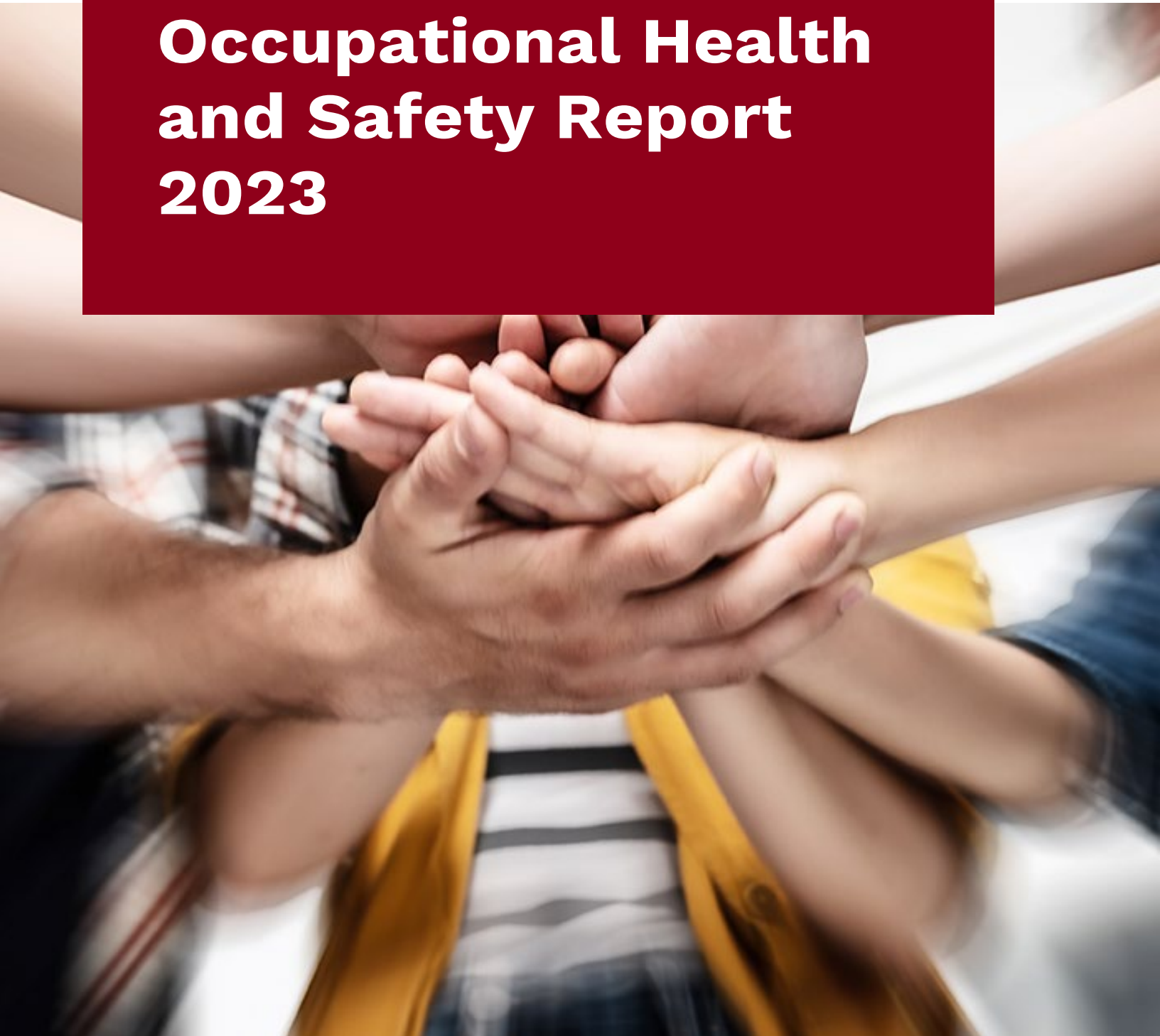


UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF RISK OFFICER

# Occupational Health and Safety Report 2023



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# Message from the Chief Risk Officer

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Dear members of the University community,

As we stand on the threshold of another year, it's imperative to reflect on our journey, acknowledging both our successes and the challenges that lie ahead. The release of our annual Occupational Health and Safety report is more than an update on the program; it's a testament to our commitment to creating not just a safer workplace, but also a culture that prioritizes the well-being of every individual who contributes to our shared mission.

