

Fatal and Serious Incidents



Employers'
Advisers Office

The [Employers' Advisers Office](#) provides advice, assistance, representation, and educational services on all aspects of the workers' compensation system.

Serious or Fatal Injury Information Sheet

For further detailed information refer to WorkSafeBC Guideline G-P2-68-1
Contact WorkSafeBC to report a fatality or serious injury or incident.

Toll-free: 1.888.621.7233 (1.888.621.SAFE) (Canada)

Hours of operation: 7 days a week, 24 hours a day

What types of incidents must be reported immediately?

You must **immediately** phone to report the following types of incidents to the WorkSafeBC's emergency and accident line whether there is an injury or not:

- Any incident that kills, causes risk of death, or seriously injures a worker
- Any blasting accident that results in injury
- Any unusual event involving explosives
- A diving incident that causes death, injury, or decompression sickness requiring treatment
- A major leak or release of a hazardous substance
- A major structural failure or collapse of a building, bridge, tower, crane, hoist, temporary construction support system or excavation
- Any serious mishap
- A fire or explosion that has a potential for causing serious injury to a worker

Is there a requirement to protect the incident scene?

Unless directed by a WorkSafeBC officer or a peace officer, no one must disturb the scene of a reportable accident except to:

- attend to persons injured or killed
- prevent further injuries or death
- protect property that is endangered as a result of the accident

Critical Incident Response (CIR)

WorkSafeBC assistance

WorkSafeBC coordinates critical incident interventions for work-related traumatic events. If your workplace has experienced a critical incident and you would like support or information about the service, please page the **CIR Program at 1 888 922-3700** between 9 a.m. and 11 p.m., seven days a week.

What is a critical incident?

A workplace critical incident is an event — like an injury, fatality, or robbery — that causes emotional or psychological trauma in people who are directly, or sometimes indirectly, exposed to the incident. It is a sudden, unexpected event outside the range of normal experience.

Reactions to highly stressful events can include:

- Feeling jumpy, anxious, moody, or irritable
- Having difficulty concentrating, making decisions, or thinking clearly
- Having trouble going near the accident scene, or to places that trigger memories of the accident of incident
- Having trouble being around people
- Having difficulty being alone
- Sleep disturbance/nightmares

These reactions are normal responses to stressful or abnormal events. Workers' feelings about their jobs and the workplace can be seriously affected, and the whole workplace may suffer, after a critical incident. Effects may include poor morale, decreased productivity, increased accidents and sick time, higher disability claims, and greater staff turnover.

WorkSafeBC's role

When the CIR Program receives a report of a critical incident, the WorkSafeBC program, in conjunction with the employer and/or worker(s) involved, will determine if an intervention is needed and appropriate.

Intervention

An intervention is a structured, short-term individual or group process that ideally occurs within **24 to 72 hours** of the event but can be accessed up to three weeks after the incident as well. Participation is always voluntary. The purpose is to focus on the well-being of the individual(s), not to find the cause of the incident or to assign blame. Intervention services are provided by a qualified mental health professional, ideally located in the employer's or worker's community. Providers are registered counsellors, social workers, and psychologists who have specialized training to work with people who have been through traumatic incidents, but they can work with existing internal peer support programs.

Employer's role in critical incidents

Employers can effectively manage critical incidents with clear policies and procedures that are humane, sensitive, and responsive to workers. Intervention procedures may reduce the intense reactions of workers to an incident and assist them in returning to their duties. Types of interventions that could be held include:

Defusing session

Held **within 6 to 8 hours** of the incident, a defusing session is a brief confidential, non-judgmental group meeting of workers affected by the incident. It is critical to have experienced people specially trained to conduct a defusing session; this can include trained peers. The defuser explains the physical, emotional and mental reactions that workers may be experiencing, and how to take care of their emotional and physical health.

Debriefing session

A debriefing session is ideally held **within 24 to 72** hours after an incident. It is a confidential, non-judgmental discussion of the continuing effects of a traumatic incident on workers. The purpose of this session is to alleviate the trauma of affected workers, and to assist in the recovery process. Debriefing focuses on the emotional well being of workers – it does not attempt to find the cause of the accident or assign blame. Sessions should be led by trained professionals and participation voluntary.

Critiquing session

A critiquing session is held **a few weeks after** the incident. Employers, supervisors, and workers review all aspects of the incident to uncover deficiencies in the handling of the incident, and provide corrective solutions. The session looks at how the incident was handled, how it could have been handled better, how it could have been prevented, and the effectiveness of the intervention. Related company policies, safety regulations, safe work procedures are also reviewed.

Corporate review

Within **30 days of an incident**, an employer conducts a broad review of all steps taken in response to the incident, including:

- First aid
- Emergency procedures
- Critical incident debriefing
- Incident investigation
- Corrective responses
- Claims management

The purpose of a corporate review is to assess the effectiveness of company's procedures, how the company responded, and suggest other corrective steps that should be put in place. This does not replace an incident investigation.

Employers' Advisers have expertise in all areas of workers' compensation. If you have questions about claims, assessments or anything related to workplace occupational health and safety, give our toll-free number a call and speak to one of our duty advisers. We are independent from WorkSafeBC, no-cost and all calls are confidential.

Call us: **1-800-925-2233** or Email us: EAO@eao-bc.org