

**MFL GUIDE:  
HEALTH & SAFETY  
ON THE  
PICKET LINE**



**February 2023**



# MFL Guide to Health & Safety on the Picket Line

## INTRODUCTION

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This guide has been developed by the MFL Health & Safety Committee to help unions plan and organize picket lines in a way that ensures the health and safety of their members and other union supporters participating in picketing activities.

As unions, we know that injuries and illness can be prevented in the workplace with robust health and safety programs, and the same applies to a picket line. In many cases, however, the nature and location of picket lines, the added stress and tension that comes with job action, and the challenges posed by Manitoba's extreme weather can all present unique hazards from those that unions are used to dealing with day-to-day in the workplace. These may require extra special attention and new approaches to our responsibilities for our members' health and safety during a strike or lockout.

This guide, which has been developed with the benefit of input and resources from many affiliates, is intended to assist unions in applying a health and safety lens to picket line planning and organizing to prevent injuries and illness from occurring. In what follows, we will:

1. Review the key steps of the Health & Safety Lens (hazard identification and control).
2. Discuss ways to incorporate health & safety into a union's strike organizing structure.
3. Discuss health & safety considerations related to a picket line's physical/environmental infrastructure.
4. Review some of the common health and safety hazards on the picket line and potential control measures, including
  - Physical / environmental hazards
  - Stress, interpersonal conflict, harassment, and violence
  - Hygiene and public health

## 1. THE HEALTH & SAFETY LENS

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As unions are well aware, health and safety programs are designed to prevent injuries and illness by identifying potential hazards and finding ways to eliminate or control them, so they do not cause harm. Applying a “Health & Safety Lens” has four (4) key steps:

- i. Hazard Identification – what are the hazards on the picket line?
- ii. Hazard Assessment – how serious or threatening are the hazards and what are the risks of injury or illness?
- iii. Hazard Elimination / Control – what measures can be taken to eliminate hazards or, where elimination is not possible, to control hazards?
- iv. Control Evaluation – are the controls sufficient or should additional/different controls be put in place? What else can and should be done?

In the same way that unions apply the Health & Safety Lens to the workplaces they represent, unions should work through the same steps for a picket line.

## 2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

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**Strike Committee / Health & Safety Committee:** Some unions assign responsibility for picket line health and safety to their strike organizing committee as a whole, often with one or two individuals designated as the health & safety lead(s); other unions set-up a dedicated strike health and safety committee.

Regardless of the structure chosen, it's important that consistent people are involved with developing the health & safety program and applying the Health & Safety Lens to all aspects of planning, organizing and implementation. It's also important that there are clear communication protocols established for all parties involved with health and safety, and that the strike organizing committee is kept fully informed and up to date. Health and safety should be a regular order of business in planning for and evaluating how a strike is unfolding.

Prior to the picket line becoming operational, members should be canvassed about whether they have any medical conditions or requirements (e.g., a need for periodic rest, or a severe allergy to wasp stings) that Picket Captains should be made aware of. The Union will need a secure system for maintaining any sensitive medical information.

**Picket Captains:** As the people in charge of the picket line day-to-day, Picket Captains also play a key role in health & safety. They're the direct link between union leadership and the members walking the line. It's important that they're trained on the health and safety program, are made aware of all hazards and understand how to implement and evaluate controls.

Picket Captains should be easy to spot on the picket line if members need to speak to them about health and safety or any other issues, and they should always have a list of picketers' emergency contact information on hand. Picket Captains should also check-in regularly with picketers to ensure they're doing okay and are not experiencing any signs of physical or mental distress, injury, or illness.

**Union Leadership:** Often, the union president or local president will serve as the 'public face' of the picket line when it comes to speaking with the media, the employer or, on occasion, the police. It's important that they be kept apprised of any health and safety issues, including any potential hazards related to any harassment or intimidation from the employer, members of the public or the police. Picket Captains are typically responsible for reporting such incidents.

**Picketers:** Striking union members make up the heart of any picket line, and they will typically receive support from various allies, such as members of other unions, clients/customers, and co-workers, who also come out and walk the line. The union will work hard to increase the number of people on the line to boost

morale and demonstrate strong support for the cause, so it's important that the picket line health & safety program reflect the potential for maximum numbers.