In the spirit of continuous learning and growth—a principle that we hold dear—this report serves as a crucial tool in our journey towards operational excellence. It is an opportunity to celebrate our successes, learn from our experiences, and recalibrate our strategies to ensure that we are always moving forward, together, towards a safer, more inclusive, and more resilient future.

Our endeavours in health and safety go beyond mere compliance. They reflect our collective principles in order to empower every person in our community to achieve more. This is not just about mitigating risks or hazards; it is about creating an environment where everyone has the freedom to innovate, challenge and thrive, in a safe way.

This year's report outlines not only our achievements, but also the areas where we need to push harder, be more innovative, and act more collaboratively. It is a call to action for all of us to engage more deeply and to understand the intrinsic link between our work environment and our ability to succeed.

I urge you all to approach this report not just as readers, but also as active participants in this ongoing journey. Your insights, your feedback, and your dedication to our collective well-being are invaluable. Let's continue to learn, adapt, and lead with empathy and courage. Together, we will not only shape the future of our workplace, but also contribute to a broader safety culture that echoes our core values.

Thank you for your continued commitment to excellence.

Carolina de Moura  
Chief Risk Officer



## Introduction and guiding principles

As we reflect on the past year's achievements and challenges, we are guided by the important principles under which we operate to achieve our institutional mission and get our work done safely and securely, including:

- “One-team” mentality
- Accountability
- Collaboration and decision-making
- Innovation and improvement
- Standardization with flexibility
- Knowledge and training

This summary serves as a testament to our dedication to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

## Occupational health and safety management system

The management system encompasses how the safety program functions at uOttawa and serves as our foundation. After extensive development and campus community involvement, we implemented this system in November 2023.

The management system includes:

- A lean and agile policy, with well structured roles and responsibilities at all levels of the organization
- A formal governance structure outlining how safety functions, including escalation and faculty/service accountabilities and responsibilities
- Cascading program manuals defining minimum requirements for general, laboratory, biological and radiation safety.
- Institutional procedures outlining how to meet the program's minimum requirements

Learn more about the [management system](#) and what resources are available to help you stay safe.

## Health and safety strategy

We designed the first institutional strategy for occupational health and safety. This strategy focuses on changing how we think and act when it comes to safety. Developed with subject matter experts and interested parties, the strategy focuses on enhancing and growing our management system, and aligns with the pillars, timelines, and visions of Transformation 2030. The strategy focuses on:

- **leadership, commitment and participation**
- **planning for safety**
- **evaluating our progress**
- **continuous improvement**

