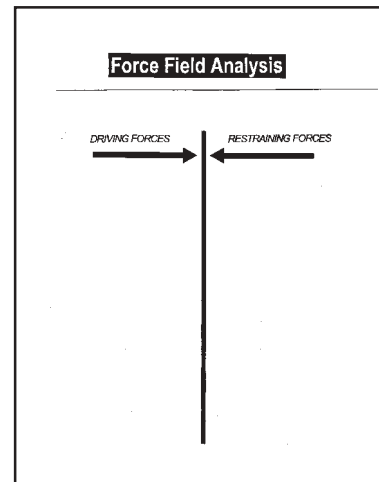
Force field analysis


Force field analysis is a useful framework with which to analyze situations, particularly ones we want to change. You'll find a copy of the tool (CP.7) in the Committee Process Toolbox along with the instructions.

Developed by Kurt Lewin, this method helps us see the big picture, considering all the factors that are influencing a situation - forces. They either drive or restrain the situation. Driving and restraining forces go against each other, creating a dynamic status quo.

Change comes when the driving force or the restraining force increase or decrease, which leads to a new status quo. If the driving force increases, then the status quo will shift to the right on the sheet; it will shift left if the restraining forces are stronger.

	COMMITTEE ACTIVITY
<p>Have a copy of the <i>Six thinking hats</i> tool (CP.17) handy.</p> <p>Brainstorm answers to the question below, allowing each committee member to throw out as many ideas as possible:</p> <p><i>How can we make our committee (more) effective?</i></p> <p>Keep a list of all answers. Then use the tool to evaluate the ideas on the list, using each of the RED, YELLOW, BLACK and WHITE hats. Revisit BLUE to agree on what to do next.</p>	



	COMMITTEE ACTIVITY
<p>Use the <i>Force field analysis</i> tool (CP.7). Brainstorm the factors that affect the effectiveness of the safety and health committee. See if you can come up with four or five factors that drive or restrain the effectiveness.</p> <p>Then pick one driving force. Brainstorm ways to strengthen it.</p>	

For example, all committee members need time for their duties. Promoting these committee needs to management may lead to agreement about scheduling meetings a year in advance, and more general support for the committee. It also may lessen the impact of a restraining force. For example, hourly workers could have a few hours of preparation time scheduled to go with each meeting.

Criteria for decision-making

Criteria let committees and representatives compare options, especially for solutions to health and safety problems.

Committees and representatives need to set criteria before dealing with a situation. These “rules” provide the principles and framework for making decisions, whether it’s which hazard to tackle first, how to use surveillance information or what to include in a recommendation.

The sample criteria on the following page walk you through questions to answer to decide how to choose from the various options you generate. Not all solutions are equal. Once you’ve answered the questions, the solution that best meets the criteria will arise.

For example, the six hazard categories remind us about the need to inspect for all types of hazards. If a lot of workplace incidents fit in “ergonomic design”, that’s where the committee should focus its efforts. It doesn’t make sense to keep inspecting only for physical or safety hazards. Once the committee inspects for ergonomic design hazards, their recommendations will include this hazard category. The members also will become more comfortable suggesting solutions that are effective and practical.

Criteria are particularly useful when it comes to getting hazards fixed. How do you decide which problem to tackle first? How do you decide what options are best? What will help you make a case for the best solution?

Criteria for setting priorities about hazards

Criteria	Hazard # 1	Hazard # 2	Hazard # 3	Hazard # 4	Hazard # 5
How serious a hazard/issue is it?					
How many people are or could be affected?					
How severe are the (potential) consequences (injury and disease, etc.)?					
How often is the problem likely to occur (frequency)?					
How much does the problem (hazard) cost?					
What's the law say about this?					
If applicable, what does the collective agreement say about this?					
Could the problem be fixed easily and quickly?					
How important is it to the people involved?					

CP.7

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

Review the questions in the first (left-hand) column of our *Criteria for decision-making* form (CP.6A). If your choices are among hazards, the next form may be more appropriate. Use the blank version to list the ones that are important to your committee. Besides the ones in our form, consider:

What other questions do we want to ask?

What questions does the committee not want to ask? Why?

What else would help us make decisions?

Then look at the second column. The committee needs to agree on the questions and the measures.

How will you measure success?

Finally, look at the criteria and measures together. Ask:

How do the criteria relate to one another?

Are some criteria more important than others?

Rank the criteria in the order that is important to your committee.

The *Criteria for decision-making*, shown below and in the Committee Process Toolbox (CP.6), sets out key criteria about how to choose priorities and recommendation(s) for solutions. Use it to make your list, before developing solutions for health and safety hazards or problems.

