Emergency response planning: an occupational health and safety toolkit

Alberta

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This material is current to September 2025. The law is constantly changing with new legislation, amendments to existing legislation, and decisions from the courts. It is important that you keep yourself informed of the current law.

This resource is for general information only and may be applicable to assist in establishing compliant emergency response planning at your work site. However, it is critical that you evaluate your own unique circumstances to ensure that appropriate emergency response plans are established for your work site. It is strongly recommended that you consult relevant professionals (e.g. lawyers, health and safety professionals and specialists) to assist in the development of your emergency response plans.

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Introduction

Emergency response plans are a vital part of any workplace.

A strong, well-rehearsed emergency response plan can help minimize the stress related to making critical decisions on the spot. It provides an element of control in potentially chaotic circumstances.

In developing an emergency response plan, an employer and affected workers identify all emergency situations that could reasonably occur at the work site, and figure out how to respond to each. The plan documents the response procedures; the designated emergency responders and the training they need; and equipment, supply, and facility requirements.

There's more than one way to develop an emergency response plan. This tool kit provides a step-by-step approach, along with templates that can help complete the process. You'll need to customize both to ensure your plan is effective for your operations.

To help get you started, a sample emergency response plan is completed in steps 2 through 7 of the tool kit. Because every business is unique, the specifics in the sample won't necessarily apply to yours. Rather, the sample is meant to illustrate the process. Use the sample as a guide, and make any necessary adjustments, as you develop your custom plan.

Why you need a plan

All industries have risks

There are inherent risks in every industry and at every work site. You may deal with the public, work alone, or be open 24 hours a day. You may be in a remote location or a crowded urban area.

Emergency preparations must go beyond knowing how to evacuate in the event of a fire. You need to have an emergency response plan in place to prepare for both internal and external emergencies at your work site.

You never know when you might need it

Emergencies often occur with little or no warning.

An emergency response plan provides a step-by-step, clear-headed response in times of potential fear and panic. It puts you in control of a situation that might otherwise quickly spiral out of control.

Having a plan, and following it, can save lives, prevent or reduce injuries, and protect property and business operations. It is an important tool for keeping workers and others at the work site safe.

It's the law

The workplace must be a healthy and safe environment for everyone at the work site at all times, even during an emergency. **That's why Alberta's occupational health and safety laws require all work sites to have an emergency response plan.** Some requirements are very specific: Part 7 of the Occupational Health and Safety Code for instance sets out employer obligations related to emergencies that require rescue and evacuation, and Part 11 of the code states the rules that apply to first aid.

An employer must establish an emergency response plan for responding to an emergency that may require rescue or evacuation.

Occupational Health and Safety Code, Part 7, Section 115(1)

Part 11 of the Occupational Health and Safety Code includes requirements for workplace first aid training, services, supplies, equipment, facilities, emergency transportation, and illness and injury reporting and records. Consult this part of the code to make sure you meet all applicable workplace first aid requirements.

As well, an employer's general duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of persons at or near the work site includes doing what is reasonably practicable to be prepared for emergencies.

Every employer shall ensure, as far as it is reasonably practicable for the employer to do so, the health, safety and welfare of

(i) workers engaged in the work of that employer,

(ii) those workers not engaged in the work of that employer but present at the work site at which that work is being carried out, and

(iii) other persons at or in the vicinity of the work site whose health and safety may be materially affected by identifiable and controllable hazards originating from the work site,

***Occupational Health and Safety Act*, Part 1, Section 3(1)(a)**

Note also that on work sites with multiple employers, health and safety responsibilities – including emergency response planning – will be either shared among the employers or led by a designated prime contractor. For more information, see *Prime contractor role and duties* in *Additional resources* on page 44.

How to develop an emergency response plan

This tool kit outlines a step-by-step approach to developing and implementing an emergency response plan for your organization. Steps 2 through 7 take you through each part of the emergency response plan template, using examples to connect the process to the document. Additional templates that can help with planning are also provided. (The **customizable templates** are available online at ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp040tmp.)

