



**RESIDENT
DOCTORS**
OF BC

Health and Safety Guide

Table of Contents

	Introduction
	Health and Safety Laws
	Rights and Responsibilities
	Health and Safety Program
	Managing Risk
	General Conditions
	Young and New Worker training
	Chemical and Biological Hazards
	First Aid
	Preventing Workplace Violence, Bullying and Harrasment
	Working Alone
	Joint Health and Safety Committee
	Reporting and Investigating Incidents and/or Injuries
	Emergency Preparedness & Response
	Radiation Hazards

Section Overview

Section 1

Introduction

This guide has been developed to assist residents as workers and supervisors to understand and maintain compliance with the Workers Compensation Act (WCA) and the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulation to ensure the health and safety of themselves, their co-workers, and Medical Students. The focus is on the prevention of work-related illnesses and injuries.

Section 2

Health and Safety Laws

In British Columbia, workers are protected by the WCA and the OHS Regulation which require employers to ensure the health and safety of all workers at their workplace. Workers are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of themselves and other workers while conducting their work at their workplace.

Section 3

Rights and Responsibilities

In British Columbia, all workers, including physicians, residents, nurses, and allied health providers, have fundamental health and safety rights.

Section 4

Health and Safety Program

A health and safety program has many benefits. Such a program ensures workplace hazards and associated risks are identified and controlled, improves health and safety performance, communicates health and safety commitments and policies to staff, and provides a framework for attaining health and safety goals and objectives. Health and safety programs assist with implementation by defining roles, responsibilities, and accountability for tasks, including corrective action as the program evolves.

Section 5

Managing Risk

Managing risk in the workplace involves identifying what hazards are in the workplace that might cause harm to your workers, and determining what reasonable steps need to be taken to prevent that harm from occurring.

Section 6

General Conditions

A fundamental purpose of the OHS provisions of the WCA is to protect workers and other people at the workplace from health and safety hazards. Employers and workers, all share in the responsibility of ensuring the health and safety of people at their workplace. General conditions are hazards, information, or other factors an employer must consider when employing workers.



Section Overview

Section 7

Young and New Workers

Employers are responsible for ensuring their workers are properly instructed and trained to do their work safely. This includes providing general safety and training orientation for new and young workers. It also includes training workers on how to safely perform their specific tasks and providing supervision and ongoing training to ensure that workers continue to work safely.

Section 8

Chemical and Biological Hazards

Employers must consider the risks associated with chemical and biological hazards from the products workers may encounter in the workplace.

Section 9

First Aid

Employers must provide first aid services, supplies, and equipment that meet the requirements outlined in the OHS Regulation.

Section 10

Preventing Workplace Violence, Bullying and Harassment

Employers must consider any hazard from a workplace violence lens when conducting their office risk assessment and must implement appropriate controls to protect themselves and their workers.

Section 11

Working Alone

Employers must ensure their staff, who could be working alone in the office or elsewhere, have a means of communicating with their employer or supervisor if assistance is required.



Section Overview

Section 12

Joint Health and Safety Committee

Workplace health and safety is a team effort. For the system to work as intended, everyone must know – and do – what is expected of them in their role. Responsibility is shared according to each person's legal obligations, which are often based on that person's authority and control at the worksite. The intent is to address workplace hazards quickly, effectively, and internally. Depending on the number of workers in a community practice, a joint committee or a worker health and safety representative could be required.

Section 13

Reporting and Investigating Incidents and/or Injuries

Employers must report serious incidents and fatalities to WorkSafeBC and investigate incidents that cause injury or have the potential to cause serious injury.

Section 14

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Employers must have a written emergency preparedness plan appropriate to the hazards of the worksite and address non-medical emergencies. The plan must be developed, implemented, and annually reviewed with the joint committee or worker representative, and be shared with all workers.

Section 15

Radiation Hazards

Where radiation is part of the operations the employer must consider and control the associated hazards and risks.





This guide is meant to be read in its entirety to provide information on the legislated roles and responsibilities for workplace health and safety in British Columbia. It should also be used as a reference resource when health and safety issues arise in the workplace.

Introduction

Employers acting as supervisors, and physicians and residents as workers, must understand and follow the Workers Compensation Act (WCA) and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulation. This is vital to safeguard their own well-being, as well as that of their colleagues and employees. The primary goal is to prevent work-related illnesses and injuries. Workplace health and safety requires a collaborative approach. To ensure the effectiveness of the system, everyone should understand and fulfill their responsibilities. By integrating good health and safety practices into daily work routines, workplace standards can be upheld without external enforcement. It is essential for individuals to play their role in maintaining health and safety at work.





A strong health and safety culture is one in which the right to a safe and healthy working environment is valued and promoted by employers and staff. A positive health and safety culture is built on inclusion through the meaningful involvement of all parties in the ongoing improvement of health and safety at work. Where such a culture is in place, workers feel comfortable raising concerns about possible risks or hazards, and the employer is proactive in collaborating with staff to find appropriate, effective, and sustainable solutions. This requires open communication and dialogue built on trust and mutual respect.

Note: Not all requirements under the WCA and OHS Regulation are discussed in this resource. This is not a definitive guide to the legislation and does not exempt readers from their responsibilities under applicable legislation. In case of inconsistency between this resource and the occupational health and safety legislation or any other legislation, the legislation will always prevail.

Disclaimer

Information in this document is provided solely for the user's information and is provided strictly on an "as-is" basis and without any warranty of any kind. Resident Doctors of BC will not be liable for any damages, direct or indirect, or lost profits arising out of use of information provided in this document or for information provided at any of the resource websites listed in this document.

Health and Safety Laws

In British Columbia, workers, including physicians and residents, are protected by the WCA and by the OHS Regulation. Employers are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of all workers at their worksite. Workers are responsible for taking reasonable care to ensure the health and safety of themselves and others while conducting their work at the worksite.

British Columbia's OHS legislation is a set of laws that help protect the health and safety of workers while at work. British Columbia's OHS legislation has three main parts:

- 1. Workers Compensation Act**
- 2. Occupational Health and Safety Regulation**
- 3. WorkSafeBC Prevention Policies**

There are also WorkSafeBC OHS Guidelines to further assist employers and their staff in meeting their obligations.

Workers Compensation Act

The WCA provides the legal authority and framework for WorkSafeBC activities, including prevention and enforcement. The health and safety provisions of the WCA address matters such as the rights and responsibilities of employers, supervisors, and workers; joint committee and worker representatives; the right to refuse unsafe work; accident reporting; investigations; enforcement; administrative penalties; offences; and regulation-making authority. Employers are required to abide by the WCA and should be registered with WorkSafeBC.

Occupational Health and Safety Regulation

The OHS Regulation contains legal requirements that must be met by all workplaces. It is designed to promote workplace health and safety, and to protect workers and other people present at workplaces from work-related risks to their health, safety, and wellbeing. Compliance with the requirements provides the basis for workers and employers, in cooperation, to address workplace health and safety concerns. The requirements are a foundation upon which to build an effective approach to health and safety in the workplace.





