

**ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH & SAFETY  
ORIENTATION  
HANDBOOK**

*Environmental Health and Safety Office*  
[www/dal.ca/safety](http://www/dal.ca/safety)

**REVISED 2006**



**DALHOUSIE  
UNIVERSITY**  
*Inspiring Minds*

## **SOME IMPORTANT CONTACTS:**

### **All Dalhousie Emergencies**

4109

### **Dalhousie Environmental Health & Safety Office**

494-2495 (Phone)

494-2996 (Fax)

Safety.Office@dal.ca (E-mail)

[www.dal.ca/safety](http://www.dal.ca/safety) (Web)

### **Radiation Safety Office**

494-2055 (Phone)

494-2996 (Fax)

Pauline.Jones@dal.ca (E-mail)

### **University Environmental Health & Safety Committee**

494-2495 (Phone)

### **Dalhousie Security Services**

494-6400 (Phone)

### **Nova Scotia Department of Environment & Labour Occupational Health and Safety Division**

424-5400 or 1-800-952-2687 (Phone)

424-5640 (Fax)

enlaohs@gov.ns.ca (E-mail)

[www.gov.ns.ca/enla/](http://www.gov.ns.ca/enla/) (Web)

# 1 HEALTH AND SAFETY IN NOVA SCOTIA

In 1996, Nova Scotia introduced a revised Occupational Health and Safety Act. The Act is a comprehensive document running almost 60 pages in length. This brochure provides only brief sketches of the Act. People who serve on the University Environmental Health and Safety Committee, on one of the many departmental or building safety committees, and particularly those who supervise the work of others, need to be familiar with the entire Act. Copies are available to any member of the University from the Safety Office. Also available are copies of the Department of Environment & Labour's booklet "Your Rights, Responsibilities and the Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Act".

While the Act describes the manner in which workplace health and safety operates in Nova Scotia, regulations issued under the Act provide many of the detailed requirements. Copies of the regulations are also available from the Safety Office.

## 1. Nova Scotia Workplace Health and Safety Laws and Regulations

### A. Of Primary Relevance to Dalhousie

- Occupational Health and Safety Act
- Occupational Health Regulations
- First Aid Regulations
- Fall Protection and Scaffolding Regulations
- Construction and Industrial Safety Regulations
- Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System Regulations (WHMIS)

### B. Other Acts

- Metalliferous Mines and Quarries Regulation Act
- Coal Mines Regulation Act

## C. Other Regulations

- Adjudication Committee Regulations
- Disclosure of Information Regulation
- Appeal Panel Regulations

The Occupational Health and Safety Act is based on a belief that significant progress in preventing accidents and illnesses can only be achieved when all those involved in the work, are fully engaged in workplace health and safety programs. The Act makes explicit the rights and responsibilities of everyone - employees, employers, supervisors, suppliers, and those providing professional services - have a part to play in maintaining safe workplaces. This legal framework within which workplace health and safety operates in Nova Scotia, is termed the "Internal Responsibility System".

## 1.2 **Rights and Responsibilities**

### 1.2.1 Employer Obligations

The Act requires that Dalhousie and all other employers under provincial jurisdiction, "**take every precaution that is reasonable in the circumstances to ensure the safety of persons at or near the workplace**". Flowing from this general duty, the Act requires that employers operate and maintain equipment properly, ensure that employees are properly trained and equipped to do their jobs and to comply with the Act.

In addition to these responsibilities, the Act also requires that the University create and co-operate with a joint occupational health and safety committee composed of people who are selected by employees and people appointed by the University.

### 1.2.2 Employee Responsibilities

Employees, for their part, must **"take every reasonable precaution in the circumstances to protect the employees own health and safety and that of other persons at or near the workplace"**. An employee is obliged to report to his or her supervisor any situation which the employee has reason to believe may be dangerous and follow health and safety policies and practices established by the University. The Act also requires that employees of the University co-operate with the University Environmental Health and Safety Committee.

### 1.2.3 Three Important Rights

To ensure that the Internal Responsibility System functions properly, the Act gives people three important rights:

- the Right to Know,
- the Right to Participate, and
- the Right to Refuse.

