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PRESS RELEASE

GOB Enacts Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2026

Belmopan, September 9, 2026.

The Government of Belize has enacted the Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2026, a landmark law that establishes a modern framework to protect the safety, health, and welfare of workers nationwide. The new law repeals the longstanding Factories Act and introduces standards that reflect current workplace realities and international best practices. It modernizes workplace safety standards, strengthens worker protections, and lays the foundation for safer workplaces across the country.

The Act applies to a wide range of employment settings, including public and private-sector establishments, construction sites, industrial facilities, domestic work environments, and certain remote work arrangements. It outlines clear responsibilities for employers and workers while promoting prevention, accountability, and shared responsibility.

The law also establishes the National Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Committee and the Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorate, which will provide leadership in policy development, standard setting, inspections, compliance monitoring, and national awareness initiatives.

Employers will be required to take all reasonably practicable measures to protect workers, including conducting risk assessments, managing hazards, strengthening accident and disease reporting systems, and implementing preventive measures. Workers will benefit from enhanced protections, including protection from reprisals for reporting unsafe conditions and the right to refuse dangerous work where there is a reasonable belief of an imminent and serious threat to health or safety.

In addition, the legislation introduces requirements for the safe management of hazardous substances, chemicals, biological agents, and other occupational hazards, while strengthening worker participation through Safety and Health Committees and Safety and Health Representatives.

Although the Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2026 has been enacted and gazetted, its provisions will take effect in phases through commencement orders issued by the Minister. This approach will allow the necessary institutional and administrative arrangements to be established before enforcement begins.

The Labour Department will coordinate implementation through several strategic initiatives, including:

- Establishing and operationalizing the Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorate;
- Developing regulations, standards, and codes of practice;
- Conducting nationwide public education and awareness campaigns;
- Delivering capacity-building programmes for inspectors, employers, workers, and safety representatives; and
- Developing reporting systems and compliance procedures.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2026 represents one of the most significant advances in labour protection in Belize in recent decades. It provides the foundation for safer, healthier, and more productive workplaces while strengthening collaboration among employers, workers, and government in promoting a culture of prevention and workplace wellbeing.

The enactment of this legislation marks a major milestone in Belize's commitment to worker protection and decent work. The Labour Department looks forward to working with employers, workers, trade unions, professional organizations, government agencies, and development partners to ensure its successful implementation and to promote a culture of safety and prevention across the country.

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