Here are the basic steps:

Get organized

1. **Establish** your team

Develop the plan

2. **Identify** all potential emergencies
3. **List** emergency equipment, supplies and facilities
4. **Document** your emergency communication requirements
5. **Determine** rescue and evacuation procedures
6. **Figure out** response procedures for each emergency
7. **Assign** specific tasks

Implement the plan

8. **Train** the emergency response team
9. **Communicate** the plan and procedures to all workers
10. **Practice** drills
11. **Update** your plan and **repeat**

Adjust your approach as needed for your workplace. Just make sure your emergency response plan addresses all of the elements required by occupational health and safety law.

Part 7 requirements in the Occupational Health and Safety Code apply specifically to emergencies that potentially require rescue or evacuation.

An emergency response plan must include the following:

(a) the identification of potential emergencies;

(b) procedures for dealing with the identified emergencies;

(c) the identification of, location of and operational procedures for emergency equipment and personal protective equipment;

(d) the emergency response training requirements;

(e) the location and use of emergency facilities;

(f) the fire protection requirements;

(g) the alarm and emergency communication requirements;

(h) the first aid services required;

(i) procedures for rescue and evacuation;

(j) the designated rescue and evacuation workers.

Occupational Health and Safety Code, Part 7, Section 116

And note that it's reasonably practicable for an employer to have a plan in place to address other emergencies – for example, when procedures such as shelter-in-place or run-hide-fight are required.

Setting up your plan

As you work through the planning process, keep in mind that the information you gather in **steps 2 through 5** may apply to all the potential emergencies you and your workers identify. If so, it can form the front end of your emergency response plan. The detailed procedures you record in **step 6** for each emergency situation can follow, listed alphabetically for easy reference.

Remember that you can find this tool kit's **customizable template package** online at ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp040tmp.

Only a custom plan will do

Your plan must reflect your specific situation.

location

building structure

layout/ floor plan

type of operation

Even within the same organization, **there is no one-size-fits-all formula to emergency response planning.** Different kinds of emergencies require different responses.

evacuate

lockdown

shelter-in-place

Get organized

STEP 1: Establish your team

Identify and invite individuals to be involved in developing the plan. A good mix of people will provide a broad range of perspectives and insight.

Managers and supervisors have the authority to assign any necessary resources (i.e. time and money) to the project. Management also has high-level knowledge of the organization, insight into individual worker skill sets, and expertise related to the industry at large.

You must involve **affected workers** in emergency response planning. This could include scheduling a formal meeting, inviting comments during a walk-through, or asking workers to review a draft of the plan for feedback. If applicable, include workers representing various departments and different shifts. The nature of the involvement will depend on the nature of your work site and activities, but it must be meaningful.

An employer must involve affected workers in establishing the emergency response plan.

Occupational Health and Safety Code, Part 7, Section 115(2)

If your work site has a **joint health and safety committee or health and safety representative,** their knowledge of the organization's health and safety culture, resources, hazard control measures, and inspection records may make them a valuable resource.

Generally speaking, employers with 20 or more regularly employed workers must establish a health and safety committee. Those with five to 19 regularly employed workers must designate a health and safety representative. For more information, see *Additional resources* (Health and safety committees and representatives) on page 43.

If your organization has a **property management** company, engage them in the development of your emergency response plan. They likely have extensive knowledge about the building and related infrastructure, and can answer technical questions that others on site may not know. Depending on the type of building and work areas, they may also have emergency responsibilities under the National Fire Code (2023 Alberta Edition).

Local first responder departments such as **fire, police and emergency medical services** may have information that could help in the development of your plan. Consider working with them, and with your **local municipality.**

Emergency planning team list (template)

This is one example of a planning team list. **If you choose to use this template, make sure you customize it to your work and work site.**

Management

Name	Department	Position

Health and safety committee members or representative

Name	Position

Workers

Name	Position	Shift

Property management company

Contact name	Phone number

Fire | Police | EMS

Name	Phone number

Municipality

Name	Department	Phone number

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Develop the plan

STEP 2: Identify all potential emergencies

Emergencies can generally be grouped into **four main categories**. Consider all four as you make your list of potential emergency situations. Here are some examples:

Site/location-based

structural failure

power outage

gas leak/shut-off

carbon monoxide

fire

explosion

water main break/leak/ shut-off

mechanical failure

crash (plane, train, vehicle)