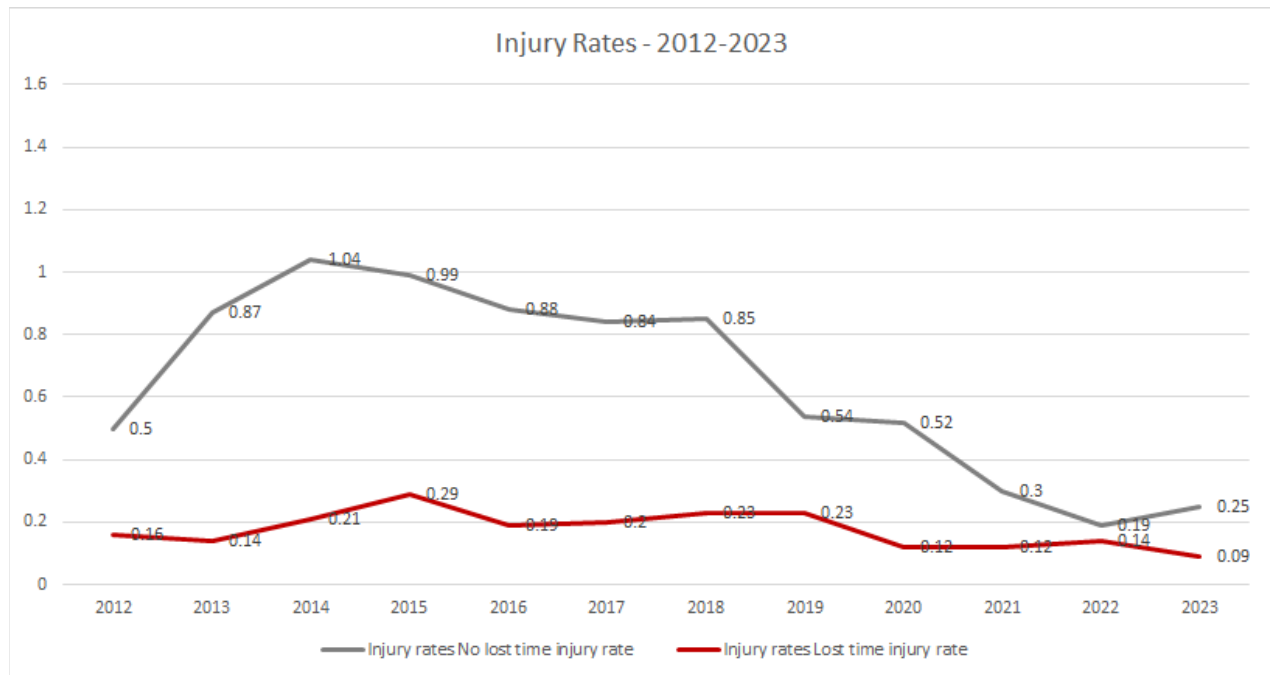
Culminating in provincial accreditation, the strategy will not only lead to a healthier and safer workplace, but also result in significant financial rebates and reputational excellence. We are aiming to become the first university in Ontario to have a provincially accredited health and safety management system, but the journey to realize this end state is what will make the greatest impact— a healthier and safer workplace where safety is a core value.

Our team is introducing the strategy to our faculties and services and we look forward to sharing our vision of improving and evolving workplace safety. [Learn more about our future together.](#)

## Provincial performance

The University’s provincial performance continues its positive trend. Common provincial metrics—such as lost-time and no-lost-time injuries per 100 workers—continue to improve, which means fewer workers are being injured at work. The graph depicts the injury rates and trends for these indicators and shows continued improvement thanks to the important progress of our safety program and recent commitments to it.

**Figure 1.** A graph depicting the injury rates with or without lost time (2012 – 2023)



## How did uOttawa compare to other universities in 2023?

The University of Ottawa ranks third-lowest in lost-time injuries, and second-lowest among large universities.

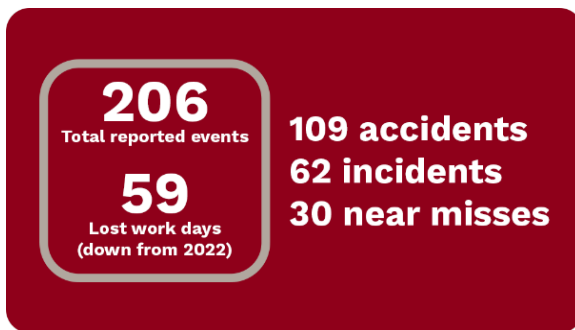
Among other notable statistics:

- Our lost-time injury rate was the lowest since we started collecting data on this statistic (2012).
- Last year saw the fewest lost workdays in a calendar year in six years (2017).
- The University of Ottawa has one of the lowest premium costs per \$100 of payroll among all large Ontario universities.
- Our safety culture survey noted significant year-over-year (2022-2023) improvement in key categories.

These are all indicators that safety at uOttawa is on the right track. Continuing the initiatives that got us here will help to sustain this performance, but we’re thinking bigger, and we intend to take our institution even further.

## 2023 at a glance

**Figure 2.** Total reported events.



**Figure 3.** Top injury events



**Figure 4.** Top injuries



**Figure 5.** Number of lost work days



## Radiation Safety Program

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) conducted a Nuclear Substances and Radiation Device (NSRD) Licence renewal examination over three months. During the process, the Radiation Safety Program’s key elements, policies and procedures were reviewed and improved to the satisfaction of the CNSC. Subsequently, a new NSRD licence was issued that is valid until 2028.

