



Province of British Columbia

PECC/PREOC Deployment Support Annex

**The Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC)
and
Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centres
(PREOCs)**

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Purpose

The purpose of the Worker Care Support Annex is to outline the health and safety policies and procedures for personnel working in the Provincial Regional Emergency Operation Centre (PREOC) and the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC).

This Annex outlines how Emergency Management BC (EMBC) maximizes the effectiveness of PECC and PREOC personnel while supporting their health and safety and ensuring the general duties of employers, workers and supervisors as outlined in the *Workers Compensation Act* are fulfilled.

Exemptions

Due to the nature of emergencies, there may be extreme circumstances when resources are limited and exemptions to these policies and procedures are required. When life and property are imminently threatened and personnel resources within the PECC or PREOC cannot be further augmented to support response activities, the Director of the PECC or PREOC may supersede these policies. The PECC Director must be notified of any exemption to these policies and procedures.

Critical Safety Statement:

Workers will get sufficient rest in order to minimize fatigue, facilitate sound decision making, prevent unnecessary injuries and accidents and reduce risk

Scope

This Annex is intended for EMBC staff, Temporary Emergency Assignment Management System (TEAMS) members and EMBC volunteers who are deployed to and working in a PREOC or the PECC. Agency representatives and contractors working in the PECC or PREOC are encouraged to follow these policies and procedures where possible, taking into consideration any conflict with their individual agency worker care guidelines.

Worker health and safety outside the PREOC or PECC work environment and WorkSafe BC procedures regarding injuries on the workplace are out of scope. While they may be referred to in the document, worker care issues that are generic to any workplace and not unique to a PREOC or the PECC are out of scope and are not addressed in detail. This guide is not intended to replace or supersede any other relevant occupational health and safety regulations.

Authorities

- WorkSafeBC Occupational Health and Safety Regulation
- BC Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU) Collective Agreement
- BCGEU Master Agreement
- Core Policy and Procedure Manual
- EMBC Policy

Guidelines and Policy

Roles and Responsibilities

Worker safety and health are a shared responsibility. All workers should be mindful and attentive to their own health and safety as well as that of their co-workers and guests to the workplace.

All Workers

Workers within the PREOC or PECC are expected to:

- Work in a respectful manner;
- Work safely and maintain a safe worksite;
- Comply with Occupational Health and Safety policies and regulations;
- Report hazardous or unsafe work practices;
- Correct and report unsafe conditions to supervisor; and
- Work within the parameters of their training and capability.

**Workers have a responsibility
for self-awareness**

Workers within the PREOC and PECC are encouraged to:

- Practice stress-reduction techniques and self-care;
- Take meals and breaks away from their workstation; and
- Support their co-workers.

Workers should be aware of their own need for rest and regularly check in as well as monitor their fellow co-workers to ensure that everyone is watching for signs of fatigue. According to the BC Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, all workers have the right and responsibility to refuse work if they believe their health or safety is at risk.

The British Columbia Disaster Worker Care Committee with support from the Emergency Social Services program of EMBC developed some general tips for worker self-care while on shift:

- Know when your shifts end and start;
- Know who is responsible for worker care;
- Know who is the designated First Aid Attendant;
- Know building evacuation procedures;
- Check in with yourself several times during your shift (How are you doing? What do you need?);
- Take 5 minutes alone or with a colleague;
- Drink water;
- Eat healthy;
- Address issues when they arise;
- Ask for help if you need it; and
- Ensure your work space is ergonomic.

Proper rest and nourishment are crucial to being able to work effectively in high-stress environments. The British Columbia Disaster Worker Care Committee also developed some general tips for self-care while off shift:

- Get together with friends or family;

- Get some rest;
- Get some exercise;
- Eat a healthy diet;
- Do something that is relaxing for you; and
- Maintain as normal a routine as possible.

Supervisors

Personnel with supervisory roles within the PECC or PREOC include management, section chiefs, branch coordinators and unit leaders, among others. These supervisors are responsible for the safety and health of the personnel reporting to them and should:

- Immediately document and address potential risks or issues that arise;
- Be attentive to potential hazards, including worker fatigue and stress, identify the level of risk they pose and implement mitigation strategies where possible;
- Monitor workers for signs of fatigue, impairment and/or compromised performance by checking with them individually;
- Schedule days of rest or time off work¹ for workers who exhibit signs of fatigue; and
- Report any concerns regarding the health and safety of their workers to the Deputy Director.