Under the Act, employees have the right to be informed of the hazards of their work. They have the right to select representatives who participate on joint health and safety committees whose functions and responsibilities are, in turn, set out in the Act. Finally, employees have the right to refuse to do work which the employee has **"reasonable grounds for believing is likely to endanger the employee's health or safety or the health or safety of any other person"**. Work refusals are not permitted when failure to carry-out the task would put the life, health or safety of another person directly in danger. The right to refuse also does not apply in situations where the danger is inherent in the employee's work. An employee who has exercised the right to refuse, may be assigned to another task until the refusal is resolved.

**An employee wishing to exercise the right to refuse:**

- Must immediately report the refusal to his or her supervisor.

**If the supervisor's response does not resolve the concern to the employee's satisfaction, the employee:**

- Must then report the refusal to the Dalhousie Environmental Health and Safety Committee.

**Again, if the Health and Safety Committee's response does not resolve the concern to the employee's satisfaction, the employee:**

- Must then report the refusal to the Occupational Health and Safety Division of the NS Department of Environment & Labour.

To ensure that the Committee members, or the Department of Environment & Labour inspector, fully understand the employee's concerns, the employee has the right to participate in inspections conducted to investigate the work refusal.

The Act has a number of provisions which further describe each of these important rights. The Act also prohibits the taking of discriminatory action against an employee who exercises any of these rights. An employee who feels that he or she has been subjected to (or threatened with) discriminatory action following a work refusal, can take action under a collective agreement or complain to the Department of Environment & Labour.

Complaints can also be lodged if, in contravention of the Act, the employer fails to pay required wages or other benefits.

## 2 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AT DALHOUSIE

### 2.1 Policy

Dalhousie University wants to ensure that students, staff and others are protected by the highest possible standards of safety, and that environmental concerns are adequately addressed. From a legal perspective, Dalhousie University must, to a minimum, comply with all federal and provincial health and safety laws.

With these aims in mind, and in an attempt to educate the University Community on the need for the highest possible standards of safety, the University has adopted the following policy:

***"Dalhousie University is fully dedicated to the provision of a safe and healthy work environment, and expects all faculty, staff and students to comply with the laws and statutes that have been enacted by the federal and provincial governments. In addition, reasonable standards of safety must be followed. To assist with the establishment of policies and guidelines which set out the highest possible standards of safety, a series of policies and procedures have been developed by the University in cooperation with the University Environmental Health and Safety Committee and the Heads of Departments and Directors of Divisions. It is expected that these policies and procedures will normally be followed by all units.***

***Heads of Departments and Directors of Divisions are responsible for the environmental health and safety of their Department or Division. The Director of Environmental Health and Safety acts as a resource person, assisting in the development of policies and procedures, in the handling of***

***environmental health and safety matters and in safety education and training.***

***All faculty, staff and students are expected to take individual responsibility for safe working practices and procedures so as to safeguard their own individual health and well-being as well as that of all their colleagues".***

Dalhousie first adopted this policy in 1988. As the new Occupational Health and Safety Act requires, the University Environmental Health and Safety Committee reviews the policy annually to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the University and its staff and students.

The Act also now requires that an organization prepare a written health and safety program. In response, the Environmental Health and Safety Committee has prepared a formal program, copies of which are available from the Safety Office.

## **2.2 Dalhousie University Environmental Health and Safety Committee**

To engage members of the University in health and safety, Dalhousie established an Environmental Health and Safety Committee in 1980. The University Committee was thus formed 5 years before the Province's first Occupational Health and Safety Act gave legal standing to joint employee/employer committees.

The members of the Dalhousie Committee include people selected by the campus organizations which represent employees and students. The University names an equal number of representatives. The Committee is chaired for alternating one year terms by a member chosen by employee group representatives and the University appointees.

The Committee meets monthly during the academic year. Minutes of Committee meetings are circulated widely and are available from the website: [www.dal.ca/safety](http://www.dal.ca/safety).

The Committee provides advice on health and safety policies, participates in investigations of serious accidents, reviews results of testing and deals with complaints and other health and safety matters set out in the Act.