## Program Overview

- 33 unsealed source permits
- 13 sealed source permits
- 18 sealed source-in-device permits and 1 Class II nuclear facility
- 60 laser and X-ray permits accounting for 181 laser and X-ray systems

As part of the health and safety management system, we restructured the Radiation Safety Manual and informed core faculty members of the changes. Major updates include:

- Requiring the Radiation Safety Officer(s) to take refresher training every five years.
- Calibration of all portable survey/contamination meters in use every 12 months; verification against a calibrated meter is not accepted.
- Removal of the ring dosimeter policy.

## Biosafety Program

The Biosafety Program continues to evolve to include important activities, such as inspection and waste diversion initiatives.

### Program Overview

- 95 biosafety permit holders working with regulated material
- Over 150 CL2 biosafety laboratory facilities and support spaces and one CL2+ facility

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) conducted an inspection of one of our facilities. No deficiencies were found during the inspection. This success was achieved thanks to the teamwork and thorough preparation of the laboratory and support staff.

In collaboration with the Faculty of Science, the Biosafety Team launched a pilot project to divert autoclave waste into the biowaste stream. The Office of Campus Sustainability deemed this switch more environmentally sustainable and energy efficient, in line with Transformation 2030. Similar initiatives are in the works for 2024 as part of our commitment to streamlining the biowaste processes on campus.

Through Student Life, we rolled out a wider-ranging syringe disposal program, which involved installing nine new sharps containers in all residences on campus. The program has been very well-received by the University community and fulfills a need that has existed for several years.

## Assurance

Measuring and communicating performance is key element of Policy 77, and senior managers have recently been introduced to basic safety-related key performance

indicators, including training, workplace accident rates, inspections, engagement, and hazard identification and risk assessment.

In 2023, there were:

- 38 unique health and safety workshops offered (-4)
- 15,171 workshop completions (+5,465)
- 10,250 mandatory training completions (+4,040)
- 510,599 m<sup>2</sup> inspected

The enforcement of mandatory health and safety training for certain groups at the University, most notably new and contract personnel, requires our continued attention. To do so, we launched a new asynchronous workshop focusing on the roles and responsibilities of all workplace parties. The Legal Services team also offered in-person training to senior managers. As of January 2024, here are the completion rates for the safety-related training workshops:

**51%** of workers have completed Respect in the Workplace

**51%** of workers have completed Violence Prevention

**53%** of workers have completed Worker Health and Safety Awareness

**26%** of workers have completed Roles and Responsibilities

**43%** of supervisors have completed Supervisor Health and Safety Awareness

Managers and supervisors can check the training taken by their personnel in the LRS training profile. Faculty and service leaders may also review their unit's performance in the same section.

As 2024 unfolds, senior managers can expect to hear more about their faculty/service safety performance, including workplace inspections and hazard identification and risk assessments.

## **WSIB health and safety excellence program**

The WSIB Health and Safety Excellence program helps make the workplace safer, while earning rebates on WSIB premiums. We successfully validated our performance in four areas: leadership and commitment, roles and responsibilities, communication, and participation. As a result, **the WSIB reduced the University's WSIB premiums by 6.4%** and we reinvested these savings into the organizational health and safety program to continually improve and evolve our health and safety culture.



## Leadership

During the first Health and Safety Week in May 2023, the OCRO launched the **Safety Leader Award**. Awarded monthly, the recipient of the safety champion award embodies the principles of Policy 77 and contributes to a safe and healthy workplace in their daily work. Recipients are recognized for their contributions by receiving a distinctive award and are featured in an article in the *Gazette*. The 2023 recipients were:

- Gabriel Ramsay
- Simone Julien-Sparks
- Murugesu Lab
- Jean Lapointe
- Elisa Koene
- Agnes Bezerra
- Tina Goralski
- Kevin Couture
- Nathalie Leclair

The OCRO awarded the second **President's Award for Health, Safety, Risk Management, and Environmental Leadership** to **Elisa Koene**, whose commitment and work, in collaboration with project managers at Facilities, has helped to ensure the safe delivery of renovations and capital projects. Congratulations Elisa, and thank you for your leadership!

The University of Ottawa also celebrated industry recognition from major safety organizations, including:

- the Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals (BCRSP) with the employer recognition award, supporting our OHS personnel pursue professional growth.
- OHS Canada, with silver recognition in safety communications, leading to initiatives like integration of safety related resources within Microsoft Teams, unique holiday news articles, and a journey to a galaxy far, far away.
- Canadian Occupational Safety with recognition for a top woman in safety.
- Canada's Safest Employers, with a nomination for Safety Leader of the Year.

