

2025 Was the Year Safety Became Personal Special Report



Why 2025 Changed OHS Risk for Canadian Employers

For many Canadian safety leaders, 2025 felt less like a continuation of familiar compliance challenges and more like a turning point. Longstanding assumptions about what constituted a “good” occupational health and safety program began to break down under scrutiny from inspectors, prosecutors, coroners, and courts.

For years, many employers operated under a quiet belief that if policies existed, training had been delivered, and incident rates were acceptable, their OHS risk was under control. In 2025, that belief proved dangerously incomplete.

What changed was not the existence of OHS laws. Those obligations have been stable for decades.

What changed was how aggressively failures were enforced, how narrowly due diligence was interpreted, and how often individual decisions by supervisors and managers became the focal point of legal exposure.

If 2024 was about rebuilding safety programs after years of

disruption, 2025 was about consequences.

From Program Presence to System Performance

One of the clearest shifts in 2025 was the move away from evaluating whether a safety program existed toward examining whether it actually worked.

Inspectors across jurisdictions increasingly focused on operational reality rather than documented intent. They asked questions that went beyond binders and training records.

Were hazards actually identified and controlled, or merely listed?

Did supervisors understand their duties, or were they relying on habit?

Were workers demonstrably competent, or simply assumed to be experienced?

Were corrective actions closed, or just assigned?

In multiple enforcement actions, employers produced extensive documentation only to face orders or penalties because the documentation did not align with what was happening on the ground.

This shift mirrors a long-standing principle in Canadian OHS law but one that was enforced more consistently in 2025. Due diligence is not about what an employer intended to do. It is about what was reasonably done to prevent the specific risk that caused harm.

Enforcement Activity Became More Assertive

Across Canada, enforcement activity in 2025 reflected a more

assertive regulatory posture.

WorkSafeBC continued to levy six-figure penalties where employers failed to ensure worker supervision and hazard control, particularly in construction, forestry, and manufacturing. Ontario Ministry of Labour inspectors issued stop work orders with increasing frequency in response to inadequate training, missing competent supervision, and failures to follow safe work procedures.