



St. John Ambulance

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## Buyer Beware: 6 Questions to Ask Before Purchasing First Aid Training for Your Company

If you own or manage a workplace in the province of Ontario, First Aid isn't an option for you; it's the [law](#). Most business know this; yet few understand exactly what they need to do to satisfy their requirements.

Many companies now offer First Aid training in Ontario; yet not all deliver the training in a way that satisfies the requirements of the law. Should something happen in your workplace and an auditor learns that your business received training that fell short of provincial standards, you could be hit with a fine of up to \$100,000 in the case of an individual, and up to \$1,500,000 in the case of a corporation.

When it comes to First Aid training for your business, it really is a "Buyer Beware" scenario. Simply paying a fee for your training doesn't guarantee that you'll get your money's worth! Here are 6 questions to ask before selecting an organization to train you or your employees.

### 1) Is the organization an approved trainer on the WSIB website?

While appearing on the WSIB website is no guarantee that you will receive quality training from the organization, it does act as the first line of defence against low-quality trainers. Should your organization be audited, receiving training from a WSIB-approved organization will result in less hassle and easier validation.

### 2) How many hours of interaction does the company provide?

By law, First Aid training courses are required to have a minimum number of instructor-student contact hours in order to be considered compliant. Those minimums in Ontario are as follows:

- 6.5 hours for Emergency First Aid, excluding breaks and lunch
- 13 hours for Standard First Aid, excluding breaks and lunch

While it can seem tempting to try to circumvent these minimums in order to get employees back into the office, the fines for cutting corners can be significant; it just isn't worth the risk. When considering a company, be sure to ask how many hours they plan to spend with their class; any answer less than the above number of hours should send up a red flag.

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### 3) What resources and certificates are left with the students after completion of the course?

Upon completion of their training, students should receive a professionally printed first aid manual in either hard copy or digital format. They should also receive both a computer-generated wallet-size certificate, as well as a wall-sized certificate to be posted at company First Aid stations.

It may also be worth asking how the company provides access to past training records, in the event that a certificate is lost or damaged. If the training company maintains proper training records, they should be able to both provide reprints of certificates, as well as generate renewal notices to help your organization remain certified into the future.

### 4) What are the organization's qualifications?

It is ideal to receive training from an organization that has the experience to deliver it effectively. All of the following can contribute to an organization's qualification to deliver First Aid training:

- **Instructor quality.** What training do instructors receive prior to delivering the course? How are they monitored for continuous quality assurance?
- **Organization history.** How long has the organization been around?
- **Familiarity with regulations.** How well does the organization know the law?

It's important to evaluate your First Aid trainer on all of the above criteria when entrusting them with the education of your employees.

### 5) What are the teaching methods? What type of hands-on experience do students receive?

Some organizations will attempt to circumvent proper practice technique by having students do things like "practice breathing" into a CPR manikin instead of properly breathing. While this may sound innocuous, it can lead to both the formation of bad habits in a real emergency situation, as well as a lack of confidence in the student that may cause them to respond inadequately – or even not at all.

The practical component of training is the most important element. It's this hands-on work that creates confident responders – not lectures, videos, stories or written work. If the organization spends less than 50% of course time on practical applications, or if they cannot provide enough equipment for each student to have their own kit to practice with, that should be a cause for pause.



## 6) What does the company charge for training, and where does that money go?

First Aid training in Ontario is offered by both for-profit companies and not-for-profits. Being a for-profit company obviously does not preclude an organization from providing effective training, but it does present the potential for misalignment between the company's priorities and what is best for your team. Ensure your choice of first aid training provider puts the highest priority on graduating confident first aid responders.

### Conclusion

Not all companies that offer First Aid training are created equal. It's important to do your due diligence before choosing a company, to make sure that you're getting what you're paying for, and to make sure the training is conducted in a way that doesn't open you up to penalties resulting from an audit. By asking the questions in this article, you empower yourself to make the most informed decision possible.

*St. John Ambulance is Canada's leading authority in first aid and the preferred choice by employers for training of their employees. As a not-for-profit, St. John Ambulance uses proceeds from training and product sales to support charitable services dedicated to improving the health, safety and quality of life of the community. For more information visit [www.sja.ca](http://www.sja.ca).*

