

Ask The Expert: What Is OHS Harmonization?



QUESTION

What is OHS harmonization and which OHS requirements does it affect?

ANSWER

'Harmonization' means establishing uniform OHS standards across the country in the interest of making compliance easier, especially for companies that have operations in multiple jurisdictions or otherwise engage in interprovincial business. The concept was agreed to in the recent negotiations on removing interprovincial trade barriers.

To achieve harmonization, provinces will have to modify their current OHS regulations in accordance with agreed-to standards the way Canada had to revise WHMIS to meet GHS standards. Last November, Manitoba became the first province to take the plunge. Nova Scotia soon followed. Expect others to do so shortly. The first round of OHS harmonization will impose uniform standards for:

- First aid kits and certification;
- Eye, face, foot, hearing and respiratory protection; and
- Personal flotation devices.