Picketers should always be told who the Picket Captain is, and be given a health & safety briefing, including being made aware of hazards and controls. In particular, picketers should be briefed on:

- protocols for avoiding traffic when coming and going to the picket site,
- if there is a need to wear high visibility PPE,
- where and where not to picket,
- the union's approach to holding up business-related traffic coming and going from the worksite as part of efforts to inconvenience the employer,
- supplies for staying warm / cool / hydrated,
- where the washrooms are located,
- the location of First Aid supplies,
- the need to treat all members with respect and solidarity, and to similarly be friendly and courteous with members of the public,
- whether or not there are any people near or on the site who are hostile to the picket line, and
- the importance of directing any inquiries from media, representatives of the employer, the police, or hostile members of the public to the Picket Captain.

### 3. PICKET LINE INFRASTRUCTURE

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**Picket Site:** Picket lines are usually set-up in a highly visible location in front or near to the workplace / employer (off private property) in order to draw maximum attention to the job action, create inconvenience for the employer, and inform the public about the employer's unfair action in refusing to settle a fair collective agreement.

One of the most effective ways to begin the process and start identifying the hazards that may be present on a picket line is to tour the picket site and draw up a hazard map – a literal map of the picket site, identifying and locating all known and potential hazards. This map will allow for a comprehensive risk assessment of the area and focus a union's attention on possible ways to mitigate them.

Some of the key health and safety considerations in determining a good picket site include:

- enough room for the expected number of picketers and supporters, plus a comfortable margin for big crowds. (If big crowds can't be accommodated at the picket site, the union may need a system for staggering solidarity supporters, and/or accessing another site for large shows of support, such as rallies),
- an appropriate set-back from traffic,
- a way to demarcate the perimeter of the picket line (note: pylons can always be used if there are no other natural end points), and
- an unobstructed area/ground for walking/picketing (unions may need to bring shovels and sand to deal with snow and ice in the winter to prevent slips and falls).

Depending on the season and existing infrastructure nearby, the picket site may also need room to set up a station to provide shade/cooling or cover from the wind/cold/rain. Many picket sites will also need space for a trailer (or other type of Headquarters) and/or portable toilets.

**Strike Headquarters (HQ) / Shelter:** The Strike Committee will determine the needs and location of a strike headquarters, normally in a central location near the picket line, where members can sign-in for their shifts and visitors can report-in to. Having members sign-in is not only important for strike administration (e.g., to track eligibility for strike pay), but also for picket line health and safety, so the Picket Captain will have a clear record of who they are responsible for onsite and their emergency contact information.

A strike's headquarters can look different depending on the union's needs – it may be a tent, a trailer, a residential home, or a rented office space. Proximity to the picket line is important from a health and safety perspective as the HQ should

always have First Aid supplies on hand, may be used as a warm-up / cool-down site, and may also provide access to water and washrooms.

Construction trailers are a commonly preferred option because of their versatility and because they offer protection from the weather, but they take up considerable space and can be in high demand (especially during prime construction season). Trailers may come equipped with the option to hook-up to Hydro or a generator, but to do this properly, a union may require:

- a permit from the area's municipal government,
- a permit from Manitoba Hydro, and
- a (unionized) certified electrician to wire it.

If the strike HQ cannot be located at or near the picket line, the union may need to set-up a temporary shelter (such as a tent) on the picket site where members can get relief from the elements, especially during very hot or cold times. In addition to being an essential health and safety protection for members, shelter during tough weather will also make the picket line more appealing for supporters and allies.

**Parking:** Unions may want to arrange for a dedicated parking space near the picket site to create some distance between cars that are coming and going, and the picket line itself. Directed parking may also help the union keep members away from very busy streets or other hazards.

**Washroom Facilities:** Ensuring a picket line has accessible washroom facilities, either in a nearby building or with the use of portable toilets, is essential. Accessible washrooms are a health & safety issues (plus, unions want to keep their members on the picket site, not searching for offsite washrooms!).

Portable toilets can be rented if there are no permanent onsite facilities – make sure there is sufficient room (close, but not too close to where members will be picketing) and that the location is easily accessible to the rental company. Rentals should include portable toilets that are wheelchair accessible to accommodate members and supporters who may need them.