Since there usually is not a “yes” or “no” answer to the criteria questions, there are related ones to consider. The answers to the other two sets of questions will help you apply each criterion. The form also lets you rank each item on the list for their importance to the committee or representative. Add others if they are more appropriate for your workplace.

Criteria for decision-making (sample)

	What's important? (Our criteria)	How do we measure success?	Do our recommended solutions match the criteria?
1	How do we (each of us) feel about the solution(s)?	What evidence supports our feeling?	In the absence of evidence, how do we proceed?
2	How many people are affected by the problem? the solution(s)?	Should we set a minimum or maximum?	If one person is affected severely by a hazard, how do we rate its importance?
3	How severe are the consequences of the problem?	What are the acute and chronic effects? How serious are they?	If the consequences are only short-term or only long-term, how appropriate is our solution?
4	How much does the <u>problem</u> cost?	Does the solution cost less, the same or more than the problem? How much?	How are costs considered, compared to severity and consequences?
5	What does the law say about this topic? What is “reasonably practicable” to do in terms of time, effort and money?	What absolute requirements must the employer follow? How does this account for “reasonably practicable”?	Is management informed and clear about the health and safety law?
6	What do workplace documents say about this situation?	What guidelines do we already have to help us? What's in our health and safety program? union contract (if there is one)? other policies?	In the absence of policy, do we develop one? If this situation is not covered in our programme, what needs to be added?
7	Can the problem be fixed easily and quickly?	What is the effect of fixing something right away?	How do we still go after long-term solutions?
8	How important is the problem to the people involved, especially those affected?	If the committee identifies a hazard that others don't “see”, how do we measure its impact?	If the potential consequences are severe, does the committee go ahead when the problem is not apparent? How do we use the prevention principles (including substitution and precaution)?
9	At what level does the solution fit on the prevention triangle? (See page C-5.)	How close are we to the root cause or source of the problem?	If the fix fits in Level 2 or 3, what should we do to find out more about a Level 1 solution?

Recognizing and dealing with conflict

Conflict is an inherent dynamic of all groups. No two people are alike, so why would we see things the same way?

Within workplace safety and health committees, conflict likely is structural too. Management and worker representatives come from different positions in the organization. Their health and safety experiences and goals are often different.

For example, management representatives may be more concerned about the costs of solutions or activities than worker representatives are. Both may agree there is a problem, but disagree about possible solutions. Workers may want to get rid of a hazard while management representatives argue it costs too much to do that, and personal protective equipment will be sufficient.

In other situations, information is an important commodity. When some members have enough information to discuss an issue, and others don't, there is a power imbalance within the committee. Information needs to be shared or there may be conflict.

Although it's difficult to deal with, studies tell us that conflict produces better decisions - because all perspectives have to be considered.

Like other groups, committees must recognize and deal with conflict to reach agreement. The solution is to have healthy conflict - learn to deal with disagreements, figure out what you can agree about, and be clear about where the differences are and why. See CP.9 - *Ground rules for healthy conflict* - and the side boxes on this page.



COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

Review the *Ground rules for healthy conflict* (CP.9). Also see "Did you know?" box below. Have a discussion about how the committee could include some of these "rules" in your terms of reference and committee ground rules. Try to reach agreement about one thing.

Then discuss:

What would help us, as a committee, to use these ground rules?



Did you know?

Ground rules for healthy conflict

Committee members should:

- criticize ideas, not individuals
- treat people's concerns seriously
- listen to what is said, not what you think is said (active listening)
- allow everyone to have a say
- clarify facts and agree about getting more information if needed
- find out what you can agree on
- clarify any disagreement before trying to develop a solution
- try to understand the reasons for the differences
- see if people will agree to try something before actually disagreeing about its use
- summarize where you're at, after everyone's had a say, and avoid repeating the same argument
- take a break and caucus where necessary, returning with one suggestion about how to proceed

There's a copy of this in the Committee Process Toolbox (CP.9).

Consensus

A key role for committees and reps is to recommend solutions for health and safety problems or actions to prevent them. That means the committee must agree about what to recommend.

Consensus is our preferred form of reaching agreement. It is an agreement with which everyone can live. It may not be your solution or my solution, but it is a solution we agree will work.

Given the committee structure, people should and will come in with different perspectives and experiences. Dialogue about a problem, its cause(s), possible solutions and the impact of those solutions helps a committee reach consensus about a recommendation. Since dialogue takes time, the agenda needs to allow for this.

For long-term effectiveness, committees need to have these important struggles (“storming”) to reach an effective solution (“performing”).

