

The 10 Most Important Occupational Health and Safety Changes in Canada in 2025



By any reasonable measure, 2025 was one of the most consequential years for occupational health and safety law in Canada in more than a decade. While no single piece of legislation grabbed national headlines the way major labour reforms sometimes do, the cumulative effect of dozens of regulatory amendments, enforcement changes, and modernization initiatives fundamentally altered what compliance now looks like for Canadian employers.

For OHS managers, this year marked a turning point. Regulators clearly signaled that passive compliance is no longer acceptable. Written programs alone are not enough. Training without verification is not enough. Committees that exist in name only are not enough. Governments across Canada are moving toward a more active, prevention-focused, and enforcement-driven safety regime that places real accountability on employers, supervisors, and senior leaders.

This article breaks down the ten most important occupational health and safety laws and regulatory changes that took effect or meaningfully advanced in Canada in 2025. For each change, we explain what changed, why it matters, and what an OHS manager should already have done or should be doing now to

stay compliant and defensible.

This is not a theoretical overview. It is a practical roadmap for safety leaders who do not want to be caught off guard during the next inspection, incident investigation, or prosecution.

1. Federal OHS Regulation Modernization Under The Canada Labour Code

What makes the 2025 federal amendments especially important is not just that the regulations were updated, but how they reframed employer responsibility. The changes reinforced a systems-based approach to safety that places greater emphasis on hazard prevention programs, documented risk assessment processes, and meaningful worker participation.

Historically, many federally regulated employers relied on legacy safety programs developed years earlier. These programs often technically met minimum requirements but were disconnected from day-to-day operations. The updated regulations make it harder to justify that approach. Inspectors are now more likely to ask how hazards are identified, how controls are selected, and how effectiveness is evaluated over time.

For OHS managers, compliance now requires more than confirming policies exist. There must be evidence that hazard identification is ongoing, that controls are reviewed when work changes, and that workers are consulted in the process. Training must align with actual job risks, not generic job titles.

An OHS manager should also be prepared to demonstrate how safety responsibilities are communicated to supervisors and how accountability is enforced. Federal regulators

increasingly expect employers to show not only what the rules are, but how management ensures they are followed.

2. Federal First Aid System Requirements

The 2025 amendments clarified something inspectors have been pushing toward for years: first aid is not a static requirement. It is a living system that must reflect workplace hazards, staffing levels, and operational realities.

Employers are now expected to assess first aid needs based on risk, not convenience. A workplace with hazardous processes, remote workers, or lone workers requires a different level of planning than a low-risk office environment. Simply meeting the minimum number of attendants or kits may no longer be enough if coverage is ineffective in practice.

From an OHS management perspective, first aid planning should now be tied directly to hazard assessments and emergency response planning. If workers are exposed to specific risks, first aid procedures must address those risks. If work is conducted in remote locations or during off-hours, coverage must reflect that reality.

Inspectors are increasingly asking how first aid plans were developed, not just whether they exist. An OHS manager should be ready to explain the rationale behind first aid levels, demonstrate how attendants were selected and trained, and show how workers are informed of first aid procedures.

3. British Columbia OHS Regulation Updates And Enforcement Focus

British Columbia's regulatory changes in 2025 reinforced a broader shift toward outcome-based enforcement. WorkSafeBC is

less focused on whether an employer has a policy and more focused on whether the policy actually works.

Emergency planning changes related to hazardous substances are a good example. Generic emergency procedures that do not reflect site-specific risks are increasingly viewed as non-compliant. Inspectors want to see that employers understand the hazards they manage and have tailored their response plans accordingly.

Mobile equipment enforcement also intensified. Seat belt requirements, equipment maintenance, and operator competency are being scrutinized closely, particularly in industries with a history of serious injuries.

For OHS managers, the takeaway is that compliance in British Columbia now demands field-level verification. Training records, equipment inspections, and supervision practices must align. If procedures exist on paper but are not followed in practice, enforcement action is likely.

Regular internal inspections, worker interviews, and supervisor accountability are no longer optional extras. They are core compliance tools in BC's evolving enforcement environment.

4. Ontario's Administrative Monetary Penalties Under The OHSA

Administrative monetary penalties represent a fundamental shift in how Ontario enforces OHS compliance. They lower the threshold for financial consequences and reduce the time between non-compliance and penalty.

This matters because many employers historically relied on corrective orders as a buffer. Inspectors would identify issues, issue orders, and allow time for compliance. While that process still exists, AMPs introduce immediate financial

consequences for certain violations.

For OHS managers, this raises the stakes for internal audits and proactive compliance. Gaps that might once have resulted in a warning or an order can now result in a fine. Documentation gaps, outdated programs, and training failures are all potential triggers.