WorkSafeBC Prevention Policies

The **Policies for the Workers Compensation Act** or prevention policies are passed by WorkSafeBC's Board of Directors and are binding on WorkSafeBC officers and other employees, as well as on the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal when making decisions.

WorkSafeBC OHS Guidelines

WorkSafeBC issues the WCA and OHS Guidelines to help with the application and interpretation of sections of the WCA and OHS Regulation. OHS Guidelines are not intended to provide exclusive interpretations. Although they are not legally binding, they assist employers, supervisors, and employees on how to comply with requirements. Many sections of the WCA and OHS Regulation have associated guidelines.

Where do I find the legislation?

- Occupational health and safety legislation is searchable on the WorkSafeBC website under **Law and Policy**.
- You can download the mobile app for **OHS Regulation** from WorkSafeBC

Resource:

WorkSafeBC - **Who does and doesn't need coverage?**

General Obligations of Employers

Who is an employer under the Workers Compensation Act?

“Employer” includes every person having in their service under a contract of hiring or apprenticeship, whether the contract is written or oral, express, or implied, a person engaged in work, or about an industry.

Example: a physician who owns and operates a clinic, including the hiring of staff.

“Worker” includes a person who has entered or works under a contract of service, whether the contract is written or oral, expressed, or implied.

Example: a physician working in a hospital alongside other health care staff.

“Supervisor” is a person who instructs, directs, and controls workers in the performance of their duties.

Example: a physician has residents assigned to them.

- A supervisor need not have the title “supervisor.” They may have some other title or have no title at all.
- The supervisor will normally be appointed by an employer as such, but a person may be a supervisor without being specifically appointed by an employer if, as a matter of fact, they instruct, direct and control workers in the performance of their duties. The employer themselves may be a supervisor.

“Direct supervision” may take place even though a worker may be in a different place than the supervisor or may travel to different places as part of their work. Directions may be given by any communications medium.

Resources:

WorkSafeBC - [Workers Compensation Act](#)

WorkSafeBC - [Definitions](#)

WorkSafeBC - [General Duties of Supervisors](#)

Rights and Responsibilities

In British Columbia, all workers, including physicians, residents, nurses, and allied health workers, have fundamental health and safety rights and responsibilities under **WorkSafeBC Regulation, Part 3**.

Core Worker Rights

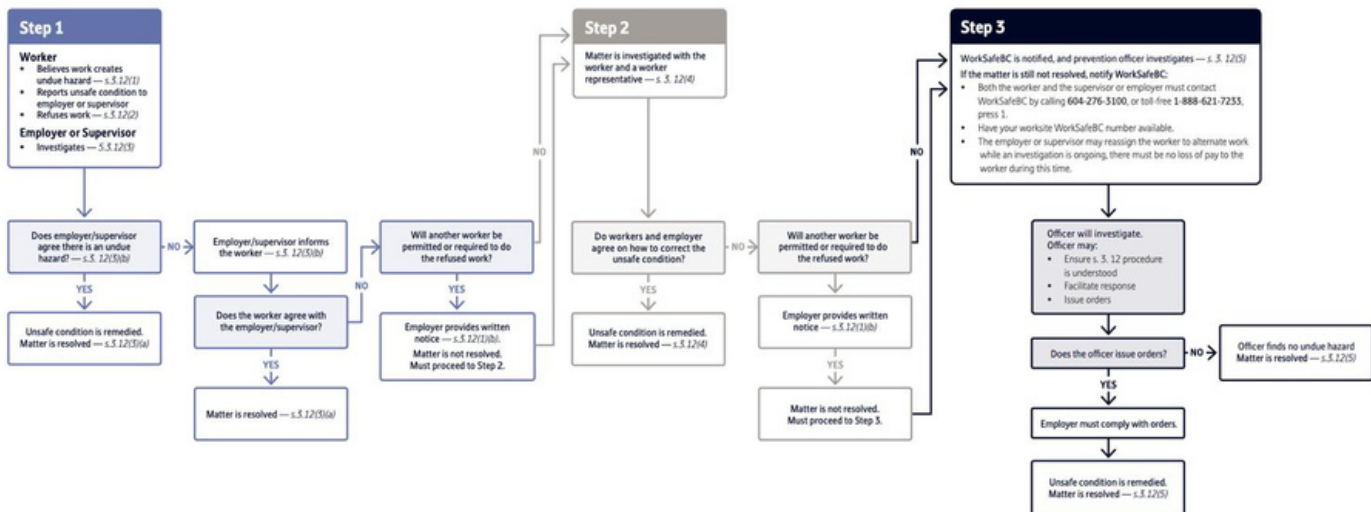
To Know – The employer must notify workers of any hazards in the workplace they know or should know of, and provide the training, health and safety rights, awareness, instruction, supervision, and equipment needed to work safely.

To Participate – Workers may participate in workplace health and safety through the joint health and safety committee or through the worker health and safety representative.

To Refuse – Workers must refuse work that they reasonably believe may endanger themselves or other workers.

Right to Refuse Unsafe Work

There are potentially three steps to follow when refusing unsafe work, click the image below to expand the chart or download the chart [here](#).



No prohibited action

In addition to the rights outlined above, the worker is protected from prohibited actions for exercising a health and safety right or carrying out any duty in accordance with the OHS Regulation. Employers are prohibited from firing, disciplining, or otherwise taking prohibited actions against workers for using their right to refuse unsafe work.

Responsibilities of employers, supervisors, and workers

Employers have a legal responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all workers at the site. This includes resolving any workplace conditions that are hazardous to the health or safety of the workers.

Employers must ensure workers:

- Are aware of all known or reasonably foreseeable health and safety hazards to which they are likely to be exposed by their work.
- Comply with OHS provisions, regulations, and any applicable orders.
- Are aware of their rights and duties under the OHS provisions and regulations.

Employers must also establish workplace health and safety policies and programs in accordance with regulations by:

- Providing and maintaining in good condition protective equipment, devices, and clothing as required by regulation, and ensuring that these are used by the employer's workers.
- Providing workers the information, instruction, training, and supervision necessary to ensure the health and safety of those workers in carrying out their work and to ensure the health and safety of other workers at the workplace.
- Making a copy of the WCA and the OHS Regulation readily available for review by the employer's workers and, at each workplace where workers of the employer are regularly employed, post and keep a notice posted advising where the copy is available for review.
- Consulting and cooperating with the joint health and safety committee or the worker health and safety representative for the workplace of the employer.
- Cooperating with the WorkSafeBC Board, safety officers of the Board, and any other person carrying out a duty under the OHS provisions or the regulations.

Supervisors, including residents, must ensure the health and safety of all workers under their direct supervision. This includes:

- Being knowledgeable about the OHS provisions and those regulations applicable to the work being supervised.
- Complying with the OHS provisions, the regulations, and any applicable orders.