Here is one method to develop consensus:

A method for developing consensus

1. Start with a proposal.
2. Clarify what the proposal means.
3. Check for immediate consensus.
4. List concerns (brainstorm without judgement).
5. Resolve concerns or look for a “third solution”:
 - revisit the purpose
 - examine who benefits from the solution
 - do a “go-around”, allowing each member to have a quick say
 - ask for a “stand aside” if there is a conflict of interest or if a member cannot support, but will not stop, the proposal.
6. Continue until consensus is reached.
7. If consensus cannot be reached, refer to a third party (e.g. Workplace Safety & Health Division).



Did you know?

If the committee chooses to use “majority rule” instead of consensus to make decisions, those with differing opinions may be disenfranchised, feel silenced or left out of the process. When this happens, the committee may have difficulties fulfilling its collective responsibilities.



B.5 Racism and discrimination

Why is racism and discrimination an issue for safety and health committees and reps?

One reason is that racism, discrimination and other forms of harassment on the job are work-related stressors. They are hazards that may affect people's health or be some of the root causes of incidents, injuries and illnesses.

This makes committees and reps responsible for dealing with racism, discrimination and other forms of harassment that lead to, or are, health and safety symptoms or hazards.

The connection is reinforced by requirements in the 2007 composite *Workplace Safety and Health Regulation*. Employers must prepare a written harassment prevention policy (Part 10 of the *Regulation*) and consult committees and reps about its development. Like other health and safety issues, committees and reps should be evaluating the policy, dealing with complaints that are covered by it, and developing and promoting related education and information programs. It is management's responsibility to deal with specific issues.

These topics aren't easy ones to deal with, or to recognize. The *Triangle model* (CP.19) provides a way to identify individual behaviours, systems and unexamined ideas. (We've adapted it from *Dancing on live embers. Challenging racism in organizations*, by Tina Lopes and Barb Thomas.)

Individual behaviours are comments, feelings and actions that send a message of discrimination. However well-intentioned, their impact is still racist or discriminatory. Systems, or the way things work, includes hiring, promotion and wage practices - what seems to be "normal". Powerful unexamined ideas are assumptions at work beneath the surface (e.g. what women can or can't do physically, who's trustworthy or lazy, etc.)

CP.19

The Triangle model to analyze racism & discrimination

For instructions on how to use this tool, see section B.5 on page B-15.

Racism and discrimination are difficult to deal with. Sometimes they are difficult to recognize, especially if you are not the person affected.



However difficult it is, workplace safety and health committees must recognize that racism and other incidents are health hazards, and must affect how health and safety is dealt with in the workplace. They may show up in some of:

- actions on the committee;
- allegations (reported or direct) - to name symptoms or hazards;
- how committee members, supervisors or others respond when racialized people report symptoms, hazards, etc.;
- who does what kind of task in the workplace and the hazards they face; e.g. workers of colour are more likely to face mental and physical ailments;
- how other language and cultural practices are recognized in the workplace;
- harassment or anti-bullying or groups of workers; or
- conflict at or near particular health and safety issues.

The Triangle model provides a way to identify:

- racialized behaviours - comments, feelings and actions that send a message of discrimination and racism; e.g. those people always...
- the larger systems at work, e.g. hiring, promotion and supervision practices, that seem "normal"; and
- unexamined ideas - the "elephant in the room" that we ignore or assumptions that "won't do this here" e.g. who's trustworthy or lazy, what "they" can do or not do physically.

See the Committee Action on page B-16 about one way to use this tool. For more information about it, also see *Dancing on live embers. Challenging racism in organizations* published by Between the Lines in 2005. It was written by Tina Lopes and Barb Thomas.



For example, a common behaviour when someone is deaf is to speak more loudly. In the workplace, a deaf person may be operating noisy equipment. Are they provided appropriate hearing protection? If not, why not? What ideas are behind this behaviour? How does the system - the “normal” way things work - support this behaviour?

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

Use the *Triangle Model* (CP.19). Think of personal experiences or incidents that you’ve seen or heard about in your workplace. List behaviours that could be experienced as racism or discrimination.

Then ask:

What are the unexamined powerful ideas or assumptions underneath the behaviour?

How does our current way of doing things support this kind of racism or discrimination?

B. 6 How effective are we now?

Before going any further, it’s time to check how well your committee is doing. The committee process tool box includes two checklists. The *Workplace safety and health committee self-evaluation - a quick check* (CP.21A) is a short and quick assessment form. The *Workplace safety and health committee self-evaluation checklist* (CP.21B) is the detailed version that we discuss in more detail in Part H.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

On your own, answer the questions in the *Workplace safety and health committee self-evaluation - a quick check* tool (CP.21A).

As a committee, compare your answers and talk about:

What are we doing well?

What needs improvement?

What is one thing we can work on right away?