## Campus Safety Grant

The Ministry of Colleges and Universities renewed its annual commitment to the Campus Safety Grant (formerly Women's Campus Safety Grant), which aims to help institutions address safety and security needs on campus, including those related to sexual violence and harassment.

In 2023, a new framework for the grant was introduced, encouraging the University community to submit applications. Our call for project proposals generated a remarkable response. After evaluating the proposals in collaboration with Facilities,

Human Resources, Protection Services, and the Human Rights Office, we allocated funding to seven projects, including RAD training, new security infrastructure, and counselling services for survivors of sexual violence.

## Safety Week

The University held its first campus safety week in May 2023. It was a resounding success: we introduced new and creative initiatives to reach our community while delivering key messages around health and safety roles and responsibilities, culminating in an appreciation BBQ for our health and safety committee members.

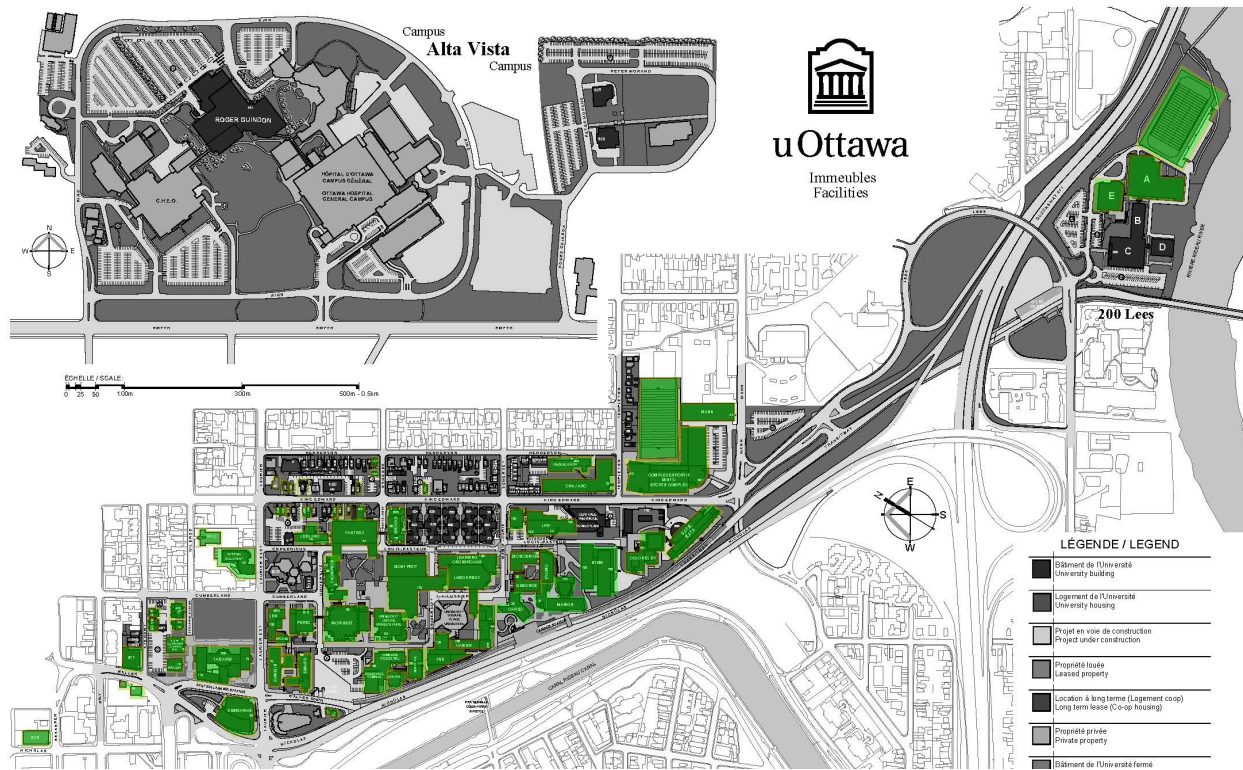
## Workplace inspections

Inspections are an important tool for managers to identify hazards in their workplace. Periodic inspections provide an opportunity to act before an injury, illness, or other property damage occurs.