Unions also need procedures for keeping washrooms clean and always stocked.

In cases where a picket is rotating between different locations or being organized on intermittent days, unions may find it easier to make arrangements to use washrooms in a nearby building.

**Burn Barrels:** A common method for picket lines to keep warm during the winter or in cooler weather, burn barrels are regulated by municipal bylaw, and it is recommended to check these bylaws prior to use.

In some municipalities like Winnipeg, burn barrels on picket lines require a permit that can be requested through the city's fire paramedic service:

<https://www.winnipeg.ca/fps/FirePrevention/Regulations/Permits.stm>.

Burn barrels are acknowledged in the bylaw as "warming fires" and must adhere to bylaw regulations:

- Be set in a metal receptacle in good repair that has a maximum capacity of 225 litres (50 gallons) with all openings entirely covered by removable non-combustible spark arrestors, grills or mesh with openings no larger than 12mm (1/2 inch)
- Be fuelled only by clean wood (No garbage, rubber, plastic, painted or chemically treated wood)
- Be maintained a minimum of 3 m (10 feet) from any combustible buildings or structures, combustible fences, trees and overhead wires  
([https://winnipeg.ca/fps/FirePrevention/Regulations/Open-Air\\_Fires.stm#7](https://winnipeg.ca/fps/FirePrevention/Regulations/Open-Air_Fires.stm#7))

Although burn barrels can provide needed warmth, they also present a risk of burns, and excessive smoke can cause respiratory issues.

Standard fire handling guidelines should be followed, including ensuring that the flames are kept inside the barrel, and water, sand or a fire extinguisher should always be available nearby.

Municipal Fire Services are tasked with inspecting barrel fires and reserve the right to put out any fire they consider a risk to people or property.

#### **First Aid and other H&S Supplies:**

- First Aid Kit/Services – having a trained first aider on site is part of the gold standard for making sure members are well taken care on the line. If a certified first aider is not available, it is still important to have first aid supplies on hand in the case of small cuts and scrapes.
- List of key contacts, members' cell phone numbers & emergency contacts.
- Picket Line Incident Report Forms – if an incident occurs (an injury or incident with the employer or a members of the public), the Picket Captain should make sure an Incident Report Form is completed while all the information is fresh in everyone's minds.
- Water – essential for hydration and to help prevent overheating. Members will also appreciate snacks to get through long shifts.
- Weather-related supplies, such a sunblock, bug spray and rain ponchos (tip: garbage bags can substitute in a pinch).
- Extra toilet paper, cleaning supplies, and hand sanitizer.
- The union's Strike Guide (if available) and Rules of Conduct to ensure respectful and inclusive behavior.
- Chairs – for members who may not be able to stand/walk for a whole shift.



## 4. COMMON PICKET LINE HAZARDS

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There are three (3) main categories of hazards to be aware of on a picket site:

- a) Physical / Environmental
- b) Stress, Interpersonal Conflicts, Harassment & Violence
- c) Hygiene and Public Health

In what follows, we will review each category of hazard in more detail.

### *a) Physical / Environmental Hazards*

**Weather:** Weather is a very important consideration in health and safety planning for picket lines because unions work hard to keep picket lines going without interruption, come rain or shine, wind or snow, hot or cold, and we all know that Manitoba's weather can be extreme and change rapidly.

Members can experience a wide range of discomfort, injury, or illness due to weather if precautions are not taken, so it's important to have people assigned to monitor weather (short-term and long-term) forecasts, and to make sure that members are advised about expected weather conditions and how to dress/prepare appropriately. It's also good practice for the union to have extra supplies of outdoor gear (like ponchos) and supplies in case members forget or are unprepared. Picket Captains should be trained on how to recognize the early signs of weather-exposure injuries/illness and be sure to check-in with members regularly during difficult weather to make sure they're okay or see if they need some relief.

**Hot Weather:** On hot days it is important for the union to provide shade, supply water, encourage members to use sunscreen (and insect repellent if required), and remind members to dress accordingly. Depending on how high the temperature climbs, and how well prepared the union and members are, there may be a need to limit picket duty during extreme heat to avoid injury/illness.