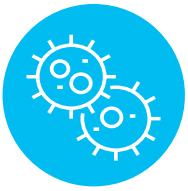
wildlife

Biological/chemical/medical

chemical exposure

drug exposure

biohazard cleanup


disease/pandemic

heat/cold exposure

heart attack/stroke

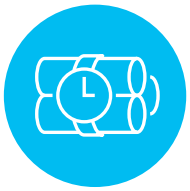
slip, trip, fall

mental health

drowning

finding a body

Workplace violence


bomb threat

suspicious package

robbery

active assailant

riots/civil unrest

aggressive behaviour/threats

physical assault

sexual assault

domestic assault

kidnapping

Extreme weather/natural disasters

tornado

wind storm

snow/ice storm

hail storm

flood

earthquake

landslide/avalanche

wildfire

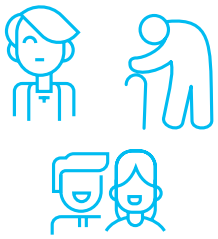
What kinds of emergencies could affect you?

This is the "What if?" stage of emergency response planning. Think about worst case scenarios. Don't get ahead of yourself by trying to figure out how to manage the emergencies. What you want from this step is a complete list of emergencies that could realistically happen at your work site.

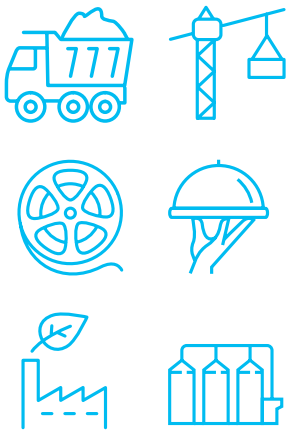
To help ensure your list is complete, consider factors specific to your operations. Draw upon what you already know, and think about both your work site and its surroundings. The examples below can help you get started.

Hazard assessments

Worker and customer demographics

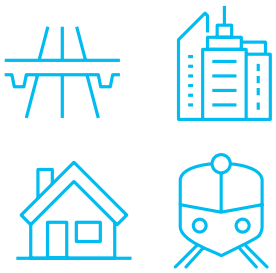


Industry-specific resources

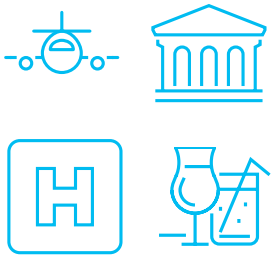


Local environment

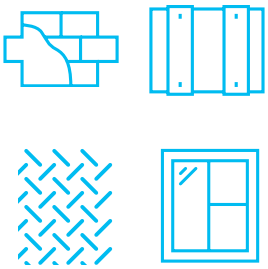
Nearby buildings and infrastructure



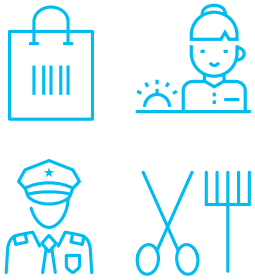
Neighbours



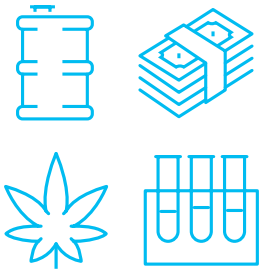
Building materials, age, and condition



Services you provide



What's on site



Be thorough as you list the types of emergencies that could affect your workers, other people at the work site, and your business operations. **Consider everything that could realistically require rescue or evacuation from your site.**

If you are working with a corporate emergency response plan developed for multiple sites, make sure you tailor the hazards listed to your specific work site.

Vehicles and mobile equipment are also considered to be work sites when they are used off site for work purposes – for example, driving to do an errand, make a delivery, or between work sites.

"Work site" means a location where a worker is, or is likely to be, engaged in any occupation and includes any vehicle or mobile equipment used by a worker in an occupation.

***Occupational Health and Safety Act*, Section 1(uu)**

Order the list

Once your list is complete, it's a good idea to order it. **Put the situations that are most likely to occur and have the greatest risk of harm at the top of the list.** Ordering the list will help you prioritize as you work through the planning steps. But please note that all emergencies, regardless of the potential you assign them, must be addressed in your plan.

