



## Workplace Safety and Health: Why It Matters More Than You Think

Wait—don’t scroll past this! Yes, “Workplace Safety and Health” (WSH) might sound like a dry topic, but stay with me. This one matters—a lot. It’s about *your* right to work in a place that’s safe, respectful, and protected from harm.

We’re not just talking about hard hats and safety goggles here. In today’s classrooms, offices, and hallways, injuries and workplace violence are on the rise. That means understanding your protections under Manitoba’s Workplace Safety and Health Act isn’t just helpful—it’s essential.

### Who This Applies To

If you’re part of the Brandon Teachers’ Association (BTA)—whether you’re a classroom teacher, support teacher, clinician, principal, vice-principal, or consultant—this information directly affects you. Every member has both rights *and* responsibilities under the WSH Act.

### The Three Key Players

The Act divides duties into three main groups:

- **The Employer:** Brandon School Division (BSD)
- **Workers:** All BTA members
- **Supervisors:** Principals and Vice-Principals (who are also BTA members)

Each group has clearly defined responsibilities to keep workplaces safe.

### What the Division Must Do

#### Employers’ Duty to Inform

Each employee must be informed about the nature and extent of the risk of violence in the workplace. The employer must provide the minimum amount of information required to keep employees safe.

BSD’s responsibilities are crystal clear: “*The employer shall ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health, and welfare of all workers.*”

That means providing a workplace that’s free of hazards, offering proper training and supervision, and making sure everyone has the information and tools they need to stay safe.

## Control Measures

Control measures are all measures, existing and new, that the employer will implement to eliminate or control further violence to the employee. These must be communicated to the employee after the investigation.

### Examples:

- Training (WEVAS, NVCI, etc)
- Protective clothing or equipment
- Different room arrangement
- Update Behaviour Plan (consult specialists such as OTs, psychologists, etc)
- Establish proactive and reactive measures (including when and how to remove a student)

## What Supervisors Must Do

Principals and vice-principals are in a unique position—they're both workers and supervisors. Under the Act, they're required to take every reasonable precaution to protect the safety and health of those they supervise. That includes informing staff of any known or foreseeable risks and responding promptly to any safety concerns or incidents.

## What Every Member Must Do

As a worker, your duty is straightforward: take reasonable care of your own safety and the safety of others. You're also required to follow WSH legislation and regulations.

In short—you have the right to a safe workplace, and the responsibility to help keep it that way.

## Reporting: The Most Important Step You Can Take

The easiest and most effective way to maintain safety? Report *everything*—every incident, every “near miss,” every situation that feels unsafe.

If something happens, tell your principal, vice-principal, or supervisor right away. They're required to investigate and take steps to prevent a similar situation from happening again.

Then, fill out one of the appropriate BSD forms:

- **Hazard/Near Miss Form**
- **Safety Concern Form**
- **Violent Incident Form**

These forms don't just create paperwork—they create change. They help identify risks across the division and ensure follow-up by the divisional WSH representative.

## What to Expect When Violence is Reported

When an employee submits a Violent Incident Report, it triggers an investigation into the incident. The severity of the injury to the employee determines who investigates the incident. (See back panel for examples).

Regardless of who investigates, the following basic procedures should be followed:

1. Gather information (name of victim, assailant, and all witnesses).
2. Inspect the scene (take photos, measurements, or sketch key elements of the scene).
3. Ask for written statements and/or conduct interviews (victim and witnesses)
4. Determine direct and indirect causes (ex. lack of training or knowledge; triggers; situational factors).
5. Report results back to the employee, as well as control measures that will be put in place.

## Violence in the Workplace: Zero Tolerance

Let's be clear: **violence in any form is unacceptable**. If you experience (or nearly experience) violence at work, report it immediately. Inform your supervisor, complete a Violent Incident Form, and know that the incident will be investigated.

Reporting isn't about getting anyone in trouble—it's about preventing harm. Your report could be the key to stopping the next incident from happening to someone else.