Injuries / illnesses related to hot weather include:

- **Dehydration:** Although possible in all weather, dehydration is most often seen in hot and dry weather. We naturally re-hydrate through drinking and eating, however if we forget to do these things, or do not feel thirsty or do not want to drink, dehydration can set in. Signs of dehydration include thirst, headache, muscle cramps, difficult bowel movements, irritability, confusion, rapid heartbeat/breathing, dizziness, and fainting. Dehydration can be treated by drinking water and other liquids (caution: members should avoid large amounts of caffeinated drinks that are dehydrating).

- **Sunburn:** A sunburn is a form of radiation burn that affects living tissue (skin), resulting from overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Common symptoms are red or reddish skin that is hot to the touch, painful or itchy, general fatigue, and mild dizziness. Sunburns can be prevented with combination of sunblock, shade and or covering up exposed skin. Aloe Vera is an effective means to treat sunburns as it soothes the burning sensation of the skin but depending on the severity of the burn it may take days to heal properly.
- **Heat Stroke (or Sun Stroke):** Heat stroke is the inability of the body to regulate its temperature under 40 degrees Celsius and is often connected to dehydration. Heat stroke is the product of prolonged exposure to hot temperatures, and can present symptoms such as confusion, agitation, slurred speech, irritability, delirium, and seizures. Mild heat stroke can be effectively treated by cooling the body down, moving away from the sun and hydrating. In cases of severe heat stroke, unions may want to consult a healthcare professional.

**Cold/Wet Weather:** Most Manitobans are aware of the effects of freezing weather and have warm outdoor clothing for the winter, but they may not be accustomed to spending prolonged periods of time in freezing temperatures. Winter clothing that is adequate for short periods will not be appropriate for a multi-hour shift on the picket line.

Unions should also keep in mind that newcomers to Manitoba may need to be briefed on the hazards of freezing weather and how to protect themselves and may require supplies of some necessary garments.

Over exposure to freezing weather for longer periods of time may lead to hypothermia when aggravated by dampness, wind chill, cold rains, and exhaustion. Cold-related illnesses can take on symptoms such as uncontrollable shivering, slurred speech, or confusion.

**Rain/Snow:** Rainy and snowy weather presents the difficult challenge of staying dry and warm. Providing a stable shelter that keeps members dry is a necessity during rainy and snowy days, as it is difficult to keep someone warm when they are wet. It is important that picketers are prepared for wet weather and are advised to always bring waterproof/ water-resistant apparel and proper footwear to the picket line.

**Ice:** Ice can make walking a picket line difficult and dangerous. Ensuring that there are shovels and salt/sand preventative measures to reduce the risk of slips and falls on the picket line is a necessity. Icy conditions may also warrant setting picketers farther from traffic to keep picketers away from drivers who are navigating slippery road conditions.

Injuries / illnesses related to cold/wet weather include:

- **Frostbite:** Frostbite is the freezing of exposed extremities and often affects the nose, cheeks, ears, and chin first. In severe cases, the toes, fingers, feet, and hands may also be injured. During Manitoba winters there are days when skin will freeze in a matter of minutes; these are even times when frost bite can impact a member's health in seconds. Unions need to keep in mind that even with the use of good clothing and bonfires for warmth, extremities and exposed skin can be at risk, so access to warm shelter and regular check-ins with members may be required.
- **Hypothermia:** Hypothermia is caused by prolonged exposure to the cold. It occurs when the body loses heat faster than it can produce it, causing a dangerously low body temperature. Normal body temperature is 37 C and hypothermia occurs as your body temperature falls below 35 C. The first stages of hypothermia include: shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, and drowsiness.

Treating minor cold weather-related distress may as simple as getting an affected member to a warm place, staying dry and hydrating. For more severe cases, however, a union may need to consult a healthcare professional.