- Are aware of all known or reasonably foreseeable health or safety hazards in the area where they work.
- Comply with the OHS provisions, the regulations, and any applicable orders.
- Consult and cooperate with the joint committee or the worker health and safety representative for the workplace.
- Cooperate with the WorkSafeBC Board, safety officers of the Board, and any other person carrying out a duty under the OHS provisions or the regulations.

Workers, including residents, nurses, and medical students, must:

- Take reasonable care to protect their own health and safety and the health and safety of other people who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.
- Comply with the OHS provisions, the regulations, and any applicable orders.
- Carry out their work in accordance with established safe work procedures as required by the OHS Provisions and the regulations.
- Use or wear protective equipment, devices, and clothing as required.
- Not engage in horseplay or similar conduct that may endanger the worker or any other person.
- Ensure that their ability to work without risk to their own health or safety, or to the health or safety of any other person, is not impaired by alcohol, drugs, or other causes.
- Report to the supervisor or employer:
 - Any contravention of the OHS provisions, the regulations, or an applicable order of which the worker is aware.
 - The absence of or defect in any protective equipment, device or clothing, or the existence of any other hazard, that the worker considers is likely to endanger them or any other person.
- Cooperate with the joint health and safety committee or the worker health and safety representative for the workplace.
- Cooperate with the WorkSafeBC Board, safety officers of the Board, and any other person carrying out a duty under the OHS provisions or the regulations.



Resources:

WorkSafeBC - *OHS Regulation, Part 3*
WorkSafeBC - *WCA, Part 2, Division 4, Section 21*

Example: Undue Hazard and Refusal of Work

You are a physician who employs clinic support staff. Normally, there are two MOAs at the reception desk. Due to operational challenges and a complex patient panel, there is a backlog of paperwork to process and one of the MOAs has gone home sick without replacement. The main entry door to the office was left unlocked and patients are arriving for afternoon appointments.

This clinic's working alone procedure states, "When working alone, the front entrance door must be locked, and patients must be screened and checked in before they can enter the office waiting room."

The office assistant informs you they will not work with the door unlocked, citing an unsafe working condition (i.e., existing working alone procedure).

At this point, notification of an unsafe condition has been made to you as the employer. It could proceed to a right to refuse unsafe work if you do not remedy the situation. At that point, the worker could formally refuse unsafe work.

Health and Safety Program

A health and safety program helps to improve health and safety performance while communicating an employer's health and safety commitments to their staff and provides a framework for attaining its health and safety goals and objectives through well-thought-out policies and procedures. Health and safety programs help delineate roles, responsibilities, and accountability for tasks, while checking corrective actions in a timely way as the program evolves.

The requirements for health and safety programming will vary depending on your site and service. Community practices with 50 or fewer workers are considered a low hazard operation by WorkSafeBC. There is still a requirement for an informal health and safety program, where larger sites require a formal health and safety program.

Informal program requirements

The employer must:

- Maintain a program based on regular monthly with workers for discussion on health and safety matters
- Ensure meetings are directed at maintaining a cooperative interest in health and safety of the workforce and correcting unsafe conditions and practices.
- Maintain a record of meetings and items discussed

Formal program requirements

The employer must:

- Define a statement of the employer's aims and the responsibilities of the employer, supervisors, and workers.
- Conduct regular inspections of the premises and work practices at appropriate intervals to identify and correct the development of unsafe conditions.
- Provide appropriate written instructions for workers.
- Hold periodic meetings with workers to review health and safety items.
- Outline a process for investigating incidents and injuries to prevent re-occurrence.
- Maintain records and statistics, including relating to inspections and incident investigations, which can be made available to the joint health and safety committee.
- Provide instruction and supervision of workers in safe performance of work.

Managing Risk

Hazard identification, assessment, and control is the foundation of workplace health and safety and is a requirement under the WCA and OHS Regulation.

The employer must identify and assess hazards. Once this process is completed, the findings will inform the development of policies and procedures. A hazard risk assessment should be revisited once per year or if there is a change in operations of the business.

Identifying and Assessing Hazards

What is a Hazard? A hazard is any situation, condition or thing that may cause harm to your workers. In a medical office, hazards might include disinfecting chemicals, used sharps, electricity, biomedical equipment, or biological agents. After you determine what hazards exist, the next step is to assess the risk these hazards pose to workers, so you can dedicate the appropriate attention and level of control to each one.

Hazards may be grouped into four main categories:

Physical Hazards

Lifting and handling tools
Repetitive motions
Slipping and Tripping hazards
Equipment
Ergonomic
Fire
Electricity
Excess noise
Inadequate lighting
Extreme temperatures
Vibration
Workplace violence (e.g., aggressive language, threats)
Lasers
Cautery equipment
Sharps

Chemical Hazards

Chemicals (e.g., solvents, cleaners, medications such as antineoplastics, cytotoxic or hazardous drugs)
Sterilizing agents (e.g., glutaraldehyde)
Bleach
Dusts (e.g., bone dust)
Smoke
Fumes, mists and vapours
Gases (e.g., anesthetic gases or oxygen)
Liquid nitrogen
Formaldehyde
Mercury (e.g., broken thermometers or sphygmomanometers)
Hydrogen peroxide
Latex

Biological Hazards

Viruses, bacteria, and fungi (e.g., influenza, varicella, rubeola)
Moulds
Blood and body fluids (e.g., hepatitis A, B, and C or HIV)
Sewage
Airborne pathogens

Psychosocial Hazards

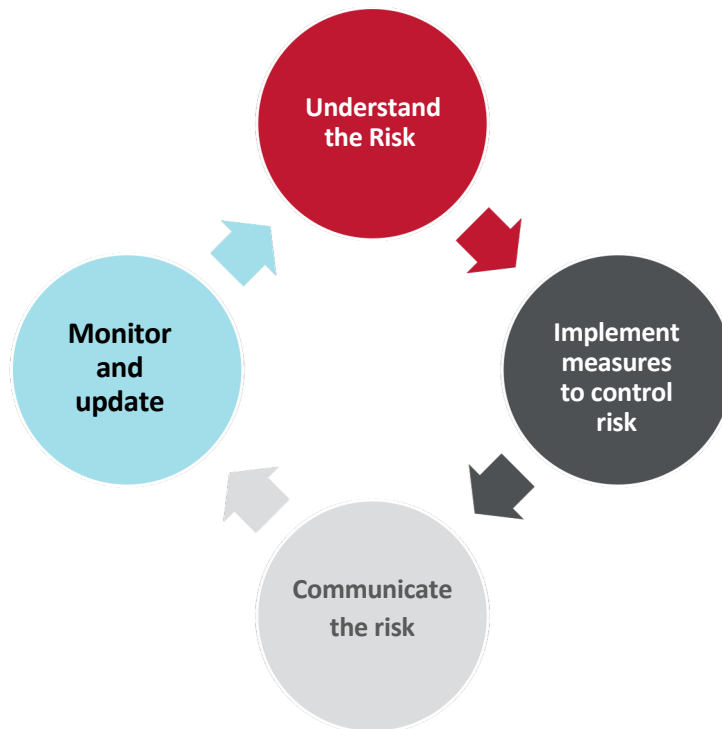
Working conditions (e.g. workload)
Stress
Fatigue and burnout
Working alone
Workplace violence
Working with chronically ill and dying patients
Bullying, embarrassment, and harassment

What is Risk?