### The Importance of Reporting

In Manitoba, Workplace Safety and Health is built on an internal responsibility system. This means that everyone has a role in the prevention of workplace violence.

#### Consider:

- If it happens to you, it can happen to others. You have an obligation to protect your colleagues—present and future—from violence.
- If a student is repeatedly violent, they may not be getting the supports they need.
- Allowing violent behaviours in school sends a negative message about the acceptability of violence in society.
- It is expected under the law that all violent incidents are reported, regardless of age or ability of the aggressor.

### Bottom Line

Every BTA member deserves to feel safe and supported at work. Safety isn't just a policy—it's a shared responsibility.

**Expect a safe workplace. Ensure a safe workplace.**

When you report, you protect yourself, your colleagues, and your community.

Take care of yourself—and take care of each other.

### Reporting = Protecting Each Other

When you report, you're not just protecting yourself—you're protecting your colleagues, your students, and the entire school community.

And remember: filling out a WSH form **cannot** be used against you for evaluation or disciplinary reasons. That protection is written right into the law. In fact, *not* reporting an incident you witness could put you in violation of the Act.

So, do the right thing. Support your coworkers by reporting every incident or near miss.

### The Cost of Violence

#### For the Victim

- Feelings of fear, stress, embarrassment, frustration and loss of power
- Missing work or quitting
- Personal, financial and economic impacts if they leave the job

#### For the Workplace

- Low morale
- Toxic work environment
- Absenteeism and employee turnover
- WSH Investigations and financial liabilities
- Damage to the workplace identity



# Who Investigates?

## Type of Violent Incident

### Serious Incident

death, injury resulting from electrical contact, fracture, amputation, electrocution, loss of sight, unconsciousness, poisoning, third degree burns, asphyxiation, laceration requiring medical treatment, collapse or structural failing of a building, etc. (WSH Reg 2.6)

Serious incidents MUST be reported to the Workplace Safety and Health Branch (WSH Reg 2.7(1) and 2.8)

Winnipeg:  
204-957-SAFE (7233)

or  
Toll-free:  
1-855-957-SAFE (7233)

### Non-Serious Incident with Medical Treatment

eg. concussion requiring medical treatment, but no loss of consciousness

OR

### Accident or Dangerous Occurrence with Potential for Serious Incident (near miss)

eg. baseball bat swung at head but missed

WSH Reg 2.9(1)(b)

### Non-Serious and no Medical Treatment Required

eg. slap, scratch, bruise, bump, bite, pinch, kick, hit by object, or threats to injure

## Investigator(s)

**First** - Workplace Safety Officers (at their discretion)

**Second** - Co-Chairs of the Workplace Safety and Health Committee (or their designates)

\*No-one should access the site until the WSH Officers release it.

WSH Reg 2.9(2)

Co-Chairs of the Workplace Safety and Health Committee (or their designates)

OR

Employer Rep and Workplace Rep

Principal  
OR  
Employer Rep

\*Check your Division's Policy

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# Right to Refuse Dangerous Work

- Employees may refuse to work or do particular work if they believe, on reasonable grounds, that the work constitutes a danger to their safety.
- If the employer asks another employee to do that work, they must inform them in writing that someone has refused to do it and their reasons for refusal.
- The employee may be reassigned during investigation.
- **If you are considering a work refusal, contact an MTS Staff Officer.**  
**PHONE: (204) 888-7961**  
**TOLL FREE: 1-800-262-8803**

# Employees' Right to Know

Each employee has the right to know their Division's policy on violence reporting. The policy must be shared with employees, as should the form used to report violent incidents.

# Why Don't Teachers Report Violence?

There are many reasons that teachers do not report violence to their supervisors, including:

- Lack of awareness of legislation or divisional policy
- Lack of training or knowledge
- Lack of response when reports are filed
- Subtle or overt pressure to suppress reports
- Belief that violence is 'part of the job'. **IT IS NOT.**



# Workplace Safety & Health

## Guiding Principles for Workplace Safety and Health Reporting of Incidents, Accidents and Near Misses

THE  
MANITOBA  
TEACHERS'  
SOCIETY



### Background Information

WSH incidents in schools are underreported, and when they are reported, there is an inconsistency in the next steps (investigating, implementing control measures, and communicating back to members who report). Each school division has its own method by which incidents are reported—some on paper, some online. Some divisions already have effective reporting procedures in place that are clearly understood by members. In other divisions, members are unaware of how to report and what to expect as follow up.