**Lack of Visibility:** It is recommended that if a picket line is near traffic, picketers use some form of high visibility personal protection equipment (PPE). One of the goals on the picket line is to be visible to everyone so taking the precaution and wearing PPE serves a health & safety purpose as well as a public visibility purpose. Visibility issues are most common at night but are also possible at dawn and dusk depending on the environmental conditions (such as fog or haze created by excessive smoke). It is recommended that during these periods, Picket Captains assess the hazard and modify their line appropriately. Although most unions have their picketers wearing union pinnies or carrying union flags, reflective PPE should be considered, especially during low visibility periods.

**Traffic/Access Hazards:** Often there is not much choice as to where a picket line will be set-up, due to the need for visibility in front of the workplace/employer. Depending on the location, members may face hazards accessing the picket site itself, such as busy roads, highways, poor lighting, ditches, or walk-up driveways that are still being used by vehicles. Picket sites should always have safe access ways, and if necessary, these should be clearly marked by pylons or other markers. Unions should consider whether 'safe walk up and leaving' procedures are required to keep members safe. Picket Captains should remind picketers to always be aware of their surroundings.

## *b) Stress, Interpersonal Conflicts, Harassment & Violence*

Labour disputes and job action can be very stressful for the members. The disruption that comes from being off the job, uncertainty about how and when a dispute will be resolved, the feelings of disrespect and betrayal by the employer, and the financial strain of being without one's normal pay cheque can all place a heavy toll on workers' mental health.

Members experiencing extreme stress related to a strike or lockout may develop depression, anxiety and/or high levels of irritation (towards colleagues, the public and family members). Situations in which workers are locked out by employer can be especially stressful, as members wrestle with a sense of powerlessness and betrayal.

Unions are very experienced at reading and understanding the mood of the membership, working to ease stress and boost morale, and building solidarity and resolve on the picket line. In fact, many of the different way unions interact with and support workers help build mental resiliency to the stress and uncertainty related to work stoppages, including:

- Promoting workers agency to choose through voting, whether to go on strike or not.
- Providing opportunities to engage and find purpose in the organizing and operation of the picket line.
- Creating a community of solidarity and support on the picket line that ensures that workers are not managing alone.

All of these can help prevent the impacts of stress on workers, but it is recommended that the union, usually through its Picket Captains, do regular check-ins with all members about their stress level and overall mental wellbeing.

Unions should be mindful that employer-paid workplace benefit plans, which would normally offer mental health supports to members, are not generally accessible to workers during a work stoppage, unless the union has made a special arrangement with the employer. In certain instances, unions have been successful in making an arrangement with the employer to have the union assume the cost of benefits during a work stoppage, but this had had to be negotiated in advance, and is not automatic or guaranteed.

Where workplace benefit plans are not available during a work stoppage, unions can refer workers to community health services that provide mental health counselling services such as those listed in the following table. (Note: some community health providers charge a fee – normally on a sliding scale – for mental health services. Unions should have a clear policy on whether or not they will contribute to such costs.)

Resources		
Name	Phone No.	Notes
Aurora Counselling Centre	204-786-9251	Free
Centre Renaissance Centre	204-256-6750	Fees assessed on sliding scale based on family size and income
Family Dynamics	204-947-1401	Formerly called Family Centre; fees assessed on sliding scale based on family size and income
Jewish Child and Family Counselling Services	204-477-7430	Open to all faiths and cultural groups; fees assessed on sliding scale based on family size and income
Klinic Community Health Centre	204-784-4059	Free drop-in counselling
Ma Mawi wi Chi Itata Centre	204-925-0300	Indigenous – fees assessed on sliding scale based on family size and income
Mount Carmel Clinic	204-589-9419	Free

The potential for interpersonal conflicts among members on the picket line or between members and others should not be underestimated. The stress of being on a picket line and the anger and frustration that members can feel when customers cross a picket line, when scabs (replacement workers) are brought in, or when the public is unsupportive can create enormous strain and heighten the risk of interpersonal conflict. From a health and safety perspective, we want to create procedures for picketers to follow that minimize negative interactions and keep picketers organized and calm in their interactions with others.

Harassment and violence are risks on a picket line, and Picket Captains should be trained on how to deal with incidents of harassment and de-escalation techniques in the event of violence. Even if a picket line is in a busy area, no one should ever work alone on a picket line, even for a short period of time, so as not to be an “easy target” for anti-union bullies.

