

# Occupational Health & Safety Coordinator

*"You can do very, very well for yourself, or you can just make it by. It all depends on your abilities, how you market yourself, what organizations you work with and how much you put into your career."*

## WHAT I LIKE BEST ABOUT THE CAREER

*"It comes down to values. I value helping people and making sure they work in a healthy, safe environment."*

## THE WORKING WORLD

*"You never get from where you are to where you want to be in one step. There are many steps along the way, but as long as each step you take is going in that direction, one day you'll get there."*

## EMPLOYER

Labatt Breweries Alberta

## EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science in Chemistry

## YEARS IN WORKFORCE

11 years

## SALARY RANGE

\$30,000 - \$80,000

## CAREER PATH

Safety and Hazardous Waste Technician,  
Supervisor,  
Occupational Health Safety &  
Environment Coordinator



• Mark • Rice •

## WHAT IS AN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COORDINATOR?

"Generally, what a safety person tries to do is make sure that people don't get hurt while they are doing their jobs, or do anything that might harm their health." That is how Mark Rice summarizes his job as Coordinator of Occupational Hygiene, Safety and Environment at Labatt Breweries Alberta. Essentially, the name of the game is prevention: evaluating hazards in the workplace and taking steps to prevent accidents, incidents or events that could harm people, property or the environment.

## WHAT DOES AN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COORDINATOR DO?

"A lot!" says Mark, whose duties include health and safety program administration, workplace inspections, hazard evaluation and

control, emergency response planning and accident investigation. And, since Mark's job encompasses environmental issues, he is also involved in hazardous materials management, recycling programs and energy conservation. All of this on a part-time basis - Mark splits his work week evenly between Labatt's and a manufacturing plant in another industry.

**Shared Responsibility** "Everyone in this plant is responsible for safety," insists Mark. "I am a resource person, a trainer and a liaison with all levels of the workforce so that every employee plays a role in worksite safety and health." Mark develops and teaches training programs on a wide variety of topics, including how to handle chemicals, transport dangerous goods, clean up chemical spills and work in confined spaces.

**True Expertise** Mark emphasizes that good safety coordinators know the limits of their own knowledge. The safety person does not and



often cannot know everything about safety in the worksite. "True expertise lies with the people who do the job," he explains. "My job is to get them to teach me what the dangers are and how to prevent those dangers, then develop safe procedures with their input."

### HOW TO BECOME AN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COORDINATOR

Industry experience is a great asset for individuals wishing to pursue a career in occupational health and safety. "Companies pursue safety coordinators with production-line experience, people who actually got their hands dirty and did the work," says Mark. He earned these qualifications through a range of summer jobs and full time positions, cleaning out chemical tanks, driving forklift, working as a lab technician and a hazardous waste technician.

A university degree with coursework in physics, math and chemistry offers a certain advantage and opens the door to specialization in more technical aspects of the field. Several universities offer certificate

programs in occupational health and safety for people who are already working in the industry and have an interest in the field.

### THE FUTURE

In this field, the future is what you make it, according to Mark. "You can do very, very well for yourself in this career or you can just make it by. It all depends on your abilities, how you market yourself, what organizations you work with and how much you put into your career."

For people who are willing to apply themselves, Mark sees great promise in the field. The maturing of the profession is one reason - many people working in Occupational Health and Safety earned their positions with years of industry experience and are nearing retirement. The other reason is that a growing number of companies are seeing a financial, as well as an ethical benefit, in having a health and safety person on the team. "A good health and safety professional can save a company a lot of money through loss prevention and risk management," explains Mark.

### RELATED CAREERS

#### Industrial Hygienist

*Industrial hygienists specialize in the more technical aspects of the field, working to ensure a healthy work environment and advising companies on how to reduce the risk of injury or illness from occupational hazards.*

#### Ergonomist

*Ergonomists aim to ensure there is a good "fit" between workers and the tools they use and/or their working environment. For example, an ergonomist would help a computer operator to position the monitor, keyboard and chair to avoid repetitive strain injuries or back pain.*

#### Occupational Health and Safety Inspector

*Safety inspectors are employed by municipal, provincial or federal agencies to visit worksites and ensure compliance with laws and regulations governing workplace safety.*



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