A clear and easily accessible reporting system would encourage members to report safety incidents, help principals and WSH committees investigate, and support a culture of safety in schools. This document provides Guiding Principles for an effective reporting system.

### MTS Guiding Principles on Reporting Systems

MTS believes that all MTS members should have access to a WSH Reporting System:

- for which they have received training;
- that is easy to access whether at work or offsite, preferably online or in an electronic format;
- that follows a clear and consistent process regardless of school or worksite within a division;
- that allows for third-party reporting;
- that sends copies of reported concerns to multiple parties (supervisor, WSH representative, WSH committee co-chair, divisional safety officer, local president, and the reporting worker);
- that has the ability to track data, including the need for medical treatment and days lost from work;
- that ensures that concerns are addressed or investigated in a timely fashion by the appropriate investigator (supervisor or WSH Co-Chairs);
- that sends copies of the investigation report to multiple parties, including corrective actions taken, if any; and
- that ensures that the reporting worker is debriefed regarding the results of the investigation and the corrective actions that will be put in place, if any.

### What to Report: Unsafe Conditions, Accidents, Violent Incidents, Near Misses, Harassment, Work Refusals

- “unsafe condition” – Any condition that has the potential to cause injury or illness to a worker;
  - “accident or incident” – An occurrence that caused an injury or illness to a worker;
  - “violent incident” – The attempted or actual exercise of physical force against a worker or a threatening behaviour or statement that physical force will be exercised. All violent incidents must be reported and investigated, regardless of the age or developmental ability of the person who perpetrated the violence. (WSH Act 1.1)
  - “near miss” – An occurrence that had the potential to cause an injury or illness to a worker;
  - “harassment” – Objectionable conduct that creates a risk to the health of a worker, or severe conduct that adversely affects a worker’s psychological or physical well-being. Includes psychological bullying and human rights violations by co-workers, supervisors, parents, students, and others. (WSH Act 1.1, 1.1.(7))
  - “work refusal” – A worker refusing to do particular work on the grounds that it poses a danger to their health or safety. (WSH Act 43)
- Workers who raise workplace safety and health concerns are protected by law from reprisal, including job termination and loss of wages. (WSH Reg 42(1))

## Who Investigates?

For concerns that do not require medical treatment:

1. Report the concern to the supervisor for resolution. (Note: In a school, the principal is the supervisor.)
2. If unresolved, report the concern to the school or site WSH Committee Co-Chairs. If there is no committee, report concerns to the WSH Representative at the school or site.
3. If the concern cannot be remedied at the committee or representative level, or if the issue is urgent and not receiving appropriate attention, contact the WSH Branch.