To contact the Committee or any one of the members, contact the Safety Office at 494-2495 or by e-mail at [Safety.Office@dal.ca](mailto:Safety.Office@dal.ca) .

### **2.3 Local Committees**

Although not required by law, University policy encourages Deans, Directors, and Chairs of Departments to create local committees. The purpose of these committees is to resolve local safety problems and to help and advise the unit head on matters of health and safety. The Dalhousie Safety Office attempts to create appropriate communications between the local committees and the University Committee.

To contact the safety committee in your department, ask your supervisor, your departmental office or the Dalhousie Safety Office.

### **2.4 Health and Safety Policies**

The University has adopted a number of policies and procedures, many of which apply to particular University work situations. For example, there are policies and procedures which apply to University laboratories and to trades and custodial work in Facilities Management. Information on the policies and procedures that relate to your particular work situation is available through your supervisor, your departmental office, the Safety Office and the Safety Office website. However, a few policies apply to all members of the University.

### 2.4.1 Fire Safety

The University has a comprehensive fire safety program. Everyone using University buildings is expected to observe normal fire safety practices and, on hearing a fire alarm, vacate University buildings under the direction of building fire wardens. A detailed emergency evacuation plan has been developed for each of the University's major buildings. To obtain a copy of the plan or to volunteer to work with your building's fire warden team, ask at your departmental office or the Safety Office.

Open flames in University buildings are only allowed with permission of the Safety Office.

### 2.4.2 Smoking

Dalhousie University recognizes the hazards posed by exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke. Accordingly, as of September 1, 2003, Dalhousie University no longer permits smoking in any University-owned or leased building, on University property or in University vehicles. Exceptions may be made to accommodate the use of tobacco, or related substances, in connection with culturally significant celebrations such as those conducted, occasionally, at Dalhousie by members of First Nations' communities.

Members of the University and visitors who wish to smoke, are asked to leave University property to do so. Those smoking in areas surrounding the University are asked to respect municipal by-laws and provincial legislation, be considerate of the rights of neighbouring residents, businesses and institutions and not litter the sidewalks with cigarette butts.

### 2.4.3 Scents

To protect members of the University community who suffer from chemical sensitivities, the University, together with the Student Union and the employee groups, encourage staff, students and faculty to refrain from using scented personal care products.

#### 2.4.4 Reporting Unsafe Situations and Accidents

University policy requires that students and members of staff and faculty, report any unsafe situations. Reports of dangerous situations should be made, without delay, to the person's supervisor or:

- **Facilities Management** 494-2470/3345
- **Dalhousie Safety Office** 494-2495
- **Dalhousie Security Services** 494-6400

In addition, anyone who is involved in or who witnesses an accident or incident which could have resulted in an injury or property damage, is required to report the accident or incident to the Dalhousie Safety Office. Accident/Incident report forms are available from your departmental office or the Safety Office.

#### 2.4.5 Responding to Emergencies

Fires If you discover a fire or smell smoke:

- leave the area immediately, if possible, closing the door behind you;
- activate a pull station to sound the fire alarm. The alarm will automatically notify Security who will immediately call the Fire Department;
- evacuate the building following the directions of the building fire warden;
- assist wardens or others who may need assistance.

After the alarm has been sounded and only if you have been trained in the use of extinguishers, should you consider returning to the fire area to attempt to extinguish the fire.

## Other Emergencies

In the event of medical or other emergencies, call Dalhousie Security which operates a round-the-clock emergency switchboard.

You can reach Security from:

- CODE BLUE** phones - by lifting the receiver located on outdoor poles around campus.
- RED EMERGENCY** phones - by lifting the receiver located in:
  - : Sir Charles Tupper Medical Bldg.
  - : Clinical Research Centre
  - : Sir James Dunn Building
  - : Chemistry Building
- ELEVATOR EMERGENCY** phones - by lifting the receiver, located in many elevators across the University.
- PAY** phones - by dialling 4109, located in over 100 indoor/outdoor locations across the University.
- OFFICE** phones - by dialling 4109.
- RESIDENCE** phones - by dialling 494-4109.
- CELLULAR** phones - by dialling 494-4109.