Emergency response plan (sample)

Section 1: General information

Employer: *Pi Retailer*
Address: *1234 Main St, Our Town, AB*
Completed by: *Taylor Miller*
Date: *March 31, 2025*

Potential emergencies

robbery	*medical event*	*building fire*	*violence*
extreme winter storm	*gas leak*	*wind storm/tornado*	*structural collapse (car hits our building)*
major train event at/ near the Main Street crossing	*active assailant*	*cell intentionally left blank*	*cell intentionally left blank*

STEP 3: List emergency equipment, supplies and facilities

Your emergency response resources must reflect the emergencies identified in your plan.

An employer must provide workers designated under section 117 with equipment and personal protective equipment appropriate to the work site and the potential emergencies identified in the emergency response plan.

Occupational Health and Safety Code, Part 7, Section 118(1)

Make sure you know:

- What you have or need to acquire.
- How the equipment works.
- Where everything is or will be stored.

Think through your needs carefully. Resources that work in one situation may not be the best choice in another. Your plan may need to present options.

alarm

bullhorn

cell phone

two-way radio

You may have access to more resources than you think.

If your muster point is outdoors, is your neighbour's parkade the sheltered **muster point** you might need in bad weather? You should identify a secondary muster point to use if needed.

Can you arrange **emergency evacuation** with the local public transit authority or school bus company?

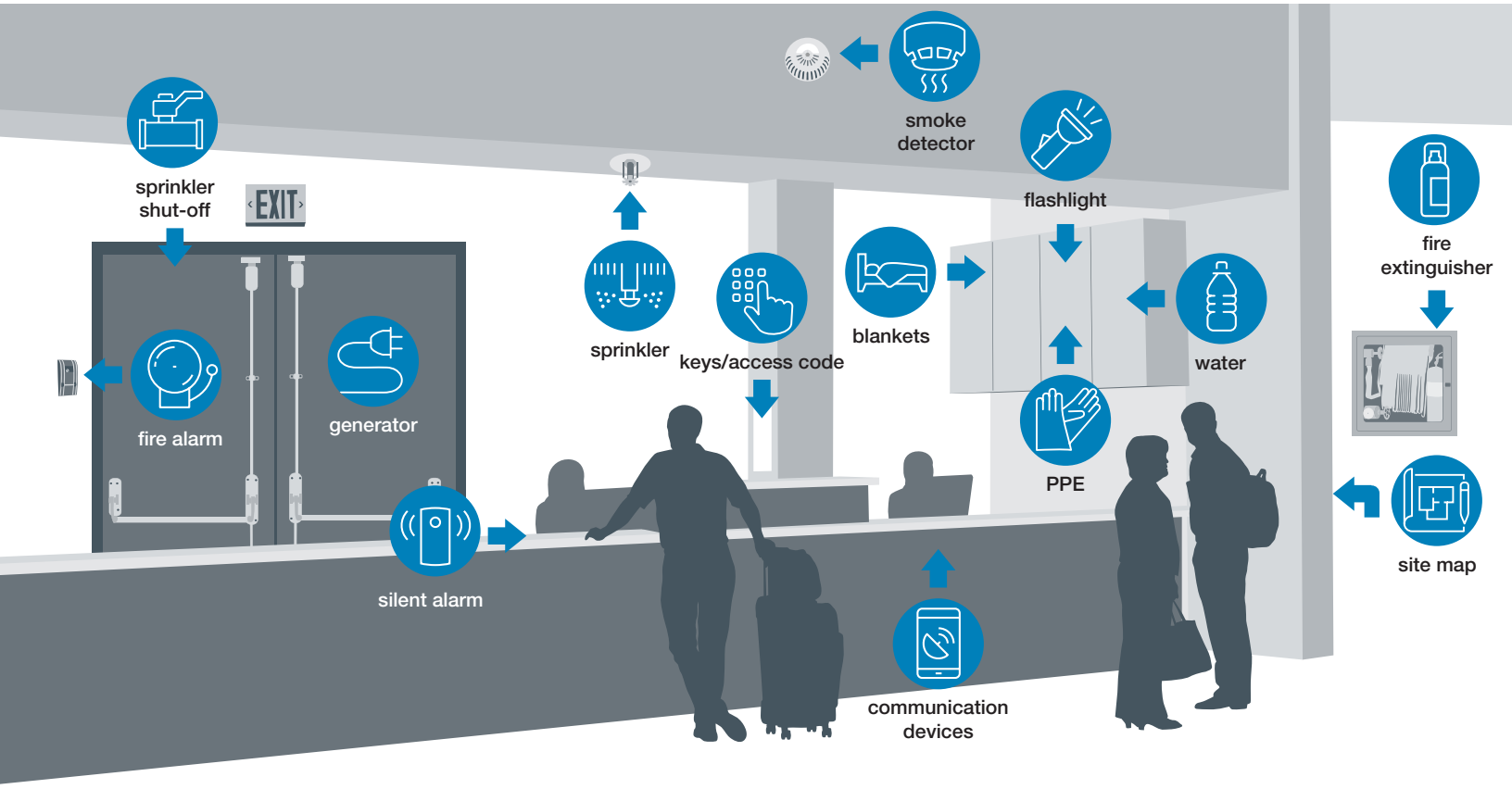
Figure out exactly what **equipment and facilities** you have access to during an emergency, how things work, and where they are located. A record with this kind of detail will help you make informed decisions during an emergency.