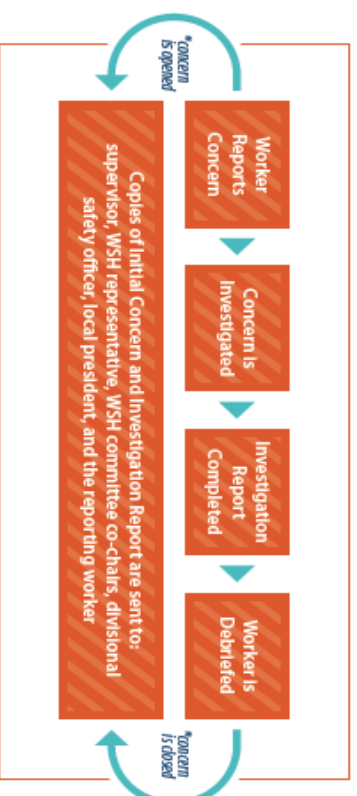
Type of Concern	Examples	Investigator
unsafe condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• icy sidewalk, overloaded shelving, unguarded saw</li> <li>• doing hazardous work without specialized training</li> </ul>	Supervisor first, then Co-Chairs if unresolved.
incident/accident not requiring medical treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fall on ice with scratched hands and knees</li> <li>• fall from ladder with minor bruising</li> </ul>	Supervisor first, then Co-Chairs if unresolved.
violent incident not requiring medical treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• slapped or pinched by a student</li> <li>• parent threatens to assault teacher</li> </ul>	Supervisor first, then Co-Chairs if unresolved.
near miss not likely to have resulted in a serious incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• trip over carpet in hallway but did not fall</li> <li>• student throws eraser at teacher but misses</li> </ul>	Supervisor first, then Co-Chairs if unresolved.
work refusal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher feels they are in danger by being asked to supervise on a canoe trip without proper training, safety equipment, or other resources</li> <li>• teacher feels they are in danger from a student who has previously assaulted them</li> </ul>	Supervisor first, then Co-Chairs, then WSH Branch.
harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• malicious comments made by a colleague</li> <li>• parent posting derogatory comments online</li> </ul>	WSH Committee not involved. Formal complaints are submitted as per Divisional Policy. May be investigated internally or by a third party.
<b>For Serious Incidents, Potentially Serious Incidents, and Incidents Requiring Medical Treatment (WSH Reg 2.6-2.9)</b>		
Serious incident <i>*must be reported immediately to WSH Branch</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• death, injury resulting from electrical contact, fracture, amputation, loss of sight, unconsciousness, poisoning, third degree burns, asphyxiation, laceration requiring medical treatment, collapse or structural falling of a building</li> </ul>	Committee Co-Chairs
Potentially Serious Incident (*near miss that could have resulted in a Serious Incident)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• car falls from hoist but does not injure anyone</li> <li>• student swings baseball bat at teacher's head but does not make contact</li> </ul>	Committee Co-Chairs
Non-Serious Incident, Accident, or Violent Incident Requiring Medical Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• first degree burns from touching a hot element</li> <li>• assault causing concussion with no loss of consciousness, but requiring medical treatment</li> </ul>	Committee Co-Chairs

## Investigations

- Policies should clearly explain what happens when an incident is reported, including who investigates, and the involvement of the reporting worker in the investigation process.
- Policies should include how reports are shared with WSH committees, including committee co-chairs, Divisional Safety Officer, supervisor, and others.

## Post Investigation

- Investigation report must clearly set out results of investigation, including direct and indirect causes of incident, and immediate and long-term corrective actions that will be taken to prevent the occurrence of a similar incident, accident, or near miss, or the reasons for no action being taken. [WSH Act 2.9(3)]
- The investigation report shall be shared with the worker and the worker shall be debriefed.



## Training and Orientation

Upon hire, and at the start of each school year, staff are to be trained in their rights and responsibilities as they relate to WSH legislation. This shall include information on the procedure for reporting concerns and any safe work procedures required to prevent injury to themselves or others. [WSH Act 7.4(5)(b), WSH Reg 2.2.1(3)]

## Further Information and Support

See The Manitoba Teachers' Society Workplace Safety and Health page at <https://www.mbteachers.org/members/2020/07/17/workplace-safety-health/>

If you require assistance with a Workplace Safety and Health concern, contact a Teacher Welfare Staff Officer at 204-831-3055 or 1-800-262-4803.

Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health: 204-957-SAFE (7233) in Winnipeg

1-855-957-SAFE (7233) outside Winnipeg



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NOVEMBER 29<sup>TH</sup>, 2025  
JANUARY 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2026  
MARCH 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2026

Register online before noon the Wednesday prior to the seminar at

<https://members.rtam.mb.ca/ap/Events/Register/xRFkNIBhMCYC7>

by emailing: [office@rtam.mb.ca](mailto:office@rtam.mb.ca) or by calling 204-899-3660.





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