## 2.5 Do You Have a Question or Concern?

The Dalhousie Safety Office provides services over a wide range of environmental health and safety areas. Included are:

- indoor air quality
- disposal of hazardous chemicals
- fire and general safety inspections
- chemical and laboratory safety
- office safety
- accident and incident investigation
- ergonomics
- trades and custodial safety

The Safety Office also works with other units in the University in areas including:

- Radiation Safety
- Diving
- Biosafety
- Infection Control

You can contact the Environmental Health and Radiation Safety Offices by:

Campus/mail: 1391 Seymour Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 3M6

Phone: 902.494.2495 (EH&S)

902.494.2055 (RSO)

Fax: 902.494.2996

E-mail: [William.Louch@dal.ca](mailto:William.Louch@dal.ca)

[Pauline.Jones@dal.ca](mailto:Pauline.Jones@dal.ca)

[Stephen.Ellis@dal.ca](mailto:Stephen.Ellis@dal.ca)

[Jan.Taylor.McIntyre@dal.ca](mailto:Jan.Taylor.McIntyre@dal.ca)

[Safety.Office@dal.ca](mailto:Safety.Office@dal.ca)

Urgent matters call: 902.456.2541 (Cellular phone)

Under normal circumstances, for non-urgent matters, you should expect to hear from us within two days.

**2006-2007 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY  
COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

**Employee and Student Group Appointees:**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>E-Mail</i>
Carolyn Green	1064	DUAG	Facilities Management	<a href="mailto:Carolyn.Green@dal.ca">Carolyn.Green@dal.ca</a>
Dean Frizzell	6400	IUOE	Security	<a href="mailto:Dean.Frizzell@dal.ca">Dean.Frizzell@dal.ca</a>
Denise Sommerfeld	2227	DFA	Nursing	<a href="mailto:Denise.Sommerfeld@dal.ca">Denise.Sommerfeld@dal.ca</a>
Ezra Edelstein	1106	DSU	President	<a href="mailto:DSUPRES@dal.ca">DSUPRES@dal.ca</a>
Forest Fyfe	3505	DFA	Physics	<a href="mailto:Forest.Fyfe@dal.ca">Forest.Fyfe@dal.ca</a>
Joe Dorey	3519	IUOE	Facilities Management	
Michael Armstrong	8810	IUOE	Facilities Management	<a href="mailto:Michael.Armstrong@dal.ca">Michael.Armstrong@dal.ca</a>
Troy Winters		CUPE	Industrial Engineering	<a href="mailto:TWinters@dal.ca">TWinters@dal.ca</a>
Zita Hildebrandt	1622	NSGEU	Ctr. for Learning & Teaching	<a href="mailto:Zita.Hildebrandt@dal.ca">Zita.Hildebrandt@dal.ca</a>

**University Appointees:**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>E-Mail</i>
Cathy MacLean	1673	Dentistry	<a href="mailto:Cathy.MacLean@dal.ca">Cathy.MacLean@dal.ca</a>
Greg McNutt	2755	Medicine	<a href="mailto:Greg.McNutt@dal.ca">Greg.McNutt@dal.ca</a>
Marlene Daye-Smith	8356	Financial Services	<a href="mailto:Marlene.Daye@dal.ca">Marlene.Daye@dal.ca</a>
Mateo Yorke	3605	Housing & Conference Svs.	<a href="mailto:Mateo.Yorke@dal.ca">Mateo.Yorke@dal.ca</a>
Patrick McGrath	7040	Athletics & Recreational Svs.	<a href="mailto:Pat.McGrath@dal.ca">Pat.McGrath@dal.ca</a>
Paul Amyotte	3976	Chemical Engineering	<a href="mailto:Paul.Amyotte@dal.ca">Paul.Amyotte@dal.ca</a>
Paul Bourgeois	6718	Facilities Management	<a href="mailto:Paul.Bourgeois@dal.ca">Paul.Bourgeois@dal.ca</a>
Ruth Murray	6019	Faculty of Engineering	<a href="mailto:Ruth.Murray@dal.ca">Ruth.Murray@dal.ca</a>