Logistics Section Chief

The Logistics Section Chief is responsible for managing staff deployments through the Personnel Unit including:

- Monitoring staff schedules;
- Tracking worker travel;²
- In conjunction with the Risk Management Officer:
 - Completing the Occupational Health and Safety Orientation for incoming personnel;
 - Establishing reasonable shift schedules;
 - Providing safe accommodations for those arriving from outside the area; and
- Ensuring that staff check in and check out on a daily basis.

All supervisors are responsible for monitoring the mental and physical fatigue levels of their personnel.

Risk Management Officer

The Risk Management Officer, when the position is filled, will monitor emergency operations centre activities and liaise with the Personnel Unit in Logistics to ensure that all necessary procedures are being followed to support good worker care practices, including:

- Ensuring appropriate measures are in place to monitor and respond to the health and safety needs of all PREOC or PECC personnel, on and off the site;
- Monitoring and advising on safety issues;
- Halting or modifying any and all unsafe operations within the jurisdiction of the PREOC or PECC;
- Ensuring that good risk management practices are applied throughout the PREOC or PECC; and that every function contributes to the management of risk;

¹ For the purposes of this annex, a day(s) of rest or time off work is defined as day(s) totally removed from work and standby requirements and includes weekends, paid leave, leave without pay, compensatory time off (CTO) or modified days (lieu/flex)

² The Logistics Chief in a PREOC or the PECC is responsible for any “outbound” deployments. For example, when a worker is deployed from the PECC to the Central PREOC, the PECC Logistics Chief is responsible until the worker checks in with the Central PREOC. Should the worker be deployed out from the Central PREOC then the Logistics Section Chief within the Central PREOC will remain responsible until the worker checks in at the next location.

- Maintaining adequate rest periods;
- Reporting any health and safety concerns to the PECC or PREOC Deputy Director; and
- Providing support and advice to counterparts at Emergency Operation Centres (EOC).

When the Risk Management Officer position is not filled, this function is the responsibility of the Deputy Director.

Deputy Director

The Deputy Director is responsible for monitoring overall worker safety and health in the PREOC or PECC. Often the responsibility for worker care is delegated to the Risk Management Officer. The Deputy Director is responsible for:

- Ensuring risk management principles and procedures are applied to all PREOC or PECC activities;
- Maintaining open communication with section chiefs regarding staffing and determining shift lengths. If shifts are required beyond the policy allowance, the Director authorizes the exemption(s);
- Obtaining exemptions from the worker care policies and procedures described in this Annex from the Director; and
- Ensuring that the PECC Director has been informed of all approved exemptions.

PECC Director

The PECC Director must be notified of any exemptions to these policies and procedures that are authorized by a PREOC Director.

Deployment – All phases

Travel Management

Workers should check in/out with the PECC or PREOC in order to convey their travel status. This should occur prior to going to or leaving from a deployment or leaving the PECC or PREOC to travel to other facilities while under deployment. If the PECC or PREOC is not activated, EMBC staff and TEAMS members should check in with the Duty Manager to ensure that EMBC is aware of their travel status. Travel status includes expected departure and arrival locations and times and the method(s) of travel. Any travel delays must also be reported as they can impact on deployment length and shift lengths.

Safety Incident Reporting

If an incident involving worker injury or involving a threat to worker safety does occur during deployment the affected worker should report the incident to both the worker's supervisor (Section Chief) within the PREOC or PECC and their regular workplace supervisor. This is necessary in case the injury affects the employee beyond the deployment. Any injury suffered at the PECC or PREOC is reportable through WorkSafe BC if it requires immediate treatment or may require treatment in the future. In addition, reporting of preventable injuries allows management to address safety concerns. If an injury or disabling occupational disease occurs, the regular procedures required by WorkSafe BC must be followed.

Deployment – Activation Phase

Considerations by the individual prior to assignment to the PECC or PREOC include:

- Personal health,
- Transportation to and from the workplace,
- Child care,

- Elder care, care for other dependent adults,
- Pet care,
- Ability to respond to home emergencies, and
- Coverage for or reassignment of regular job responsibilities.

All PREOC or PECC workers should meet established rest requirements before returning to assigned duties.

Deployment Length

The length of deployment for EMBC staff and TEAMS members will generally be 7- 10 days. This deployment length is considered to be optimum, as it provides for consistency and sustainability of operations, while supporting good worker care practices. The first day of travel is considered the start of the deployment.