Just like every workplace, every picket line should have violence and harassment policy that is communicated and known by all its members. All incidents of violence and harassment should be reported both to the Picket Captain and the to the police.

**Members of the Public:** An important part of running a picket line is to inform the public about the employer’s unfair behavior and increase public pressure for a fair deal. Picket lines will often involve talking with the public, handing out informational materials and dissuading customers from buying the products and services of the employer. As a result, there may be instances where members of the public do not appreciate the union’s position or the presence of the picket line, and they may let their displeasure or opposition be known to picketers (sometimes, rudely).

It's important that striking members are coached to always be calm and polite to members of the public. If a conversation with a member of the public becomes conflictual, the Picket Captain should intervene to remove the picketer from the situation and deal with member of the public appropriately.

**Private Security Personnel:** Employers will often hire private security personnel to watch over, take photos of and/or video record a picket a line (on the pretext of watching out for illegal activity). Security personnel will often spend their time patrolling the perimeter of the workplace property, sitting in a vehicle observing the picket, or be stationed inside the workplace periodically patrolling.

Picket Captains may want to introduce themselves to Security Personnel to establish a line of communication in the event of any incidents. For the most part, Security Personnel will take a very "hands off" approach and should not interfere with the picket line. Picketers should be coached to ignore Security Personnel, for the most part, or give them a friendly wave. In the unlikely event that Security Personnel seek to limit picket line activities or become threatening or intimidating in any way, the Picket Captain should be informed immediately, and should relay the message to union leadership / strike committee.

**Scabs (aka Replacement Workers):** In some cases, scabs may be hired by the employer to replace workers on the picket line. Hiring scabs is a deeply insulting move by an employer. There's no way to sugarcoat the extreme insult and anger that striking workers will feel if scabs take their jobs and weaken their job action. It is common for emotions to boil over and clashes to ensue between striking workers and scabs. Unions need to prepare carefully for such an occurrence and take measures to protect the mental and physical health of strikers and prevent any violence or serious clashes on the picket line.

**The Police:** The police are frequently perceived as 'the bad guys' when they show up on a picket line, often because they are called by the employer. However, the police will not typically interfere with a picket line that is peaceful, respectful, and not doing anything unlawful. Unions should encourage their members to behave respectfully toward the police.

Workers have the right to peacefully picket their employer's premises and the premises of their suppliers or partners, and even employers who may not be directly involved in the dispute. This right is protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada. The right to picket recognizes that picketing will interfere with normal operations of a business and the picketers can communicate their issues with customers/clients and ask that they respect the picket line and not cross it. Unions do not have a legal right to hold-up traffic indefinitely, or to physically prevent people from crossing a picket line.



To avoid misunderstandings about what constitutes acceptable interference with normal operations, it is recommended that unions contact the local police authorities before a picket begins. This will offer the police a “heads up” and show that the union is organized and is willing to build a relationship with authorities to keep the picket peaceful. It also opens a line of communication that is beneficial if there is an incident on the picket line (for example – a member of public threatening a picketer).

When contacting the local authorities, unions should:

- Advise them of the location of the picket.
- Let them know when it will begin.
- Provide names of and contacts of the onsite Picket Captains or other contacts they may need to get ahold of.
- Ask any questions members may have – the police have a lot of experience with street and rally safety issues.

If, and when, police officers are called to a picket line, it is recommended that only Picket Captains and union leadership engage with them directly. If police are recommending changes to how the picket line is operating, Picket Captains may need to quickly consult with union leadership and/or the strike committee. Picket Captain should inform picketers if there are going to be any changes to how the line is operating as a result of discussions with the police.

Unions should be very aware that any unlawful activity on the picket line (such as trespassing, vandalism, violence, excessive disruption of business, etc.) can result in limits being placed on picketing or, in extreme cases, arrests. It is very common for employers to have people taking photos and videos on a regular basis so unions should operate in such a way as to assume that everything they do is being recorded.

In the unlikely event of an arrest, the Picket Captain will need to advise union leadership and Strike Committee and get legal advice immediately.

