

retailer'sguide

For Independent Retailers and Store Managers

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The Health & Safety Checklist

By Robert Price

Health and safety isn't always a top concern for retailers. It's not because retailers don't care about the health and safety of their employees and customers, but if nothing ever goes wrong, then it's only natural for a retailer not to worry about it.

It's only when something does go wrong that health and safety becomes a priority — and by then, it's too late.

This Retailer's Guide aims to identify potential hazards in your store and offers tips on how you can make your store safer for every person in your store.

inside

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Make Health and Safety Your Daily Business

Why don't all retailers maintain high health and safety standards? For the usual reasons: We're busy. We have to put sales first. We're just a two-person operation (or three, or four, or 10). Nobody has ever been hurt in our store, so it's unlikely anyone will ever get hurt.

These reasons fade into irrelevance when the unexpected happens and somebody does get hurt. So how can a retailer take health and safety seriously before an accident forces him or her to take it seriously?

Rui Rodrigues, National Loss Prevention Manager at Best Buy Canada and a member of RCC's Safety Group program, advises all retailers to treat health and safety as another metric to measure the business's success.

One way to do this, he says, is to use the same kind of scorecards for health and safety that you use for sales. Over time, this will allow you to identify trends in health and safety, measure the frequency, and set targets for the future.

"Treat it like a budget. Ask, are we hitting our targets? Are we getting better?" Rodrigues says. "Don't make it special, or then it loses some of its merit."

Outside the Store

- Inspect the parking lot and all areas where customers and employees normally walk or park. Identify hazards like potholes, broken sidewalks, misplaced garbage bins, and poorly marked wheelchair ramps. If your landlord or another party is responsible for maintaining the parking lot or sidewalk, make sure you report the hazards immediately.
- Keep your entrance clear of ice, snow and other slip and trip hazards. If you're located in a mall or enclosed environment, make sure carpets, store signage and other obstacles won't cause an accident.
 - Ensure automatic swinging doors, if installed, open fast enough for fast walkers.
 - You don't want customers walking into the glass.
 - At night, go outside and make sure exterior lighting is working properly and ensure the lighting is adequate. Replace any burned-out bulbs.

Inside the Store

- Make sure you have a first aid kit on site. Mount it on the wall in an easily accessible area. Refer to provincial regula-

Resources

There are a number of organizations providing free resources to Canadian businesses seeking help with their health and safety programs. Here's a brief list of places to find help:

National Sites

Retail Council of Canada: Health and Safety
www.retailcouncil.org/storeops/HealthandSafety.asp

Canadian Centre for Occupational Healthy and Safety
www.ccohs.ca

Health Canada: Environmental and Workplace Health
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/index_e.html

Industrial Accident Prevention Association (IAPA)
www.iapa.ca

Provincial Sites

Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia: WorkSafeBC
www.worksafebc.com

Alberta Safety Council
www.safetycouncil.ab.ca

WorkSafe Saskatchewan
www.worksafesask.ca

tions for information on the specific first-aid supplies you are required to keep on hand.

- Make sure the lights in your store provide adequate lighting not just to display your merchandise, but also to prevent bumps and falls.
- Clearly identify the emergency exits with signs that are fully visible and show the direction of the nearest door. Also, ensure there is a three-foot passage around the emergency exits, wide enough to allow a wheelchair to pass. Remember to clear ice and snow from the outside of the door.
- Keep aisles clear of trip hazards like boxes and extension cords.
- Stack overstock boxes neatly and securely, and don't let the overstock pile exceed three feet. Don't let the boxes lean or overhang the shelving.
- Maintain a space of at least 18 inches between overstock boxes and sprinkler heads.
- When you stack boxes, put the heaviest items on the bottom of the pile.
- If you have furniture models on the floor, make sure the models are fully assembled and stable. The same goes with other kinds of displays — do loose pieces, exposed screws, or cords pose a hazard to customers and employees?
- Check to see if signage is secure. Make sure hanging signage hangs over shelving units and not over places where customers and associates walk. If your signage does hang over the heads of people, make doubly sure the chains are strong enough to hold the weight.
- Keep floors dry and clean. Wherever there is a spill, rainwater or melting snow, post a Wet Floor sign until the floor is dry.
- Use an A-frame industrial ladder, and avoid using telescoping ladders. If you keep a ladder on the floor, store the ladder away from customers and high-traffic areas. Hang an Employees Only sign to deter customers from using the ladder.

The Back Room

- Keep the back room orderly and the floors dry. Store all stock in boxes or on pallets. Stack pallets flat on the floor, not on their sides.
- If you use racks or shelves to store stock, check the beams to ensure they are stable, strong and secure. Replace damaged shelving immediately.
- Don't store loose product on high shelves. Always put heavy items on the bottom of the shelves.

Three Fire Safety Tips

- 1.** Inspect your fire equipment and review your fire evacuation plan each month. Talk to your local fire department about what tools or procedures you require to bring your store up to standard.
- 2.** Ensure that fire extinguishers are mounted on the wall in an easily accessible location and tagged with inspection dates and proper labels.
- 3.** Emergency exits must be accessible and easily opened in an emergency. Keep the inside of the door clear of obstacles, and remove snow, ice and other impediments to ensure the doors can swing open easily.

- Clearly mark emergency exits and make sure the doors are accessible from the inside and out. Remember to clear ice and snow from the back doors.
- Check the plumbing to see if the tap leaks and if the toilet has an adequate water supply. Keep the sinks empty and the drains clear.
- In the lunchroom, ensure the microwave and refrigerator are clean and operational. The place where employees eat or spend their breaks should be kept clean.
- Remember to label cleaning products clearly and never transfer dangerous chemicals to unmarked or unsuitable containers. Store cleaning chemicals in a safe and tidy place.

When Incidents Happen

- Make note of any operational issues (like broken faucets, burned-out lights, etc.). Make sure the issue is resolved and keep the work orders in a file for future reference.
- Maintain a checklist of the steps you follow when you perform a health and safety audit. Date the checklists and keep them — they'll help you to map trends and provide evidence of your due diligence.

continued

SAFE Manitoba
www.safemanitoba.ca

Ontario Service Safety Alliance
www.ossa.com

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board of Ontario
www.wsib.on.ca

Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail du Québec
(Quebec Occupational Health and Safety Commission)

www.csst.qc.ca/portail/en/ (English)
www.csst.qc.ca/portail/fr/ (French)

Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission of New Brunswick
www.whscc.nb.ca

Workers' Compensation Board of Prince Edward Island
www.wcb.pe.ca

Workplace Safety and Insurance System (Nova Scotia)
www.wsis.ns.ca

Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission of Newfoundland and Labrador
www.whscc.nf.ca

Yukon Workers' Compensation Health & Safety Board
www.wcb.yk.ca

Workers' Compensation Board of Northwest Territories and Nunavut
www.wcb.nt.ca