There are several factors that determine the length of the deployment, such as when the worker last had his or her scheduled days off and if the worker is required to return to their regular position within a certain timeframe. Also the level of activity and stage of the emergency can factor into the deployment length. The worker should determine deployment length through discussions with his or her regular supervisor and the PECC or PREOC Logistics section that is responsible for arranging the worker’s deployment. Workers should have two days of rest prior to returning to their regular job for standard or maximum deployment lengths (see below). The policy on length of deployment should be noted in advance of deployment by both the worker and his or her regular supervisor.

Maximum days of deployment will be reduced by any regular work days worked directly prior to being deployed. The following examples assume the worker has had scheduled days off immediately prior to deployment.

Standard Deployment Example:

The standard deployment is generally 7-10 days including travel days:

- Day 1: Travel to site and work a shift if appropriate. Travel and work must not exceed 14 hours.
- Day 2 – 9: Work shifts according to PECC or PREOC schedule
- Day 10: Work a shift if appropriate and travel home. Travel and work combined must not exceed 12 hours.³

Workers should return to their regular location following a 7 – 10 day deployment and not be recalled for deployment for a minimum of two days.

³ There may be acceptable situations when the worker can comfortably travel to the facility and begin working on the same day or where they can work their last day and fly home that evening.

Maximum Deployment Example

A maximum deployment of 14 days may be authorized by the PECC or PREOC Director with the appropriate rest days or time off as required.

- Day 1: Travel to site and work a shift if appropriate. Travel and work must not exceed 14 hours.
- Day 2 – 7: Work shifts according to PECC or PREOC schedule
- Day 8: Rest day (if required)⁴
- Day 9 – 13: Work shifts according to PECC or PREOC schedule
- Day 14: Work a shift if appropriate and travel home. Travel and work combined must not exceed 12 hours.⁵

Workers should return to their regular location following a 14 day deployment and should not be recalled for deployment for a minimum of 7 days.

Personnel Orientation

Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) information must be provided to all new PECC or PREOC personnel as part of their initiation orientation. All (new and returning) workers will participate in a health, safety and facility orientation upon arrival at the PREOC or PECC. This orientation should include:

- Sign-in/out procedures,
- Instruction on this Annex and the responsibilities of the worker for self-care,
- Personal safety,
- Critical incident and cumulative stress management,
- Access to first aid, and
- Facility emergency preparedness procedures.

Orientation for young and new workers is guided by *Occupational Safety and Health Regulation 3.23*. New or young workers arriving in the PREOC or PECC will receive a health and safety orientation specific to their workplace needs.

The Logistics Personnel Unit will coordinate with the Deputy Director and the Risk Management Officer to ensure that all workers receive an orientation, badging or identification and a safety briefing upon check-in.

Personnel working in a PREOC or PECC should, upon arrival, inform the Director of any health conditions, or medications they are taking that could impact their work and safety in the PREOC or PECC.

⁴ This may be a rest in place day, that is, a day totally removed from work and standby requirements taken in the geographic location of the deployment

⁵ See footnote #2

Deployment – Operations Phase

Shift Length

Shift length is a key factor in cumulative fatigue. For that reason, the Logistics staff responsible for developing the PECC or PREOC daily organisation chart must consider the following when determining staffing schedules for workers (includes travel time where applicable):

- Day 1 – 4: Maximum shift length is 14 hours
- Day 5 – 14: Maximum shift length is 12 hours

Shift lengths may be less, but should not exceed these maximums unless authorized by the PECC or PREOC Director. Staff scheduling should ensure that workers can balance their shift lengths. For example, if a shift length is longer than the maximum allowance due to extraordinary circumstances the worker should be assigned a shorter shift the following day. Ongoing self assessment of fatigue levels should be conducted by workers throughout their deployment. As well, the PECC or PREOC Deputy Director has a responsibility, with assistance from all supervisors, to monitor the fatigue levels of staff and assign shift lengths accordingly.

The following work/rest ratios are established to ensure good worker care practices. Any exemptions to these due to exceptional circumstances should be authorized in advance by the PECC or PREOC Director.

- 1) Meal/rest breaks (30 minutes to 1 hour) should be taken away from the work station once every 5 hours to ensure fatigue is minimized. Workers should be encouraged to get some fresh air and exercise during breaks, whenever possible.
- 2) All workers must get a complete 8 hour period of rest between the end of one shift and the start of another shift.

There may also be situations during the deployment where the PECC or PREOC Deputy Director or the worker identifies the need for time off. Workers have a responsibility for self-awareness and should identify to their supervisor if they feel they require a rest day or time off. It is also the responsibility of the Deputy Director to monitor the physical and mental conditions of workers and ensure that fatigued or stressed personnel are provided with support and appropriate rest periods or time off.