Risk is the chance that someone could be harmed by the hazards, as well as the potential severity of harm.

Managing Risk

Managing risk involves the employer thinking about what might cause harm to workers and determining whether they are taking reasonable steps to prevent that harm from happening.



1. Understand the risk

The Employer will identify hazards in the workplace, this may be done pre-occupancy, during annual inspections, from reports of employees or direct observations. This may include physical hazards (e.g. tripping hazards, violence), biological hazards (e.g. needlesticks, waste, infection) or chemical (formaldehyde, cytotoxic drugs).

2. Implement measures to control risk

The greatest risk or risks should be addressed first. If the risk cannot be eliminated, control measures will be used to minimize the risk. The hierarchy of controls is used (page 22) is used to select the measures.

3. Communicate the risk

A key step in managing risk is communicating the risk to workers and what to do to control the risk. Workers, including residents are to be provided with training on how to identify and document hazards, and safe work procedures.

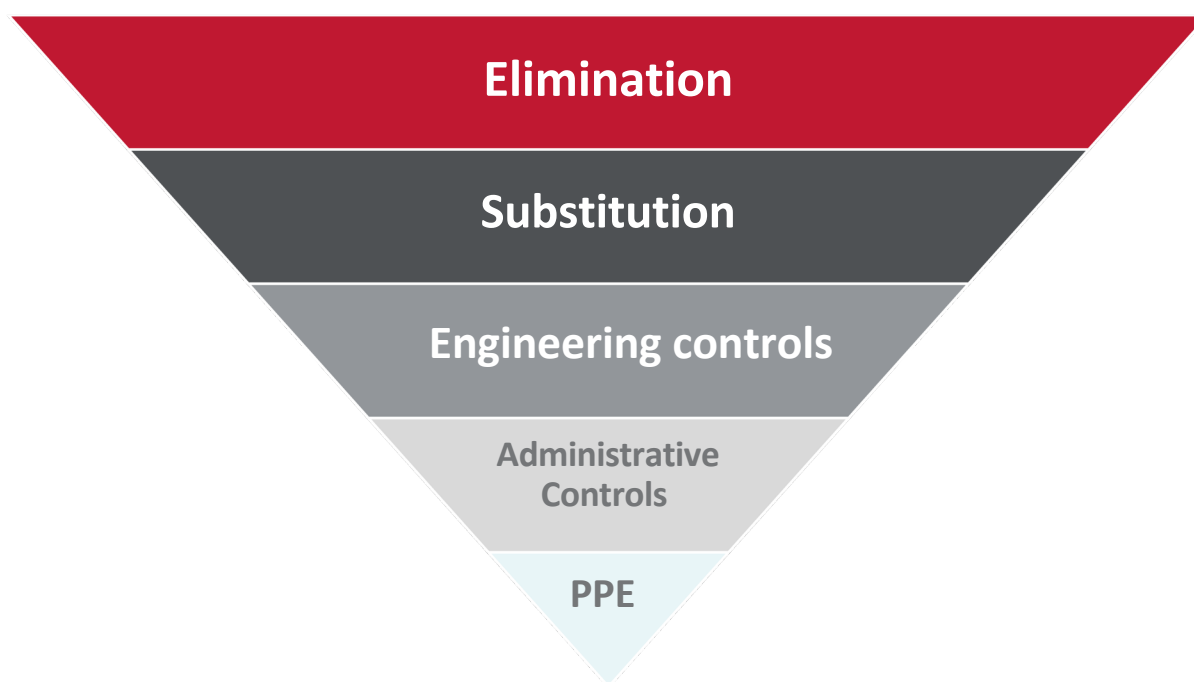
4. Monitor and Update

Employers must monitor the effectiveness of the risk control measures in place and work with staff to improve those that are not working as intended. Employers are also responsible for looking for new or changing hazards and risks during monthly safety inspections and annual review of past assessments.

Eliminating and Controlling Hazards

The employer is responsible for identifying, eliminating, and controlling all hazards identified in their site. Whenever possible, hazards should be eliminated. If this is not possible, hazards must be controlled effectively to reduce risk. Control of hazards means reducing the hazard to levels that do not present a risk to your workers' health and safety.

Hierarchy of Controls (recommended by WorkSafeBC)



Risk Management Strategies in Order of Hierarchy

Elimination

Eliminating the hazard completely is always the first and most effective choice. When considering using elimination controls, ask yourself: "Can I find a safer way to perform the task?" For example, for exposure to infectious disease, providing phone consults eliminates the risk of exposure to staff

Substitution

Substitution involves replacing material or process with a less hazardous one. When considering using substitution controls, ask yourself: "Can I use something less harmful?" For example, substituting latex gloves for nitrile or other materials of equal or greater protection

Engineering Controls

If you cannot eliminate the hazards or substitute safer alternatives, engineering controls are the next best options. These involve using work equipment or other means to prevent workers from being exposed to a hazard. Engineering controls are physical changes to the workplace and may include additional equipment or modifications such as partitions, or cross-corridor doors

Administrative controls

Administrative controls involve identifying and implementing safe work procedures so your workers can perform their job duties safely. Examples of administrative controls include implementing staff immunization programs, providing training and work procedures

Personal Protective Equipment

Using PPE is the lowest effective hazard control; when using this measure ensure:

- The right type of PPE is selected for the task
- The PPE fits properly and is comfortable under working conditions
- Workers are trained in the need for PPE, its use, donning and doffing, and proper disposal
- Workers are fit tested for N95 or other respiratory protection where required

General Conditions

Everyone shares the responsibility of ensuring health and safety. Employers are responsible for ensuring workers are aware of any known or reasonably foreseeable health and safety hazards while at work and must correct hazardous conditions. Workers must protect their own health and safety and the health and safety of other people who may be affected by what they do at work. General conditions in this section include considerations for physical, environmental, site-specific information, and other factors an employer must consider in their office.

- Safe movement of people, equipment, and materials entering and leaving the space.
- Adequate lighting.
- Proper storage and handling of materials and equipment.
- A designated place to store and consume food.
- Access to accessible washrooms and/or change rooms.
- Access to safe drinking water.
- An unpolluted fresh air intake, free from tobacco and cannabis smoke or e-cigarette vapour, being a minimum of six metres away from outdoor smoking areas.
- A ventilation system for the supply and distribution of air and removal of indoor air contaminants that is designed, constructed, and operated in accordance with established engineering principles, and ASHRAE Standard 62, Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality.

Workplace impairment as an occupational health and safety issue is of increasing concern to employers and workers. Physical or mental impairment, including fatigue, can create a significant risk of injury and death to the impaired worker, their co-workers, and the public. Physicians and their staff share responsibility for managing all types of impairment in the workplace. No worker should be impaired by alcohol, drugs, or other substances, nor be suffering from a physical or mental impairment while at work.