An effective response in 2025 involved tightening internal compliance processes. Regular audits, documented corrective actions, and clear escalation processes became critical. Supervisors needed clearer guidance on their legal responsibilities, and senior management needed to understand that safety failures now carry faster financial consequences.

5. Ontario's Explicit Coverage Of Remote Work Under OHS Law

The clarification that remote work falls under the OHSA was a direct response to changing work patterns. It also addressed a common misconception that employers have limited responsibility for home-based work environments.

In reality, employers continue to have duties to identify hazards, provide information and instruction, and address risks that arise from work activities, regardless of location. The challenge for OHS managers is doing this without overreaching into employees' personal lives.

Best practice in 2025 involved providing guidance rather than mandates. Employers implemented remote work safety checklists, ergonomic assessments, and reporting procedures. Training addressed both physical and psychological hazards, including isolation, workload management, and harassment through electronic communication.

Inspectors increasingly ask what steps employers took to address foreseeable remote work hazards. An OHS manager should

be able to show that risks were considered, guidance was provided, and workers were supported.

6. Québec's Modernized OHS Regime

Québec's modernization initiative represents one of the most ambitious OHS reforms in the country. Its core objective is prevention, supported by structured participation and accountability.

Many employers underestimated how broadly the changes would apply. The new regime extends prevention requirements beyond traditionally high-risk sectors, bringing many white-collar and service-based workplaces into scope.

For OHS managers, this meant reassessing obligations based on workforce size and risk classification. Employers that previously had minimal formal safety structures now face requirements for prevention programs, committees, or action plans.

The law also emphasizes ongoing review. Prevention is not a one-time exercise. Programs must be reviewed, updated, and supported by worker involvement. Documentation must reflect this ongoing effort.

7. Québec's Expanded Committee And Action Plan Requirements

Committees and action plans under Québec's modernized regime are intended to be functional, not symbolic. Inspectors are increasingly examining whether committees meet regularly, whether members are trained, and whether recommendations are acted upon.

An inactive committee creates risk. Meeting minutes that show repeated unresolved issues can undermine an employer's

position during enforcement or litigation.

OHS managers must now invest time in committee effectiveness. This includes training members, setting clear agendas, tracking action items, and ensuring management responds to recommendations.

For smaller employers required to implement action plans, the expectation is similar. Plans must address real risks, be communicated to workers, and be reviewed periodically.

8. Workplace Harassment And Violence Requirements

By 2025, harassment and violence prevention had fully transitioned from a human resources issue to a core OHS obligation. Regulators across Canada expect structured programs, documented risk assessments, and meaningful training.

Policies alone are insufficient. Inspectors often ask how risks were identified, how workers were trained, and how complaints are handled in practice. Failure to investigate incidents properly can lead to enforcement action.

OHS managers should be working closely with HR but maintaining clear accountability for OHS compliance. Training should be role-specific, supervisors should understand their duties, and reporting mechanisms should be accessible and trusted.

9. Targeted Enforcement Campaigns

Targeted enforcement campaigns reflect regulators' strategic priorities. In 2025, workplace violence, vulnerable workers, and high-risk sectors received particular attention.

These campaigns matter because they increase inspection likelihood and reduce tolerance for non-compliance. Employers

caught unprepared often face orders, penalties, or prosecutions.

An effective OHS manager monitors enforcement trends and adjusts focus accordingly. This may involve refreshing training, conducting targeted inspections, or revisiting risk assessments in priority areas.

Being surprised by an enforcement focus is increasingly difficult to justify.

10. National OHS Harmonization And Modernization Efforts

While Canada does not have a single national OHS code, 2025 continued a clear trend toward alignment in key areas such as hazard prevention, worker participation, and documentation.

This trend matters most for employers operating across jurisdictions. Inconsistent practices create compliance gaps and increase administrative burden.

OHS managers are increasingly expected to design systems that meet the highest applicable standard while allowing for jurisdiction-specific adjustments. Strong management systems provide consistency, defensibility, and scalability.

What This Means For OHS Managers Going Forward

Taken together, the top ten OHS changes of 2025 tell a clear story. Canadian regulators are moving away from passive, paper-based compliance and toward active, system-based prevention. They expect employers to understand their obligations, implement effective controls, train workers properly, and verify that safety programs actually work.

For OHS managers, the role has never been more important. Success now depends on staying informed, conducting regular audits, engaging workers and supervisors, and documenting everything.

If there is one lesson from 2025, it is this: **compliance is no longer about having the right documents.** It is about **demonstrating that safety is managed, measured, and continuously improved.**