Communication with Family Members

During extended PECC or PREOC operations, workers should be provided with the time and means to check in and keep up communication with their family members. Workers who are assured that their families are cared for are better able to focus their attention on their emergency management duties.

Deployment – Demobilization Phase

Before a worker finishes his or her final shift at the PREOC or PECC an exit interview should be conducted. The worker may be interviewed by one of the following: the Section Chief, the Risk Management Officer or the Deputy Director. The Director is responsible for ensuring an exit interview is conducted with all PREOC or PECC workers where possible. At a minimum each departing worker should complete an exit survey, however, any departing worker who shows signs of fatigue or undue stress should undergo an exit interview.

Critical Incident Stress

A worker may indicate they have a need for critical incident stress debriefing either during the operational phase or during the exit interview at demobilization. Critical incidents are defined as “any

type of situation which causes workers to experience emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the time or later.” Critical incident stress is defined as the “emotional, physical, behavioural and cognitive reactions to a critical incident.” It is the PECC or PREOC Director’s responsibility to ensure that workers have access to appropriate critical incident stress debriefing.

Travel

If the worker intends to drive home after their last shift, the interviewer must determine at the exit interview whether this is appropriate based on the level of fatigue and/or stress the worker is exhibiting. The interviewer should arrange either alternate transportation or a night’s accommodation in the vicinity of the facility in order to ensure the worker arrives home safely.

Related Resources

Self-Assessment <http://ess.bc.ca/pubs/SelfAssessmentbrochure.pdf>

Stress Tips <http://ess.bc.ca/pubs/stresstip.pdf>

Manual for Maximizing Stress Resilience <http://ess.bc.ca/pubs/MaxStressManual.pdf>

Appendix A – Authorization for Exemptions to the PECC/PREOC Deployment Policies and Procedures

(To be completed by the Supervisor)

Event/Incident: _____ Task#: _____

Region: _____ Date: _____

Worker Name: _____ Position: _____

Exemption to be authorized:

Reason for exemption:

Beginning date: _____ Ending date: _____

Authorization requested by:

Name: _____ Position: _____

=====

Authorization:

Name: _____ Position: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Process for completion:

1. Supervisor must complete and sign this form after consultation with worker
2. Director must sign approve and sign form
 - a. If exemption is occurring at the PREOC level, Director must ensure that the PECC Director is informed of this authorization
3. Logistics Personnel Unit must copy form:
 - a. Original to be kept with Logistics documentation; and
 - b. Copy to be attached to Daily Sign In Sheet at the beginning date for the exemption.

Appendix B – Exit Survey/Interview Checklist

Topics that should be included in the exit survey and interviews addressing worker care:

- Pre-deployment organisation
 - Were you current with training, policies and procedures and prepared for deployment?
 - Were the arrangements for your deployment well organised?
- Site orientation
 - Did you receive adequate orientation to the facility to which you were assigned?
- Position orientation
 - Did you receive adequate orientation to your assigned position?
- Site safety/risk management
 - Did you encounter any safety and/or risk issues and if so:
 - Were they reported?
 - Were they acted upon?
- Supervision
 - Were you adequately supervised in your position?
 - Were you adequately supported in your position?
- Realistic demands
 - Were the demands of your position/function realistic?
 - Were the timelines given to complete tasks realistic?
- Sufficient staffing
 - With respect to your section, was staffing appropriate?
- Adequate breaks/rest periods
 - Were you encouraged to take adequate breaks and down time?
 - Did you take adequate breaks and down time?
- Stress management activities
 - Were you encouraged to manage stress through physical and other activities?
 - Did you participate in stress management activities?
- Food and refreshment services
 - Were these services adequate?
 - Were any special diet requirements addressed satisfactorily?
 - Did the food and beverage services promote healthy choices?
 - Were there sufficient food and beverage services for the shift lengths and the number of personnel in attendance?
 - Did the food and refreshment services follow FoodSafe guidelines?
- Work environment
 - Was the facility satisfactory?
 - Work space
 - Washroom facilities
 - Quiet rooms/activity rooms available when on breaks or off shift
 - Noise levels
 - Air temperature and quality
 - Cleanliness
- Hotel accommodations
 - Was your hotel accommodation adequate?
 - Within reasonable distance of the emergency operations centre
 - Well maintained
 - Secure
 - Fire exits clearly marked and smoke alarm in the room