Organization pays off

Emergencies usually demand a quick response. **Know where everything is ahead of time.**

Make sure you have:

- Access to emergency facilities and transportation.
- Knowledge about fire protection system(s) in place.
- A properly stocked and well-organized emergency supply area.
- Trained first aiders, and trained rescue and evacuation workers.



Additional emergency equipment may be located throughout the work site. It's a good idea to identify these items for quick reference on a posted map.

Your first aid requirements

Every Alberta workplace must meet first aid requirements in Part 11 of the Occupational Health and Safety Code. Your emergency response plan must reference your required first aid services. Your first aid requirements are specific to your work site.

To calculate the number of first aiders, the level of first aid training, and the first aid supplies, kits, equipment and facilities required at your work site, consider the following three things:

1) The hazard level of the work performed at the work site

low | medium | high

2) The number of workers per shift

3) The distance of the work site to the nearest health care facility

close
up to 20 minutes under normal travel conditions

distant
20 – 40 minutes under normal travel conditions

isolated
more than 40 minutes under normal travel conditions

Refer to the Occupational Health and Safety Code (Part 11 and Schedule 2) to see what your workplace requires.

Emergency response plan (sample)

Section 2: Work site resources and procedures

Emergency and personal protective equipment, including fire protection requirements

Equipment	Location	Operating procedures
AED (automatic defibrillator)	*Beside door to office (rear of store)*	*Follow instructions on the case and the AED voice prompts.*
First aid kit	*At the front cash (shelf under counter)*	*Complete first aid record after use.*
Fire alarm pull station	*Next to washroom (rear of store)*	*Pull lever down.*
Fire extinguisher	*Next to washroom (rear of store in wall bracket under the fire alarm)*	*Remove from bracket, pull pin, aim at base of fire, squeeze trigger, sweep nozzle side to side across base of fire.*
Panic button (silent)	*Front cash - underside counter, right of the cash register*	*Press button.*
Security cameras	*Monitors at front cash and on manager cell phone*	*3-week data storage.*
Emergency vest and hard hat	*At the front cash (shelf under counter)*	*Wear if leading evacuation.*

First aid

Type of first aid kit/supply	Location
CSA Type 2 Basic, small	*At the front cash*
Blankets	*In the office (middle shelf)*
AED	*Beside door to office*

Shift	First aider names
Morning	*Ali C or Melinda Y*
Afternoon	*Jeff M or Scot H*
Evening	*Jan R or Rocky S*

Transportation plan: *Call 911 for ambulance.*

List and location of emergency facilities

Facility name	Address	Distance from work site
City Hospital	*101 Hospital Ave.*	*2 km*
Fire Station	*422 Grand Blvd.*	*4.5 km*
Police	*10 Centre St.*	*3 km*

Return to this part of the plan to update your equipment, supplies and facilities requirements as you work through the next steps and your emergency response procedures.

