



Employee Competency and Training.

Every company needs employees that are well trained and must ensure their workers have the skills, knowledge and experience to do their work and able to undertake their tasks in an effective and efficient manner. The Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act defines competent as a person who is adequately qualified, suitably trained and with sufficient experience to safely perform work without supervision or with only a minimal degree of supervision. It is the employer's responsibility to provide required training to workers to ensure work can be done in a safe manner. Workers are required to take requested training and are expected to apply the knowledge and skill they attain through training to improve their work. Through competency assessments, it can be determined if training taken has been applied.

How do we determine competencies for all workers? Many employees come to the job with previous training and experience, some with none. Competency must be assessed on criteria that is specific to worker roles and tasks performed. For example, a heavy equipment operator will have different job skills, equipment used and work practices than a laborer in a welding shop.

Some questions employers may ask when determining competency:

- How can we make sure employees have the relevant skills and education needed to complete their tasks?
- Do workers know how to use required equipment and tools, etc.?
- What equipment requires specialized training?
- What safety equipment is needed and do workers know how to properly use, inspect and maintain it?
- Are new workers with minimal skills, education and experience partnered with an experienced worker to mentor them?

How often competency is assessed is based on numerous items, such as; is the worker new with minimal skills or experience, skills they acquired, equipment and tools used and company policy. Frequency of review could be based on a probationary period or part of an annual review. Remember, the goal in establishing competency is helping the worker become qualified in what they do, ensure they are properly trained and can do their tasks with minimal, or no supervision.

Like competency, training is provided based on the needs of the worker and their job tasks. Training is an ongoing process that all employees participate in during their careers and assists in establishing competency. It is vital to staying proficient in techniques, understanding how upgrades to tools and equipment can make tasks easier and staying current with industry practices and best standards.

Mentoring is a process where experienced workers oversee and guide less experienced workers. They educate on ways of completing work processes, ensure they're completed properly, provide corrections, advise on workplace hazards and how they're controlled, to name a few. The mentor is often the worker's supervisor or manager who can monitor and provide feedback on the worker's progress. This is the basis for on-the-job training which often follows the tell-show-do process: tell how to do a task and what safety mechanisms are required (hazards, required PPE, properly use equipment, etc.), show how it's done including what tools, equipment and materials are used, then monitor the worker completing the task.



On-the-job training involves many things including being orientated to a company, in-house product and equipment demonstrations from suppliers, on-the-job training, with a mentor, online training, webinars, safety moment in toolbox meetings, to training provided by certified third-parties (fall protection, H2S, confined space, etc.) and trades schools.

On the job training also involves drills for emergency response. For example, our company undertakes monthly man down drills. All workers rotate through the different rescue roles in the drill so in an actual event, no one person has the sole responsibility of a specific rescuer. All workers at MCT are trained in:

- confined space,
- fall protection,
- respiratory protection (SCBA),
- front end loader and
- first aid

Workers are also trained in the engineered controls of purging the cryotank of liquid nitrogen and monitoring oxygen levels within the tank. Part of the training involves documentation of the drill and discussion of areas for improvement. An example of ongoing improvement for effectiveness is ensuring the SCBA oxygen tank is always full and the mask ready for donning, as well as workers having the proper facial surface for the mask to properly seal.