

Spot The Safety Violation: Would You Want to Use this Restroom?



Are these proper and adequate bathroom facilities for workers?
How do they fall short?

One of the most basic things workers should be able to expect from their employers is clean and working bathrooms and sinks. These facilities aren't necessary for practical reasons only'they also serve a health and safety purpose. After all, how can workers adequately wash their hands to remove germs, viruses or traces of hazardous substances if there are no sinks with running water'

This picture from the Health and Safety Executive in the UK (HSE) shows the poor excuse for sanitation facilities that a construction firm provided for its workers.

An HSE inspector visited the company's site and issued an Improvement Notice after finding sub-standard facilities for workers on site. But after the company failed to improve the facilities and bring them up to an acceptable standard, it was fined £2,000 (\$3,639 CD).

Health and Safety Inspector Adam Hills said, 'Construction workers have the right to sanitary and welfare facilities including having an adequate supply of hot and cold running water. There is really no excuse to subject workers to pre-Victorian conditions. Sadly, however, these basic requirements are too often neglected.'

'A cold water tap and toilet on their own are not adequate. Decent facilities will positively benefit health and well-being, and help prevent ailments and infection,' added Hills.

Inadequate bathroom or restroom facilities can be a problem in the construction industry in Canada, too.

For example, Ontario's [Ministry of Labour](#) noted that construction workers are often at risk from exposure to infectious diseases on construction projects due to poor sanitary conditions associated with toilets and clean-up facilities. To address this issue, the ministry conducted a province-wide enforcement strategy focusing on sanitary conditions at construction projects.

But bathroom facilities can also become a health and safety issue in other industry sectors. For example, if the facilities in any workplace aren't properly maintained, they can contain slip-and-fall hazards. And if the lack of hot water prevents workers from washing their hands, illnesses such as the flu can spread through your workforce.

5 STEPS FOR COMPLYING WITH SANITATION REQUIREMENTS

The [OHS regulations contain personal hygiene or sanitation requirements](#) for workplaces. To comply with these

requirements, you should generally take the following steps:

Step #1: Provide appropriate facilities. Employers must provide its own sinks and toilets and/or urinals for workers' use on the job or access to such facilities. In some circumstances, you may also need to provide showers, such as if workers are exposed to certain hazardous substances or high temperatures.

Step #2: Have enough bathrooms. Make sure you have enough bathrooms for both male and female workers based on the total number of employees. Small workplaces may be able to have a single unisex facility.

Step #3: Ensure facilities meet standards. The OHS regulations spell out the standards that bathroom facilities are required to meet. For example, they must generally be properly ventilated and illuminated, have hot water at the sinks and contain adequate supplies of toilet paper.

Step #4: Ensure facilities are properly used. Your bathrooms should only be used for their designated purpose. So ensure, for instance, that they're not used to store materials. And make sure that workers use the facilities when necessary. For example, require workers to shower at the end of their shift if they've been exposed to hazardous substances such as lead or asbestos fibres.

Step #5: Properly maintain bathrooms. Take steps to ensure that your bathroom facilities are clean and all elements are in proper working order. For example, the facilities in the pictures are very dirty and don't appear to be working properly (check out the bucket under the sink that seems to be there to catch leaks). And make sure that your [general housekeeping practices](#) apply to the bathrooms as well as the rest of the workplace.

But make sure that workers who clean these facilities follow [safe work procedures](#) so they don't endanger themselves, such

as by mixing incompatible cleaning products.