Unions should also be ready for the possibility that the employer may apply and be granted by the courts an injunction, setting legal limits on a union’s ability to interfere with the employer’s normal operations. An injunction may restrict such things as the area available for picketing or the length of time vehicles can be held-up. An injunction may also reinforce specified private property lines that cannot legally be crossed. Picket Captains should be well versed on any restrictions in an injunction and adapt the union’s strategy in response.

### **Tips for Reducing Interpersonal Conflicts on the Picket Line**

Members should be encouraged and coached to:

- Be professional and polite.
- Do not make threats or engage in aggressive or intimidation tactics.

- Do not engage in a physical altercation with anyone.
- If there are negative comments made from the public, do not react negatively, or engage – smile and move on.
- Do not give statements to the news media – all media should be directed to the Picket Captain.
- Do not engage in conversation with the employer or other personnel employed by the employer – only the Picket Caption or Union Leadership should do this.
- Do not bring any type of weapon to the picket line.
- Keep the picket line clear of garbage and litter.
- Stay off the employer's property.

### *c) Hygiene & Public Health*

Good hygiene and public health measures play a central part in picket line health and safety. With a lot of people on one site, it can be a challenge to keep spaces clean and mitigate the spread of germs and viruses that can cause illnesses on the picket line.

Tips for maintaining good hygiene and preventing the spread of germs / virus:

- Make sure to have ample quantities of hand sanitizer available on the picket line and encourage picketing members to use it regularly, especially before handling food/drink.
- Portable toilets rentals will come with regular cleanings from the rental company, as well as basic cleaning and toiletry supplies, but it is important to check on the state of washrooms in between company cleanings and ensure infrastructure is clean and needed supplies (toilet paper, hand sanitizer, extra cleaning supplies) are well stocked.
- Take the time to sanitize washroom door handles and latches periodically.
- Before serving food, clean all surfaces, use clean utensils, and encourage members to wash or sanitize hands, and use clean utensils.
- Manage food supplies (especially perishables) – food is often provided by the union or donated by supporters so it's important to assign someone the responsibility of monitoring any food that is put out for members and ensuring that any leftovers are disposed of properly. Remember that most foods can't stay out safely for prolonged periods without being refrigerated.
- Food waste garbage needs to be disposed of on a regular basis, so as not to attract insects or unwanted critters.



- Keep the picket site clean of any garbage, including snack wrappers, coffee cups, ash (if using burning barrels) and any discarded equipment, signage, or pamphlets. Garbage receptacles need to be available, and garbage should be disposed of at least daily.
- Contagious illnesses, like colds, the flu and COVID-19, are transmitted by air through the mouth, nose, and eyes as well as hand to hand contact. Each of these illnesses produce symptoms such as a cough, sore throat, fever, nasal congestion, runny nose, and sneezing. It is recommended that unions develop clear “sick leave policies” so that members understand when they should stay home and not participate in the picket line. Unions should also check and adhere to any current public health orders when it comes to contagious illnesses and to ensure that members are able to access appropriate testing when ill.

**Smoking:** Some members may be smokers and may need to be afforded short breaks in a designated place far from other picketers to prevent secondhand smoke from affecting the picket line. From a health and safety perspective, smoking is an activity that is hazardous to those who smoke and those who are around them. It is a known carcinogen that can cause lung disease, cancers, heart attacks, strokes, and coronary heart disease to both active smokers and those inhaling secondhand smoke. That is why smoking is a regulated activity enforced by both provincial legislation and municipal by-law. Provincial regulation prohibits smoking from inside public buildings in Manitoba, and municipal by-law regulates outdoor smoking where specified.

The City of Winnipeg Outdoor Smoking Bylaw prohibits smoking outside certain buildings. This should be referred when planning a picket line inside city limits: <https://www.winnipeg.ca/cms/BLES/PNS/smoking.stm>.

When outside of Winnipeg, check with the municipality where the picket is situated for any specific outdoor smoking regulations and restrictions.

It is recommended that unions develop clear policies and signage about where smoking can and cannot take place near the picket line.

### **Drugs & Alcohol**

Having drugs or alcohol on a picket site is generally not recommended (though there may be some cases where drugs are permitted for medical reasons) because impairment increases the risk of injury and illness, including interpersonal conflict and violence. Unions should have very clear policies on this and communicate them to all members.