Another consideration is ergonomics. Ergonomics is the interactions between people and their physical and organizational environments. [Ergonomic requirements](#) intend to reduce strains and sprains and other injuries.

A musculoskeletal injury (MSI) is an injury or disorder of the muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, nerves, blood vessels, or related soft tissue. These injuries may be caused or aggravated by work, and MSI risks can exist in any type of workplace. As required by the OHS Regulation, physicians must identify the factors in their offices that may expose workers to a risk of MSI and assess the risk.

Resources:

WorkSafeBC - [OHS Regulation, Part 4](#)

WorkSafeBC - [Musculoskeletal Injury \(MSI\) Risk Assessment Worksheet](#)

Young and New Worker Training

Employers must ensure all workers, including young and new workers, are trained for:

- Safe operation of office equipment and medical instruments.
- Safe procedures when working with harmful materials.
- Correct use of personal protective equipment.
- Effective verbal de-escalation techniques.

Workers must:

- Participate in and apply training learned.
- Not perform work they believe is unsafe.

A young worker is defined as anyone under the age of 25. A new worker is defined as anyone new to the workplace, returning to a workplace where a hazard in that workplace has changed, or relocated to a new workplace if the hazards in that workplace are different from the previous workplace.

The following topics must be included in the young or new worker's orientation and training:

- Name and contact information of the young or new worker's supervisor.
- The employer's and young or new worker's rights and responsibilities under the WCA and OHS Regulation, including the reporting of unsafe conditions and the right to refuse unsafe work.
- Workplace health and safety procedures, such as what to do if a spill occurs.
- Hazards to which the young or new worker may be exposed such as physical or verbal aggression.
- Working alone or in isolation.
- Violence in the workplace including responding to verbally aggressive patients. Location and use of personal protective equipment.
- Location of first aid facilities and summoning for first aid.
- Reporting illnesses and injuries sustained at work.
- Emergency procedures, including an office fire, flood, or power loss.
- Instruction and demonstration of the young or new worker's job duties.
- The office's health and safety program.
- Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System requirements.

Contact information for the health and safety committee or the worker health and safety representative, as applicable to the workplace.

Some of this will occur during the Occupational Health and Safety training at the start of residency, the remainder will occur on site at the start of the applicable rotations. The employer must keep a record of all young and new worker orientation training. Records can be destroyed for workers who no longer are employed at the organization.

Resources:

WorkSafeBC - *WCA, Part 2, Division 4, Section 21*

WorkSafeBC - *OHS Regulation, Part 3, Section 3.22-3.25*

WorkSafeBC - *Health care & social services*

Chemical and Biological Hazards

Employers must consider the risks associated with chemical and biological hazards their workers might encounter while at work. Biological agents may be designated as hazardous substances under the OHS Regulation and require the employer to develop an Exposure Control Plan. For instance, if a patient is known to be infected with tuberculosis and the workers could be exposed, the physician must identify the risk of exposure and the controls required to protect workers.

Legislation Applicable to Chemical Hazards, Biological Hazards, and Other Harmful Substances
Legislation related to chemical and biological hazards and other harmful substances is found in several sections of the WorkSafeBC OHS Regulation [Part 5: Chemical and Biological Agents](#), and [OHS Regulation Part 6: Substance Specific Requirements](#) outlines some specific requirements related to worker exposures and monitoring.

The following biological agents are designated as harmful substances:

- A liquid or solid material that is contaminated with a prion, virus, bacterium, fungus, or other biological agent that has a classification given by the Public Health Agency of Canada as a human pathogen that causes an adverse health effect.
- A biological toxin that causes an adverse health effect.

Resources:

WorkSafeBC - [OHS Regulation, Part 5, Section 5.1.1](#)

Public Health Agency of Canada - [Pathogen Risk Assessment](#)

Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)

Hazardous materials may cause serious health problems in workers or cause fires or explosions in the workplace. WHMIS provides information on hazardous products, as defined and described in the [federal Hazardous Products Act](#) and [Hazardous Products Regulations](#), so workers can protect themselves. While WHMIS was updated in 2015, responsibilities for employers, workers and others remain unchanged.

Each hazardous product must have a label and data sheet. Labels identify the product's hazards and precautionary measures. Data sheets provide more detailed information. If the product is not classified as a hazardous product, the employer must still provide training, supervision, and safe work procedures. These labels are explained within the WHMIS 2015 training.

Resources:

WorkSafeBC - [OHS Regulation, Part 5, Section 5.3-5.19](#)

WorkSafeBC - [WHMIS](#)

WorkSafeBC - [WHMIS 2015: The Basics](#)

Biological Agents

Exposure Control Plan (ECP)

Most health care workers are likely to be exposed to biological agents. Employers are required to develop and implement an ECP for their office, which is a detailed requirements document designed to reduce the risk of workplace exposure.

An ECP must include the following elements:

- A risk assessment conducted by a qualified person to determine if there is a potential for exposure.
- A list of all work activities where there is a potential for exposure.
- Controls to eliminate or minimize the potential for exposure.
- Standard or routine infection control precautions for all work activities that have been identified as having a potential for exposure.
- A description of the PPE needed to eliminate or minimize the exposure

Employers must also:

- Inform workers about the contents of the ECP and provide them with adequate education, training, and supervision to work safely.
- Keep a record of all training and education provided to workers.
- Keep a record of all workers who have been exposed to a biological agent while performing work activities.

Resource:

WorkSafeBC - Sample Exposure Control Plan for Biological Agents for Occupational First Aid Attendants (OFAAs)

Considerations for medical sharps

Any medical sharp used to care for or treat a person must be a safety-engineered medical sharp. If more than one type of safety-engineered hollow bore needle or safety-engineered medical sharp is available in commercial markets, the needle or sharp that provides the highest level of protection from accidental parenteral contact must be used. An employer must determine the highest level of protection available based on information provided by manufacturers, independent testing agencies, objective product evaluation, or other reliable sources. Safe work procedures and practices relating to the use of safety-engineered hollow bore needles and safety-engineered medical sharps must be developed and implemented before use of these devices.

Considerations for labeling and identifying containers

A container holding a biological agent designated as a hazardous substance must be clearly identified by the relevant biohazard symbol or by other means that indicates the presence of a biological agent. A laboratory sample of a known or suspected biological agent designated as a hazardous substance must be transported only in accordance with the federal Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992 (Canada).

Vaccination and medical evaluation

If the Communicable Disease Control Immunization Program issued by the BC Centre for Disease Control, as amended from time to time, lists a vaccine that protects against infection by a biological agent that is designated as a hazardous substance, the employer must offer the vaccination – at no cost to the worker – to all workers who are at risk of workplace exposure to that biological agent.

If a worker may have been exposed to the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B and C viruses, or any other biological agent designated as a hazardous substance, the employer must advise the worker to seek immediate medical evaluation.

