

Audit Terms of Reference

Occupational Health and Safety Committees

September 2022

Context

Occupational health and safety committees (OHSCs) play an integral role in the prevention of occupational illness, injuries and fatalities on mine sites. OHSCs are composed of worker and employer representatives who work together to identify health and safety issues in the workplace.

Worker-employer cooperation has a long history in the B.C. mining sector, with regulatory requirements for worker participation in workplace inspections appearing as early as 1887. OHSCs were first required in the mining sector in 1989 with the passage of the *Mines Act* (the Act). Released in 1990, the Health, Safety and Reclamation Code for Mines in British Columbia (the Code), provided (and continues to provide) further specificity as to the operation of these committees.

Taken together, the Act and the Code establish a framework and process for OHSCs to identify real and potential safety hazards in the workplace. Broadly, the Act and the Code contain requirements pertaining to OHSC duties; governance; access to resources and facilities; and communication between members, management and workers. Under the existing framework, OHSCs at B.C. mines are expected to inspect work areas, participate in investigations, review workplace health and safety programs, and meet regularly to discuss their findings. Mine managers are required to cooperate with their respective OHSCs and to correct safety hazards noted in OHSC meeting minutes.

OHSCs are a critical component of any workplace health and safety program – a first line of defense in preventing work-related incidents, injuries and death. Given their foundational role, understanding and taking steps to foster the effectiveness of OHSCs is important for supporting worker health and safety throughout the B.C. mining sector.

Objective

The objective of this audit is to determine whether the Ministry's regulatory program supports the identification of workplace hazards by OHSCs and the mitigation of those hazards.

Scope

In examining the effectiveness of the regulatory program for OHSCs, the audit will consider:

- Regulatory requirements for the identification and mitigation of workplace hazards in the *Mines Act* and the Code.
- Ministry compliance and enforcement activities, policies and guidance regarding OHSCs.

- OHSC actions and outcomes, including the perspectives of workers and management at B.C. mines.

The audit will focus on the Ministry's current regulatory program. Historic requirements, policies or guidance materials may be reviewed for context but will not be evaluated as part of the audit.

OHSCs are required on mine sites where 20 or more workers are regularly employed. The audit will not directly consider requirements or data for sites that fall below this threshold. However, insofar as there are common themes in joint worker-employer health and safety responsibilities across site types and sizes, this audit may also provide valuable learnings related to mine sites without OHSCs.

Timeframe and reporting

The audit examination is expected to conclude in spring 2023, though these timelines are subject to change. At the conclusion of examination, the audit team will engage with the Ministry, Indigenous peoples and interested parties on the results prior to releasing a public report summarizing the audit findings, conclusion and recommendations.

Approved by:



Karina Sangha
Chief Auditor

August 26, 2022

Date