STEP 4: Document your emergency communication requirements

An emergency communication system is a required part of every emergency response plan. It can include anything from cell phones or a two-way radio system, to a single- or multi-stage alarm system, to a designated media spokesperson.

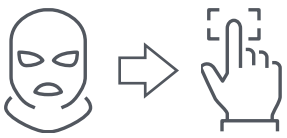
During an emergency, social media posts can release information that may cause confusion or endanger workers. For example, in an active shooter event, a social media post could give the assailant information about the number or location of workers. **Your plan should identify how and when information is released,** including when consultation with law enforcement is required.

Emergency response plan (sample)

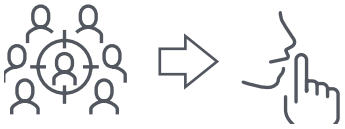
Alarm and emergency communication requirements

Type	Details
Fire alarm	*Fire alarm connects automatically to fire department.* *- Audible signal is steady beeps.* *- Visible signal is flashing emergency light.*
Silent alarm	*Silent alarm connects to the alarm company. Company monitors the alarm 24/7, will dispatch police immediately.*
Cell phones	*Work cite cell phones located at front cash and in office are for emergency use.*
Alberta Emergency Alert app	*Alberta Emergency Alert app on work site cell phones will sound if there are municipal emergency alerts.*

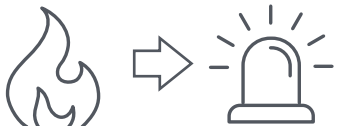
Triggering the wrong alarm in an emergency can introduce a hazard by causing confusion. **The type of alarm should match the nature of the emergency.**



silent alarm
for a robbery



code words or hand signals
when threatened by an individual



facility-wide alarm
to begin an evacuation

Include communication protocols

There may be people inside or outside your organization who need to know what's going on if an emergency occurs. Make sure your plan includes information about who needs to be contacted when, and how to reach them.

It's a good idea to keep an emergency contact list with your emergency response plan. See the sample template on the next page. (This is part of the **customizable template package** online at ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp040tmp.)

Emergency contact list (template)

This is one example of an emergency contact list. **If you choose to use this template, make sure you customize it to your work and work site.**

Employer address:

Phone:

Prepared by:

Emergency response contacts

Police	911
Police (non-emergency)	
Emergency Medical Services (ambulance)	911
Fire	911
Poison and Drug Information Service	1-800-332-1414

Employer contacts

Owner/general manager	
Manager	
Health and safety coordinator	
Maintenance	
Security	
Public relations (designated)	
Other	

Alberta government contacts

Occupational Health and Safety (toll free)	1-866-415-8690 (toll free)
Occupational Health and Safety (Edmonton)	780-415-8690
Workers' Compensation Board (WCB)	1-866-922-9221 (toll free)
Alberta Environment	
Other	

Other contacts

Power company	
Gas company	
Telephone company	
Insurance company	

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STEP 5: Determine rescue and evacuation procedures