Resources:

WorkSafeBC - OHS Regulation, Part 6 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Sharps Safety for Healthcare Settings (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services)
WorkSafeBC - OHS Regulation, Part 6, Section 6.33-6.40

Collective Agreement Article 30 Immunizations

Where residents are exposed to infectious or communicable diseases for which there are proven protective immunizations, such immunizations will be provided at no cost to the resident. If you need assistance accessing an employer vaccine clinic, please contact RDBC.

Residents must provide their vaccination records as part of their onboarding process. All residents are expected to receive yearly influenza vaccinations; details on the times and locations of employer vaccine clinics will be made available annually.

Hepatitis B vaccinations are provided to residents upon request. If you need assistance accessing an employer vaccine clinic, please contact RDBC.

Cytotoxic Drugs (Hazardous Drugs)

Cytotoxic or hazardous drugs are specific drugs with the potential to harm workers who are exposed to them. Continual or frequent exposures to low level of a cytotoxic or hazardous drug, or a single exposure to a larger amount, can put workers at risk of negative health effects.

A cytotoxic drug is defined as an agent that possesses a specific destructive action on certain cells or that may be genotoxic, oncogenic, mutagenic, teratogenic, or hazardous to cells in any way and includes most anti-cancer drugs. A wide range of people can be at risk of exposure to cytotoxic drugs in the workplace, including pharmacy workers, nurses, physicians, and health care aides. In the past, most cytotoxic drugs were antineoplastic, which refers to drugs used to treat cancer. However, increasingly these drugs are being used to treat diseases other than cancer, such as rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, and skin psoriasis.

An employer must develop an ECP that describes how workers will be protected from cytotoxic or hazardous drugs. An ECP is a detailed requirements document that includes information on workplace responsibilities, the nature of the hazards, the risks associated with exposure, and the control measures in place.

Resources:

WorkSafeBC - *OHS Regulation, Part 6, Section 6.42-6.58*

WorkSafeBC - *Safe Work Practices for Handling Hazardous Drugs*



First Aid

Employers must provide equipment, supplies, facilities, first aid attendants, and services to promptly render first aid to workers if they suffer an injury at work and transport the injured workers to medical treatment if required.

In British Columbia, workplace first aid requirements are outlined in WorkSafeBC Regulation Part 3 Section 3.15 to 3.21 and are based on risk level, distance to a hospital, and number of workers, which is determined by:

- How hazardous the work is.
- The time taken to travel from the worksite to a hospital.
- The number of workers on each shift.
- Hospitals must have a first aid attendant on site.

Employer Responsibilities

Assess the circumstances of the workplace, including:

- The number of workers who may require first aid at any time.
- The nature and extent of the risks and hazards in the workplace, including whether the workplace creates a low, moderate, or high risk of injury. For community physician practices, a low risk of injury is assumed.
- The types of injuries likely to occur.
- Any barriers to first aid being provided to an injured worker.
- The time that may be required to obtain transportation and to transport an injured worker to medical treatment.

Review the assessment within 12 months after the previous assessment was completed, and whenever a significant change affecting the worksite occurs.

First aid equipment supplies and facilities/storage must be kept clean, dry, ready for use, and be readily accessible any time a worker works in the workplace.

The employer must provide for each workplace such equipment, supplies, facilities, first aid attendants, and services as are adequate and appropriate for:

- Promptly rendering first aid to workers if they suffer an injury at work.
- Transporting injured workers to medical treatment.

Resources:

WorkSafeBC - *OHS Regulation, Part 3, Section 3.16*

WorkSafeBC - *First Aid Record form*

WorkSafeBC - *First Aid requirements*

WorkSafeBC - *OHS Regulation, Part 3, Section 3.14*

Preventing Workplace Violence, Bullying and Harassment

All employers in British Columbia must:

- Conduct a risk assessment to address workplace violence and implement appropriate controls aimed at protecting physicians and staff.
- Implement procedures for responding to reports or incidents of bullying and harassment.

WorkSafeBC defines violence as any actual or attempted physical force, or threatening behavior or statements, by someone other than a worker, that could cause injury or make a worker fear injury.

In healthcare settings, resident violence may include physical gestures like pointing or pounding, threatening language or posture when needs aren't met, verbal aggression in person or over the phone, or physical assault. Resident health and safety should be prioritized equally with patient safety.

Workplace violence is a recognized hazard in B.C. healthcare. Under OHS Regulation Part 4, Section 4.28, employers must assess the risk of violence as part of their workplace hazard evaluation. Identifying potential violence helps in creating policies and procedures to reduce worker exposure.

Legislated Requirements

Employer Responsibilities

Employers must conduct a risk assessment where risk of injury from violence exists that includes:

- Consideration of previous experience in that workplace.
- Workplace experience in similar worksites.
- The location and circumstances in which work will take place.

Employers where risk of violence is identified must:

- Establish procedures, policies, and work environment arrangements to eliminate the risks from violence.
- Establish procedures, policies, and work environment arrangements to minimize the risk to workers if elimination of the risk is not possible.
- Ensure that a worker reporting an injury or adverse symptom because of an incident of violence is advised to consult a physician of the worker's choice for treatment or referral.
- Train all workers in safe work procedures before they are exposed to the risk of violence.
- Inform workers where persons have a history of violent behaviour and whom workers are likely to encounter in the course of their work.

- Instruct workers, who may be exposed to the risk of violence, the means to recognize the potential for violence, the risk prevention and reporting procedures in place, and the appropriate response to an incident including where to obtain assistance.

Resource:

WorkSafeBC - *OHS Regulation, Part 4, Section 4.27-4.31*

Categories of Workplace Violence

Fifty-nine per cent of all violence-related time-loss claims in B.C. come from people working in healthcare and social services (WorkSafeBC, 2021). In 2023, SWITCH BC completed engagement sessions with nearly 1,300 health care workers and learned 89 per cent of respondents experienced verbal violence and 52 per cent experienced physical violence (What We Learned, SWITCH BC, 2023). Moreover, the Doctors of BC members reported one in two physicians had been involved in, or impacted by, a health and safety incident in the previous 12 months (2023 Health Authority Engagement Survey Report, Doctors of BC).

Whenever there is direct interaction with members of the public, the potential for violent incidents exists. Violence in the workplace may include attempted or actual assaults or any threatening statement or behaviour towards a worker which gives reasonable cause to believe that they are at risk of injury. Incidents of violence may not occur at the worksite, but an incident is considered workplace violence if it arises from a worker's employment.

If you have not attended the **Provincial Violence Prevention Curriculum**, please reach out to RDBC.

Incidents of violence may not occur at the worksite, but an incident is considered workplace violence if it arises from a worker's employment.

Violence may arise from:

- A stranger.
- A client/patient.
- A co-worker.
- Domestic issues.

Factors to consider when assessing the risk of workplace violence

Does the work involve any of the following?

