

The right to refuse unsafe work

For employers and supervisors:

The information in this guide is provided to help you deliver information to workers in a toolbox meeting, staff safety meeting, or similar workplace setting.

As you present this information, think about ways you can include details that are specific to your workplace. For example, talk about:

- Processes you have in place for workers to report potentially unsafe conditions — before needing to use the right to refuse procedure
- Names and contact information for worker representatives or union representatives
- Any relevant examples of work tasks that have been refused as unsafe in the past, and how those issues were resolved

Use the space on the third page of this meeting guide to record these details.

As a worker, you have rights related to a healthy and safe workplace. You have the right to know about hazards in the workplace and the right to participate in health and safety activities. You also have the right to refuse unsafe work.

If your supervisor or employer asks you to perform a work process or use a tool or equipment, and you have a good reason to believe that doing the work might create an undue hazard to your own health and safety or the health and safety of any person, you must refuse this work. This is both your right and your responsibility.

Before you exercise your right to refuse, be sure you have followed other procedures for reporting hazards and resolving workplace problems, such as talking to your supervisor. If those other hazard reporting processes have not resolved the problems and you still believe that the work presents an undue hazard, exercise your right to refuse.



If you are following the refusal of unsafe work process, there are steps that you — and your supervisor or employer — must take:

Step 1

Worker: Immediately stop the unsafe work and report the unsafe condition (the work task, tool, or equipment) to your supervisor or employer.

Supervisor or employer: Your supervisor or employer investigates the matter and fixes it if possible. If they do not agree that the condition is unsafe, they report back to you.

If you and your supervisor or employer can't agree on how to resolve the matter, move to step 2.

If your supervisor or employer believes the work can safely be done by another worker until the matter is resolved, they must not ask or permit another worker to do the work unless they inform the other worker(s) in writing about:

- The refusal and the reported unsafe condition
- Reasons why the task would not create an undue hazard
- The workers' right to refuse the work

Step 2

If the matter is not resolved in step 1, you and your supervisor or employer investigate the matter in the presence of one of the following:

- A worker representative of the joint health and safety committee, or a worker health and safety representative
- A worker selected by your union
- Any other worker chosen by you, the worker who reported the unsafe condition

If you, your supervisor or employer, and your worker representative do not agree on how to correct the unsafe condition, move to step 3.

Step 3

If the matter is not resolved after following steps 1 and 2, both you and your supervisor or employer contact WorkSafeBC. A prevention officer will investigate the issue and take any necessary action.

Call 604.276.3100, or toll-free 1.888.621.7233.

Your supervisor or employer must not discipline or penalize you for following these steps. You may be reassigned temporarily to other work tasks while the unsafe condition is being investigated and resolved.

Visit worksafebc.com/refusing-unsafe-work for more information.

Record of meeting

Workplace	
Date	Time

Other safety issues or suggestions

Record of workers attending

Name (please print)	Signature	Company
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		

Employer's and/or supervisor's comments	
Employer's signature	Supervisor's signature