

Mastering Training Audits: How Canadian OHS Managers Can Ensure Compliance & Workplace Safety



If you're an OHS manager in Canada, you know that safety training isn't just about ticking boxes—it's about ensuring workers have the knowledge and skills to prevent accidents before they happen. But how do you know if your training program is actually working? More importantly, how do you prove compliance when an inspector comes knocking?

That's where a **training audit** comes in. When done right, it ensures your team is properly trained, your records are up to legal standards, and your organization isn't at risk of fines, liability, or worse—a preventable workplace incident.

Let's dive into how to **conduct a training audit that actually makes a difference**, what records you need to keep, and the legal nuances across Canada that OHS managers must know.

WHY A TRAINING AUDIT IS CRITICAL (BEYOND JUST COMPLIANCE)

Workplace safety training is more than a regulatory requirement—it's a **lifeline** for workers in hazardous environments. A training audit ensures that employees aren't just sitting through courses but actually **understanding and applying** what they've learned.

But here's the challenge: many organizations don't have a **clear picture** of whether their training programs are effective. They assume that if a session has been conducted, the job is done. That assumption **can lead to serious consequences**.

A poorly trained worker can put **themselves, their coworkers, and even the company at risk**. In cases where injuries or fatalities occur, investigators will quickly ask for **proof of training**—and if those records are missing or incomplete, the company could face significant penalties.

A training audit is your **proactive defense**. It helps you answer key questions:

- Are employees receiving the **right** training for their job roles?
- Are they **retaining** and **applying** safety knowledge?
- Are training records **accurate, accessible, and legally compliant**?
- Is refresher training being scheduled at the right intervals?

By conducting **regular audits**, you ensure that safety training is not just an exercise in paperwork but a **functional, effective part of workplace culture**.

HOW TO CONDUCT A TRAINING AUDIT THAT GETS RESULTS

Step 1: Establish the Legal Training Requirements

Not all training is optional—many safety training programs are **mandated by law**. OHS regulations vary across Canada, but most require specific training in areas such as **hazard communication (WHMIS), PPE use, equipment operation, and emergency response**.

For example, in Ontario, at least **one worker and one management representative** must complete **certified Joint Health**

and Safety Committee (JHSC) training, while British Columbia requires **fall protection training to be refreshed every three years**.

Before starting your audit, **review provincial and federal regulations** to ensure you're capturing all legally required training. If your company operates in multiple jurisdictions, you'll need to align with the **strictest** requirements to stay fully compliant.

Step 2: Evaluate the Effectiveness of Existing Training

Many companies assume that if a worker **attended a training session**, they are now fully competent. But real-world safety performance tells a different story.

To **truly assess** whether training is effective, OHS managers should focus on three key areas:

1. **Knowledge Retention** – Do employees remember safety protocols weeks or months after training? If they can't recall key information, the training likely wasn't effective.
2. **Practical Application** – Can workers demonstrate proper use of PPE, operate machinery safely, and follow emergency procedures in real-world scenarios? Classroom training without hands-on application often leads to **gaps in competency**.
3. **Behavioural Changes** – Are workers actually applying safety knowledge in their day-to-day tasks? If unsafe behaviors persist despite training, something needs to change—whether it's **training methods, reinforcement strategies, or supervision**.

An effective training audit **goes beyond paperwork** and takes a **close look at employee competency in action**.

Step 3: Ensure Training Records Are Legally Compliant

In Canada, training records are **critical legal documents**. If an inspector arrives or an incident occurs, these records will be your first line of defense. But not all record-keeping systems are created equal.

A **legally compliant training record** should include:

- **Employee name and role.**
- **Date and type of training completed.**
- **Trainer's name and qualifications.**
- **Assessment results (if applicable).**
- **Dates for required refresher training.**

How long you need to keep these records depends on your jurisdiction. In **Ontario**, for example, training records must be kept **for the duration of employment plus one year**, while **British Columbia** requires **at least three years of retention**.

A major pitfall for many organizations is relying on **scattered, paper-based** records that are difficult to retrieve when needed. Digital tracking systems can **automate record-keeping**, send **reminders for refresher training**, and ensure documentation is **readily accessible** in case of an audit.

THE HIDDEN RISKS OF NEGLECTING TRAINING AUDITS

Failing to conduct regular training audits doesn't just expose your company to **legal risks**—it increases the **likelihood of preventable accidents**.

Consider this: A worker operates heavy machinery without having received proper training, and an incident occurs. During the investigation, the company **cannot produce** training records proving that the employee had been trained. The result? Hefty **fines, lawsuits, and reputational damage**.

In one real-world case, an Ontario company was fined **\$130,000** because a worker was **killed by an overhead crane**—and the investigation revealed that no formal crane operation training

had been provided. This is why an audit isn't just a **formality—it's a life-saving measure.**

HOW TO FUTURE-PROOF YOUR TRAINING PROGRAM

A one-time training audit isn't enough. To ensure **ongoing compliance and safety**, OHS managers should:

- **Schedule annual audits** to catch gaps before they become risks.
- **Implement competency-based assessments**, not just attendance tracking.
- **Use digital record-keeping** to streamline compliance and retrieval.
- **Monitor regulatory changes** to ensure training programs stay up to date.

Investing in **better training, better records, and better auditing** isn't just about avoiding penalties—it's about **building a safer workplace for everyone.**

FINAL THOUGHTS: TRAINING AUDITS ARE MORE THAN JUST COMPLIANCE—THEY'RE AN OHS GAME-CHANGER

Training audits aren't just about **checking off a legal requirement**—they're about ensuring that **workers are truly equipped to handle workplace risks**. By conducting thorough audits, focusing on **competency over compliance**, and keeping **airtight records**, OHS managers can create a **safer, legally protected, and more efficient work environment.**

So the next time you're reviewing your training program, ask yourself: **Are we just training employees—or are we actually making them safer?**

CALL OUT BOX

Best Practices for Managing OHS Training Records

1. **Use a Digital Training Management System (TMS) – Paper**

records can get lost or damaged. A TMS helps **track, store, and retrieve** training records efficiently.

2. **Automate Training Reminders** – Set up reminders for **refresher training deadlines** to ensure ongoing compliance.
3. **Ensure Secure Storage** – Keep records in a **safe, easily accessible** location in case of an audit.
4. **Regularly Review & Update Records** – Make training audits part of your **annual safety review process**.