The Joint Health and Safety Committee members inspect the workplace at least once a year to further identify hazards in the workplace. In 2023:

- 18,604 spaces were inspected, with 270 inspection reports generated
  - Downtown campus – 16,816 spaces inspected, with 7,003 hazards identified
  - Alta Vista campus – 1,788 spaces inspected
- Eight members participated in the inspections. An increase in member participation is a critical priority for 2024 and a basic right of workers.
- Top five hazards:
  - 817 instances of lighting hazards
  - 812 instances of items stored at heights
  - 648 instances of chemical hazards (improper storage, containment)
  - 491 instances of unsecured cabinets or shelving
  - 349 instances of improper eyewash maintenance (not inspected, not functioning, missing signage) improper labelling, storage and/or containment
- 46% of reports were returned within the required time (21 days), which is an 18% improvement over 2022. Timely reporting will be another important action item for 2024.

**Figure 2.** Campus map showing workplace inspection progress. Buildings in green represent completed buildings, while buildings in yellow represent partial inspections.



## Radiation

Twenty-seven (27) radiation safety inspections were conducted across three different types of radiation permits. The overall inspection results indicate that we are improving in our record keeping and waste management.

## Biosafety

Given the growing number of CL2 facilities on campus, we developed and implemented a new inspection program to meet the University’s annual inspection requirements. The Biosafety department developed a three-year inspection plan, using a targeted annual inspection approach, which focuses on prioritized biosafety program components each year. This allows the Biosafety team to meet annual inspection targets and compliance monitoring obligations while visiting all CL2 laboratories every year.

## Health and Safety committees

A health and safety committee is composed of worker and employer representatives who are **mutually committed to improving health and safety in the workplace**. Worker and management representatives are welcome to join the committee. To achieve its goals, the committee holds **regular meetings**, conducts regular **workplace inspections**,

and makes **written recommendations** to the employer for the improvement of the health and safety of workers. Management remains the most accountable for a healthy and safe workplace.

Information about the committee is available in your [Teams navigation menu](#), including the members, meeting minutes, and field visit forms from the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

If you are interested in the work of the Joint Health and Safety Committee, please consider [joining to improve health and safety at uOttawa](#).

## Regulatory interventions

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development conducted five (5) interventions in 2023.

- [June 2023](#) – preparation for opening of 200 Lees (FHS)
- [September 2023](#) – investigation of workplace harassment
- [September 2023](#) – follow-up of the investigation of workplace harassment
- [September 2023](#) – investigation of occupational illnesses
- [September 2023](#) – complaint regarding asbestos

No orders to comply and no monetary penalties were issued to uOttawa.

## Renewed website and integrated safety resources

The Office of the Chief Risk Officer [rebranded and consolidated to an essential platform](#) providing safety resources to the university community. In addition, we created [an icon in Microsoft Teams](#) to provide quick access to safety resources, ensuring that every individual can easily find the support and information they need.

## A brief look ahead to 2024

The coming year promises to bring about exciting projects, change, and renewed sense of organizational safety with focus on major initiatives. We will also continue to provide support to meet the University's operational requirements. Our most exciting projects include:

- Measuring and communicating safety performance to faculty and service leaders.
- Preparing foundational elements for a transformational change to the safety culture
- Further evolving our contractor safety management program
- Implementing a revised Joint Health and Safety Committee structure
- Analyzing and taking action in light of the results of our second health and safety culture survey, which generated 21% more responses and feedback from uOttawa community.
- Growing our health and safety communication plan to share news and engage with the University community.

## Meet your environmental health and safety team



Working under the Office of the Chief Risk Officer, the Environmental Health and Safety team establishes the University's environmental health and safety mission and vision. The team develops, maintains, and oversees the evolution of the environmental and occupational health and safety management systems.

The team, which reports through the Vice President, Finance and Administration, provides the necessary information and expertise for senior managers to make informed decisions that contribute to the continued health, safety, and environmental stewardship of the uOttawa community.

Feel free to contact the team by email if you have questions or issues involving:

- [Occupational Health and Safety](#)
- [Biosafety](#)
- [Radiation Safety](#)
- [Environment](#)



Bureau de la dirigeante  
principale de la gestion  
des risques

Office of the  
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