

AWCBC Safety & Prevention Committee

Jurisdictional Update Template

Jurisdiction: Alberta

Date: May 2023

1. Certification and Incentive Programs

Alberta's Certificate of Recognition (COR) underwent a department led evaluation in 2018. Based on the 2018 evaluation, the department identified seven key recommendations. The department has completed five of the seven recommendations and progress continues on the final two. The status of the recommendations is outlined as follows:

1. Strategic vision/direction for the program to be set by a department-led committee which includes the larger CPs with representation from the smaller CPs.
 - The Strategic Steering Committee (SSC) was established in March 2019. This eight-member committee is comprised of the four largest CPs one CP elected from the remaining smaller CPs, one labour representative, the WCB and the department, which chairs the committee. **[Complete]**
2. The department will focus on program policy and ensuring the system operates as intended. CPs will focus on program delivery ensuring that employers and auditors meet provincial standards.
 - COR program decisions are no longer made by consensus at the CP table. Final decisions are now made by the department with input from the CPs and SSC.
 - A new MOU and reporting metrics for CPs was implemented in 2020. **[Complete]**
3. Discontinue the formal Partners Program.
 - The formal Partners Program involved 65 organizations that worked with the department to set goals around promoting and supporting the COR program. **[Complete]**
4. Automatically recognize International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and Canadian Standards Association (CSA) as equivalent to COR. **[Complete in Oct. 2019]**
5. Transition the Employer Review process from being conducted by the department to a new process to be conducted by the CPs.
6. Replace SECOR with a new simpler program. **[Complete]**
7. Introduce a new enhanced COR that denotes excellence in health and safety.
 - The department is leading an industry working group to develop a new complexity-based and scalable audit (CBSA), which will eventually replace both COR and SECOR audits.

The department established three CP-led working groups to develop the most critical components of the plan. The status of the working groups follows.

- **Complexity Based and Scalable Audit (CBSA)** – the working group is designing a new provincial audit criteria and an audit instrument, with the intent that they will eventually replace the current COR audit instruments, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the audit process.

- **Auditor Qualification, Training and Certification (AQTC)** – the working group is updating standardized requirements for auditor qualifications, training, and certification for all CPs. This will improve consistency by establishing a common set of auditor competencies.
- The working group has developed a competency profile for safety management system auditors
- **COR Harmonization and Measurement** – the working group is developing standard COR metrics for program measurement and looking beyond Alberta’s borders to work towards COR harmonization between the provinces.

2. Sectors and HSAs (Health & Safety Associations)

Alberta Health has entered into discussions with the Continuing Care Safety Association to take on the responsibility as Certifying Partner/Safety Association for sectors that include group homes and facilities which may be seen as a high hazard work environment for staff. Progress has been slow to date however is moving forward.

3. Training

Miyo Pimatisiwin Indigenous health and safety tool-kit

Miyo Pimatisiwin, an Indigenous health and safety tool-kit, provides a comprehensive set of resources to facilitate knowledge by Indigenous employment and training agencies that serve Indigenous clients. The toolkit includes materials for either in person or virtual delivery of relevant OHS information for workers and employers.

Step-by-step speaking notes cover off the rights and responsibilities of work site parties, reporting OHS incidents to employers, supports for workers beyond the workplace and example activities that embed Indigenous teachings to incorporate a story telling approach to the content. The tool kit was released in July 2022.

4. Social Marketing

Nothing to Report

5. Hazard Programming (eg. Psychological, Occ. Exposures, etc.)

Heroes' Fund

- The \$1.5 million per year Heroes' Fund recognizes the sacrifices of first responders who die as a result of performing their duties.
- A one-time, tax-free payment of \$100,000 is provided to eligible families of first responders, including police officers, firefighters, paramedics, sheriffs, and provincial correctional officers.
- Payments administered from the Heroes' Fund are separate from regular workers' compensation fatality benefits.
- The Heroes' Fund supported 14 families in 2022/-23, compared to eleven families in 2021-22.
- The fund pays for fatality benefits in they occurred, however WCB-Alberta's adjudication processes can take time and invoices can be received by the department at a later date. This can result in changes to the previously reported number of families supported.

Supporting Psychological Health in First Responders

- The Supporting Psychological Health in First Responders Grant program provides grants to improve services for first responders who are living with or are at risk of developing post-traumatic stress injuries. Services that the grants support include early intervention and resilience building. The grant program has two streams: Services, which focuses on supporting not-for-profit-- organizations in the delivery of services to first responders; and Applied Research, which supports research to inform prevention of or interventions for post-traumatic stress injuries. The budget for the program is \$1.5 million per year.
- In its third year, 37 applications were received and 11 projects received funding, totaling \$1,509,900.95. This compared to 33 applications received and nine projects receiving funding, totaling \$1,504,149 in the prior year.
- The program will be reviewed in 2023-24 to ensure that the grant program continues to meet Alberta's needs.

6. Strategic Initiatives

Occupational Health and Safety – Prevention Initiative

The OHS Prevention Initiative clarifies priorities of the Alberta OHS system based on evidence and consultation with all players. The initiative supports the use of best practices for an effective OHS system through education campaigns based in user centered design and knowledge translation principles.

