



Health & Safety

know your rights

Volume 2, Issue 2

The information in this bulletin is intended for PETL members.

REPORTING CONCERNS

All members have a duty to report health and safety hazards and concerns to their principal. Section 28 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act specifically states that a worker should “report any known workplace hazard or violation of the Act to the employer or supervisor”. If the principal does not address and resolve the concern adequately or in a timely manner, contact the local for support and advice to determine the best course of action to address the safety concern.

Additionally, COVID-related health and safety concerns should be reported to your school’s Designated Worker during their monthly health and safety inspection. Please explicitly ask that the concern be recorded in the inspection report. These reports are instrumental in ensuring documentation for follow up and advocacy.

Further steps may include contacting the Ministry of Labour with a complaint. If you are considering making a complaint to the Ministry, please contact the local for additional information and support.

WINTER WEATHER HAZARDS

With the changing weather, members should be reminded of the potential hazards that may arise.

Slips, trips, and falls are routinely some of the top sources of workplace injury in the PDSB, and this year is no exception, as they have been one of the top two injuries reported each month so far. With the weather changing, and especially at this time where precipitation can melt and refreeze, it poses an extra danger for us when we are walking outside. Please ensure you wear footwear with a good tread and try to avoid icy areas as much as possible.

Be conscious of loose or curled carpets, floor mats, and slippery floor tiles at all entrances as the danger of slipping is not confined to just the outside.

If you spot any hazards that could cause anyone to slip, trip, or fall, whether it is outside, or inside, please inform your principal immediately, so that it can be addressed and rectified.

Members are reminded that the minimum indoor temperature should be no less than 18 degrees Celsius as set out by the Occupational Health and Safety Act. If you suspect your room is too cold, please inform your principal so they can investigate, to ensure that your room is at least 18C or they are required to move you to another room that does meet the minimum temperature requirements.

YOUR RIGHT TO REFUSE UNSAFE WORK

Section 43 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act affirms the right of workers to refuse unsafe work. A worker can refuse to do work where they have reason to believe that:

- “a) any equipment, machine, device or thing the worker is to use or operate is likely to endanger himself, herself or another worker
- b) the physical condition of the workplace or part thereof in which he or she works or is to work is likely to endanger himself or herself
- c) workplace violence is likely to endanger himself/herself”

However, Regulation 857 does mean that teachers **must** ensure the safety of students in their care first. At no time should a teacher leave students unsupervised or unattended when exercising a work refusal.

If you believe that you are in a situation that could endanger yourself, you should report those concerns immediately to your principal. If that does not produce a satisfactory resolution, then reach out to your PETL Vice-President liaison to assist you in ensuring that your H&S concerns are addressed sufficiently, and hopefully a work refusal can be avoided.

Below is a link to the Worker’s Health and Safety Centre poster on the right to refuse unsafe work, which includes a flowchart of the work refusal process:

<https://www.whsc.on.ca/Files/Resources/Posters/Worker-right-to-refuse-poster.aspx>

REPORTING VIOLENT INCIDENTS

Use of the PETL Workplace Violence Report has been discontinued. Now, when you complete the Board’s Workplace Violence Incident Reporting online form, PETL will automatically receive a copy if you check the YES box on the form to “I consent to my report being shared with my union.”

PETL encourages all members to check YES to have their report shared with the Local so that we may continue to gather information about the extent and nature of such incidents, in order to support members who are experiencing workplace violence. The aggregate data collected from these reports will be used to help develop strategies to improve the safety and health of our members.

If you have questions or need support regarding incidents of workplace violence, please contact your Vice-President liaison.
