

Human Resources Policy 04 - Occupational Safety and Health

Last updated November 1, 2021

This policy statement covers the safety and health of all employees and workers within the BC Public Service. The policy statement supports the core policy objective of ensuring “the public service promotes a safe and healthy workplace that supports the well-being of employees.”

BC Public Service organizations will create an environment that promotes employee safety and health. Organizations need to plan, operate, and act with employee safety and health in mind.

Each organization will develop, implement and maintain an Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) program.

While each organization’s OSH program will reflect the nature of the workplace and operations, all programs will meet the following requirements:

- All employees will make safety a primary consideration in their workplace activities and decisions;
- The OSH program will meet or exceed the requirements of the Workers Compensation Act, Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, and collective agreements;
- Responsibilities for safety and health will be clearly assigned at each level within the organization;
- Pro-active measures will be taken to identify workplace hazards and risks in order to implement prevention measures and reduce or eliminate associated employee injury or illness;
- Employees will be actively consulted and involved on issues that impact their workplace safety and health; and,
- COVID-19 prevention including proof of vaccination is implemented at all workplaces.

Components of Occupational Safety and Health Program

The following components will be part of each organization’s occupational safety and health program. The size and complexity of the organization’s operations and workplaces will determine the content and amount of detail of each component.

Policy Statement

A policy statement will describe the organization’s commitment to a safe and healthy workplace, and will include principles that seek continual improvement in program performance. The policy statement will describe the key responsibilities of the organization’s executive, supervisors, and employees. The policy will be communicated throughout the organization and regularly reinforced by all levels of management.

Inspections

To prevent accidents and support workplace safety, workplaces will be inspected regularly to identify and correct unsafe conditions or practices.

Assessment of Risks and Hazards

Organizations will identify hazards, assess risks, and implement control measures on a proactive basis (rather than a reactive basis). The measures will vary from simple to complex, depending on the nature of the workplace, work environment, and work processes.

Disclosure or Observation of Impairment

WorkSafeBC's Occupational Health and Safety Regulation requires employees who are impaired for any reason, including but not limited to the use of legal substances, to report the fact they are impaired to their supervisor. Employees must report impairment to their supervisor prior to attending, commencing or continuing work who will then assess the employee's fitness for duty.

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation also prohibits supervisors from assigning employees to activities where a reported or observed impairment may create an undue risk to the worker or anyone else. The employer must not knowingly permit a person to remain at any workplace while the person's ability to work is affected by alcohol, a drug or other substance so as to endanger the person or anyone else.

Incident Reporting and Investigation

Unsafe working conditions must be identified before they result in an accident or injury. Employees need to be aware that they are responsible for reporting unsafe conditions and hazards.

The primary goal is to prevent accidents from occurring. However, if an accident or incident does occur, the manager must ensure it is investigated to determine the underlying causes and to take corrective action.

Written Safe Work Procedures

Written safe work procedures will be available to all employees in the BC Public Service. These procedures will cover the proper operation of machinery and equipment and any other work processes or operations that could present a hazard if they are not followed.

Education and Training

All managers will ensure that their employees receive an orientation on the organization's

occupational safety and health program and workplace specific safe work practices. In addition, education and training will be provided to ensure that employees know the working procedures for doing their job safely. On-going safety training will be provided as new programs, procedures, and equipment are introduced to the workplace.

Joint Occupational Safety and Health (JOSH) Committees

Joint occupational safety and health committees will be established consistent with the provisions of the collective agreements, Workers Compensation Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. The committees will actively promote workplace safety and support the involvement of employees in workplace occupational safety and health programs.

Monitoring and Control of Hazardous Materials and Substances

Organizations will monitor, control, and ensure the safe use, storage and disposal of hazardous materials and substances, consistent with the requirements of Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) regulations.

Exposure Control

Organizations will determine if there is a risk of occupational exposure to hazardous or bio-hazardous substances, including blood borne pathogens, at the workplace. For those employees at risk of exposure, organizations must develop an exposure control plan and where required, a health monitoring plan appropriate to the risks.

COVID 19 Prevention

COVID 19 is a communicable disease that can be transmitted in the workplace. COVID-19 vaccinations provide the most effective way to safeguard employee health and reduce the risk of transmission. Effective December 13, 2021 all parties entering a staff-only area of an indoor public service workplace while public service staff are present, for any purpose other than receiving a direct ministry service for public or clients, must provide proof of full vaccination for COVID-19 before entering the staff-only area.

Organizations, workplaces, and staff must confirm proof of full vaccination for any party that they are responsible for, allow or otherwise invite or direct into a staff only area of an indoor workplace. This requirement includes, but is not limited to contractors, statutory appointees, meeting attendees, interns, students, staff from other employers and visitors. For further information see [HR Policy #25 – COVID-19 Vaccinations](#).

Emergency Planning and Response

Organization worksites need to plan for emergencies that might occur, including having a plan of action for response and evacuation of the workplace.

In most cases, the plans will include response to a fire, but may also include, based on a risk assessment, response to power failures, threats (including bomb threats), earthquake, flooding, or spills of hazardous chemicals.

Occupational First Aid

Organizations will ensure that first aid services are available and consistent with the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, which requires that employees be provided with prompt, easily accessible, and appropriate first aid treatment.

Maintenance of Records and Statistics

Records and statistics of occupational safety and health activity will be maintained by organizations, including records of safe work procedures, safety training, inspections, and investigation reports. These records and statistics will assist in identifying trends, unusual conditions, and problem areas, and play an important role in identifying the underlying causes of workplace injuries and occupational diseases.

OSH Management Practice and Program Review

Regular workplace management meetings will be held to review safety and health activities, including the results of risk assessments, inspections, and investigations. Management will also undertake regular meetings and communications with employees and with the joint occupational safety and health committee on safety issues or concerns that may arise.

Organizations will regularly review their occupational safety and health program. The review schedule will be based on program needs as well as the complexity of the operating environment. Reviews should measure program effectiveness, assess performance against targets, identify opportunities for improvement, and recognize successes and individual contributions.

Workplace Violence

The government is committed to the prevention of workplace violence by:

1. Ensuring that a risk assessment is performed in any situation where there is a risk of violence to an employee in the course of their employment.
2. Having procedures and policies in place to eliminate or minimize the risk of violence to employees.

3. Ensuring that any employee or manager who is facing an actual or potential workplace violence issue has the required resources, information and training to deal with the incident.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can affect an employee inside or outside the workplace. If there is a risk of domestic violence occurring at the workplace, all managers/supervisors must initiate violence prevention protocols to eliminate or reduce the risk. If the domestic violence is outside of the workplace and there is no threat to the employee at work, the employer will provide education, training and advice to help the employee, managers, and supervisors.

Other OSH Program Components

At a minimum, occupational safety and health programs also need to cover the following topics:

- Ergonomics,
- Working alone, and
- Indoor air quality.

Additional topics may need to be covered depending on the type of work being performed, the related hazards, and the specific requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.