The long-term- goals of the initiative are:

- workplaces engage in behavior that supports preventing priority diseases in and outside of their workplace;
- reducing incidents of slips, trips and falls, musculoskeletal disorders injuries and psychosocial disease and injuries;
- system partners increase participation in educational opportunities to prevent priority disease and injury; and
- increasing sharing and partnership of system partners' resources for coordination and alignment.

The initiative focuses on three priority injuries and diseases: musculoskeletal disorders due to repetitive use, overexertion and heavy lifting; slips, trips and falls; and psychosocial hazards, including workplace violence, harassment and mental health. It also focuses on priority workforce types, which include small businesses and vulnerable workers.

Three working groups developed campaign materials to support employers, supervisors and workers to raise awareness of priority areas and provide materials with practical solutions to take action to prevent illness and injury. Campaign materials and information resources include web content, video tutorials and presentations, posters, postcards and bulletins.

Other jurisdictions have requested information on the initiative. Injury statistics in the three priority areas will be analyzed in the coming years to assess the impact and effectiveness of the initiative.

The Prevention Initiative has taken a step to re-evaluate its approach following the development and release of information materials and resources that focused on the three priority areas with varying success. The evaluation of this new approach and engagement methods is planned to occur in 2023-24. An outline of the resources developed for each priority sector is catalogued below.

The re-launch of updated resources that help prevent workplace musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) occurred in December 2022. These resources included:

- a poster that identifies common signs and symptoms of MSDs; and
- postcards that raise awareness about the importance of MSDs and where to find more information.

In May 2022, there was a launch of new resources that help prevent workplace slips, trips and falls. This included the promotion of these resources on GOA social media platforms over a four-week period following release. These resources included:

- four videos promoting slip, trip and fall awareness and safety and simple steps at the workplace to remove or control these hazards; and
- six bulletins that explain actions workers and employers can take when slips, trips or falls are present or situations surrounding slip, trip and fall hazards.

The psychosocial hazards working group developed and released the following resources in September with a similar social media campaign lasting three weeks. Resources included:

- two video presentations to promote awareness of psychosocial hazards in the workplace and how to address them;
- three bulletins that complement the videos and describe in more detail what psychosocial hazards are, outline barriers to dealing with psychosocial hazards in the workplace, and provide more information on hazard assessment and control of psychosocial hazards in the workplace; and
- two posters and one postcard with quick information on psychosocial hazards that can be posted in the workplace or downloaded onto mobile devices.

Engaging new businesses

Contacting newly established businesses provides an opportunity to proactively engage and educate employers on OHS and employment standards requirements and build effective programs. Beginning in 2021-22, the new employer contact program began contacting all newly registered WCB employers by email. The email includes an information package with important OHS and employment standards legislated requirements for new businesses. Employers are invited to contact the OHS Contact Centre if they have questions or need more information. A total of 12,342 emails were delivered to new employers in 2022-23.

New employer contact program		
	2021-22	2022-23
Number of new employers contacted	11,364	12,342

7. Legislation

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Code Review

Changes to the OHS Code came into force on March 31, 2023. An updated and easier-to-understand OHS Code helps employers keep workers healthy and safe and supports Alberta's economy. The changes to the OHS Code align with best practices for health and safety, modern standards and technology, and harmonize Alberta with other Canadian jurisdictions while improving health and safety outcomes. Updates included revisions to improve clarity, reduce duplication, align roles and adopting responsibilities with those in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, harmonize standards with other jurisdictions in Canada, as well as adding new requirements to improve health and safety in eight parts of the OHS Code. As part of the changes, 7,995 regulatory requirements were removed from the OHS Code.

Significant effort has been undertaken to communicate the changes with OHS system stakeholders across Alberta, including issuance of publications on the changes as well as virtual and in person information sessions with stakeholders. Four editions of OHS eNews were published, including a special edition dedicated exclusively to information newsletter subscribers of upcoming changes to the OHS Code. Additionally, stakeholders can still send questions directly to a special monitored email.

Regularly updating the OHS Code allows it to keep pace with changing work practices, evolving technologies, emerging issues and interprovincial trade agreements that support harmonization and labour mobility. It also provides an opportunity to clarify work site party responsibilities and improve health and safety outcomes while enabling innovation, competitiveness and streamlining requirements. A three-year review plan and process was posted online in December 2022. Publishing this plan helps Albertans anticipate changes and understand how to contribute meaningful input. In 2023-24, Part 27: Violence and Harassment, Part 33: Explosives, Part 36: Mining are scheduled for review. As well, technical review for occupational exposure limits in the OHS Code will begin.

8. Other

Searchable Legislation

- In July 2022, Alberta launched a new occupational health and safety legislation tool to give employers and workers an easier way to access information.
- The legislation search tool consolidates the OHS Act, regulation and code into one interactive, online resource, and has been recently updated to reflect the changes made to the OHS Code March 2023.
- The tool enables employers and workers to more efficiently access and apply the health and safety rules that apply to their workplace. A searchable web-based version of the legislation means people can quickly navigate, download, print, copy and share individual or many sections from all three components of OHS legislation in one place. It is designed for use on both computers and mobile devices.
- Since the tool launched in July 2022, there have been over 36,000 users with over 642,000 individual contact events (searches, saves, downloads).