- Working alone or in small numbers.
- Working between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- Working in isolated or remote areas.
- Providing emergency interventions.
- Working with patients in a community office setting.
- Working with unstable or violent individuals.
- Working at or near a worksite targeted by protestors or action groups.
- Working with or having controlled substances on site.
- Working in proximity to businesses that experience an elevated risk, such as retail (especially with money, prescription drugs or jewelry).
- Working in or near areas of increased crime.
- Working with persons where domestic violence is a concern.
- Visiting clients/patients in their homes.

A violence prevention program is a key part of a health and safety program and is required by WorkSafeBC.

Resource: WorkSafeBC - [Preventing Workplace Violence in Health Care: Five Steps to an Effective Program manual](#)

Bullying and Harassment

What is bullying and harassment? A worker is bullied and harassed when someone takes an action that they knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause that worker to be humiliated or intimidated. This includes any threatening statement or behaviour which gives the worker reasonable cause to believe they are at risk of injury. When an employer or supervisor takes reasonable action to manage and direct workers, it is not bullying and harassment.

Bullying and harassment in the workplace can take many forms, including verbal aggression, personal attacks, and other intimidating or humiliating behaviours. Examples of behaviour or comments that might constitute bullying and harassment include verbal aggression or insults, calling someone derogatory names, harmful hazing or initiation practices, vandalizing personal belongings, spreading malicious rumours, horseplay, and practical jokes.

If workplace bullying and harassment is not addressed, it can lead to lost productivity, illness, anxiety, and depression. Bullying and harassment may cause people to leave work permanently and file WorkSafeBC claims. Employers, workers, and supervisors have legal obligations to prevent and address bullying and harassment in their workplace.

Resources:

WorkSafeBC - *OHS Regulation, Part 4, Section 4.24-4.26*

WorkSafeBC - *OHS Policies, P2-21-2*

WorkSafeBC - *Workplace Bullying and Harassment*

Responding to bullying and harassment

Employers must take all reasonable steps to prevent where possible, or otherwise minimize, workplace bullying and harassment.

Workers also have obligations which include:

- Not engaging in the bullying and harassment of others.
- Reporting any bullying and harassment behaviours they experience or observe in the workplace.
- Applying and complying with the employer's policies and procedures.

Employers must inform workers of their bullying and harassment policy statement and procedures to minimize bullying and harassment, and train all workers and supervisors to recognize, respond to, and report incidents of bullying and harassment. The procedures must ensure a reasonable response to the report or incident, aim to fully address the incident, and ensure that bullying and harassment is prevented or minimized in the future.

In addition to establishing procedures, employers are responsible for ensuring their staff follow these procedures and they review them annually.

Legislated Requirements

Employer Responsibilities

Employers must ensure the health and safety of all employees and any other workers at the worksite by:

- Taking steps to minimize bullying and harassment.
- Developing a policy statement to prevent and address bullying and harassment.
- Developing and implementing reporting procedures.
- Developing and implementing procedures to investigate and deal with incidents and complaints.

B.C. Human Rights Code

Some bullying and harassment may involve breaches of human rights, such as when it involves racial or sexual discrimination. For more information, review the [B.C. Human Rights Code](#), seek advice from a qualified legal professional, or contact the [B.C. Human Rights Tribunal](#).

Resources

WorkSafeBC - *Resource tool kit*

WorkSafeBC - *Responding to workplace bullying and harassment*

WorkSafeBC - *Toward a Respectful Workplace: A Handbook on Preventing and Addressing Workplace Bullying and Harassment*

Working Alone

Before a worker is assigned to work alone or in isolation, the employer must:

- Identify any hazards to that worker.
- Develop and implement a written procedure for checking the wellbeing of a worker assigned to work alone or in isolation.
- Train the worker on the procedure for checking in.

A worker is working alone or in isolation if they are at work and assistance is not readily available in case of emergency, injury, or illness. If a worker called for help, by physically shouting for help, no one would hear them. Working in isolation means other people are present in the office but in different areas or separate rooms. For example, a physician is charting in an exam room at the rear of the building and the medical office assistant is at the front reception desk. If the physician called for help, the MOA would respond.

Legislated Requirements

Employer Responsibilities

The employer must:

- Identify any hazards to the worker.
- Take measures to eliminate the hazard, and if it is not practicable to eliminate the hazard, to minimize the risk from the hazard.
- Minimize the risk from the hazard to the lowest level possible using engineering controls and/or administrative controls.

Procedures for checking the wellbeing of a worker:

- The employer must develop and implement a written procedure for checking the wellbeing of a worker assigned to work alone or in isolation.
- The procedure for checking a worker's wellbeing must include the time interval between checks and the procedure to follow in case the worker cannot be contacted, including provisions for emergency rescue.
- A person must be designated to establish contact with the worker at predetermined intervals and the results must be recorded by the person.
- In addition to checks at regular intervals, a check at the end of the work shift must be done.
- The procedure for checking a worker's wellbeing, including time intervals between the checks, must be developed in consultation with the joint health and safety committee or the worker health and safety representative.

- Time intervals for checking a worker's wellbeing must be developed in consultation with the worker assigned to work alone or in isolation. The employer should be checking in on the isolated/alone worker.

Resources:

WorkSafeBC - [OHS Regulation, Part 4, Section 4.20](#)

WorkSafeBC - [Working Alone: A Handbook for Small Business](#) Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety - [Working Alone - Working with Patients](#) Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety - [Working Alone - General](#)

Joint Health and Safety Committee

Workplace health and safety is a team effort. In workplaces that require a joint health and safety committee, responsibility is shared according to each person's legal obligations, which are often based on that person's authority and control at the worksite. The intent is to address workplace hazards quickly, effectively, and internally.

The joint health and safety committee acts as a forum for the employer and their workers to collaborate and to improve health and safety in the workplace. A high functioning committee supports health and safety issues to be brought forward and acted upon quickly and effectively and will contribute significantly to health and safety in the workplace.

Joint Health and Safety Committee

The joint health and safety committee supports the employer's duty to ensure a healthy and safe workplace. The joint committee brings together representatives of the employer and the workers to identify and help resolve health and safety issues in the workplace. A Joint Health and Safety Committee:

- Identifies situations that may be unhealthy or unsafe for workers and advise on effective systems for responding to those situations;
- Considers and expeditiously deal with complaints relating to the health and safety of workers;
- Consults with workers and the employer on issues related to occupational health and safety and occupational environment;
- Makes recommendations to the employer and the workers for the improvement of the occupational health and safety and occupational environment of workers;
- Makes recommendations to the employer on educational programs promoting the health and safety of workers and compliance with the OHS provisions and the regulations and to monitor their effectiveness;
- Advises the employer on programs and policies required under the regulations for the workplace and to monitor their effectiveness;
- Advises the employer on proposed changes to the workplace, including significant proposed changes to equipment and machinery, or the work processes that may affect the health or safety of workers;
- Ensures that accident investigations and regular inspections are carried out as required by the OHS provisions and the regulations;
- Participates in inspections, investigations and inquiries as provided in the OHS provisions and the regulations;



Minutes from meetings are posted on site for workers who are not on the committee to review.

Where should there be a joint health and safety committee?

If your workplace has 20 or more workers, there must be a joint committee. This includes any workplace where there are 20 or more workers employed at the workplace for longer than a month. WorkSafeBC may also order that a joint committee be established in any other workplace.

Where should there be a worker health and safety representative?

If your workplace has more than nine but fewer than 20 workers, there must be a worker health and safety representative. This includes any workplace where there are 10 or more workers employed at the workplace for longer than a month.

If there are fewer than nine employees, your site does not require a worker representative. The employer may establish regular meetings with staff to discuss health and safety concerns, risks, and mitigation strategies.

Resources:

WorkSafeBC - *WCA, Part 2, Division 5*

WorkSafeBC - *OHS Regulation, Part 3*

Reporting and Investigating Incidents and/or Injuries

Employers must investigate and report serious incidents and fatalities to WorkSafeBC and must investigate incidents that cause injury or have the potential to cause serious injury.

First Aid Task Chart

This chart will help you decide the action that must be taken on each type of injury.

First aid incident occurs. Employee reports to first aid attendant or goes to first aid kit, if able. First aid is administered.

Minor Injury	Significant Injury	Serious Incident
What is it? • Small cut or scrap • Injury was minor without the possibility of being more significant	What is it? • Serious injury • Injury requiring medical treatment Minor injury, or no injury	What is it? • Serious injury or death • Incident involves major structural failure • Major release of a hazardous substance • Fire or explosion
What should you do? Report to the employer to ensure any corrective actions can be completed.	What should you do? After you report, an investigation must be completed by the employer Preliminary Investigation must be completed within 48 hours Interim corrective action must be in place during the investigation Full investigation must be completed within 30 days with corrective action steps listed	What should you do? After you report, serious incidents must be investigated by the Employer and WorksafeBC

An employer must immediately notify WorkSafeBC of the occurrence of any accident that:

- Results in serious injury to or the death of a worker
- Involved a major structural failure or collapse of a building, bridge, tower, crane, hoist, temporary construction support system or excavation
- Involves the major release of a hazardous substance
- Involves a fire or explosion that had a potential for causing serious injury
- A preliminary investigation must be completed within 48 hours of the occurrence of the incident that resulted in a worker requiring medical treatment or had the potential for causing serious injury to a worker.

The investigation must:

- Identify any unsafe conditions, acts, or procedures that significantly contributed to the incident
- Determine the corrective action necessary to prevent the reoccurrence of similar incidents, if unsafe conditions, acts, or procedures are identified.

A full investigation to be completed by the employer within 30 days is required for the above occurrences and for any incident requiring medical aid, resulting in a lost-time injury or a near miss that had the potential for significant injury.

An investigation must be carried out by persons knowledgeable about the type of work involved and, if they are reasonably available, with the participation of the employer or a representative of the employer and a worker representative.

Reporting workplace injury or disease

Call the Provincial Workplace Health Call Centre to confidentially report an incident, exposure, or near miss at your facility:

1 (866) 922-9464

Open daily 07:00 – 18:00 PST, if after hours please leave a message.

When they call you back, you are entitled and supported by both the employer and UBC to take clinical time to respond to the workplace call centre, any investigation that results and WorkSafeBC if necessary.

If you would like support from Resident Doctors of BC during an investigation that is your right under the Workers Compensation Act.



Emergency Preparedness and Response

- A workplace must have a written non-medical emergency plan.
- The employer must provide training in the appropriate emergency procedures.
- An employer must ensure a site assessment is conducted.

An emergency may be defined as any situation or occurrence of a serious nature, developing suddenly and unexpectedly, and demanding immediate attention. Examples of non-medical emergencies requiring a preparedness policy and procedure include:

- Fire
- Flood or water leak
- Gas leak
- Power loss
- Equipment failure
- Earthquake
- Violent and aggressive behaviour
- Security breach, such as theft or unauthorized person

The OHS Regulation, Part 4, Section 4.13-4.18 and Section 5.97-5.102 require employers to establish an emergency response plan for response to an emergency that may require rescue or evacuation.

Legislated Requirements

Employer Responsibilities

Employers must establish an emergency response plan appropriate to the hazards of the workplace. The plan must address emergency conditions which may arise from within the workplace and from adjacent workplaces. The plan must be written, and affected workers must be consulted in the development of the plan.

The emergency response plan must include:

- An assessment of the risks posed by hazardous substances from accidental release, fire, or other such emergency.
- An inventory of all hazardous substances at the workplace that may endanger workers in an emergency, such as compressed gases or flammable liquids.
- A schedule to institute drills to test the system.
- Training for all workers in appropriate emergency procedures.

Develop procedures to:

- Notify workers and the first aid attendant of the nature and location of the emergency.
- Spill clean-up and re-entry.
- Rescue and safe evacuation of workers.
- Notify emergency personnel including fire and police.
- Notify adjacent workplaces or residences which may be affected.

Looking for policies for your site: PHC, PHSA and VCH can be found here (<https://shop.healthcarebc.ca/>)

Resources:

WorkSafeBC - [OHS Regulation, Part 4](#)

WorkSafeBC - [OHS Regulation, Part 5](#)

WorkSafeBC - [OHS Regulation, Part 5, Section 5.97-5.102](#)

Government of B.C. - [Prepared BC emergency guides and resources](#)

Radiation Hazards

Radiation is energy that travels through material or space in the form of waves or streams of particles. It is present everywhere in our environment.

In Canada, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission regulates all aspects of nuclear energy, ensuring strict rules are followed for possession, use, packaging, transport, storage, and import and export of nuclear substances to protect the health, safety, and security of Canadians. For healthcare settings, this regulation applies to radioactive substances used in nuclear medicine and radiation therapy.

In B.C., WorkSafeBC also has regulations governing radiation exposure which applies to all sources of ultrasonic energy, non-ionizing and ionizing radiation, including radiation sources governed by the Nuclear Safety and Control Act (Canada). Employers must ensure that a worker's exposure to non-ionizing radiation does not exceed exposure limits as set by applicable Health Canada safety codes.

The OHS Regulation requires employers to develop an Exposure Control Plan with detailed requirements if a worker may exceed a specified action level. There are additional regulatory requirements for employers to:

- Specify that certain radiation equipment is installed, operated, and maintained in accordance with applicable Health Canada safety codes.
- Investigate radiation incidents or overexposures and take corrective actions.
- Establish and implement a quality assurance program and a regular preventative maintenance program for their diagnostic X-ray equipment.
- Ensure that any worker that exceeds or may exceed the action limit is provided with and uses a dosimeter to monitor their personal exposure to ionizing radiation.

Also:

- Owners of radiation equipment must ensure that shielding is adequate to ensure that the maximum exposure limits for ionizing radiation are not exceeded.
- Owners must maintain proper records of radiation surveys and worker exposures.

Resources:

WorkSafeBC - [OHS Regulation, Part 7, Section 7.17-7.25](#)

WorkSafeBC - [Radiation Safety](#)