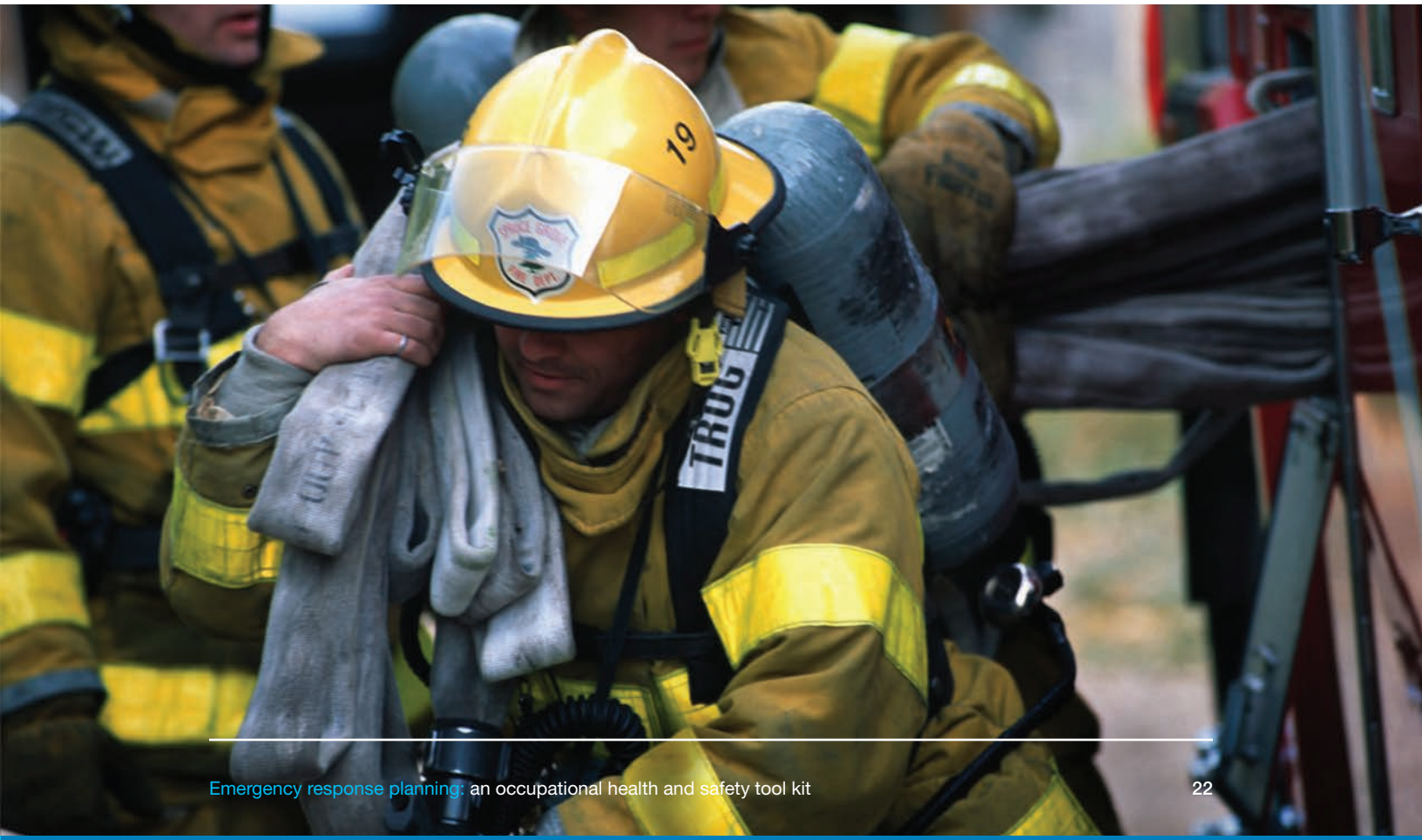
Your plan must include rescue and evacuation procedures. The procedures you identify here will apply to any emergency requiring rescue or evacuation. (If specific emergency situations require a different response, you'll develop those separately and document them in appropriate sections of the emergency response plan. Step 6 covers this.)

Calling 911

In some situations, it may be effective and appropriate to base rescue and evacuation procedures on providing required first aid equipment and services, and calling 911.

But in others, 911 services may not be able to provide a timely response – or may not have the equipment or technical knowledge to perform specific types of rescues or evacuations. **Make sure your rescue and evacuation procedures will work for all the potential emergencies you've identified.** Consider the work site location (i.e. how long will it take for emergency services to reach the site under normal conditions), the nature of work being carried out, and the hazards involved.

Revisit steps 3 and 4 at this point to make sure you have the equipment, facilities, supplies and communication systems you need.



Some provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Code require specific emergency rescue or evacuation measures.

If a licensed ambulance service is not available to your work site, or if weather conditions pose a transport risk, you must have **alternate transportation** in place. Read more in *First aid in the workplace* in *Additional resources* on page 43.

Certain types of work may require **on-site rescue capability**. These include work in confined or restricted spaces, in conditions that require a fall protection plan, or in a location that requires rope access. Read more in *Guideline for Developing a Code of Practice for Confined Space Entry* or *Occupation health and safety fall protection plan* in *Additional resources* on page 43, or consult Part 41 of the Occupational Health and Safety Code in relation to rope access work.

Mine and mine sites, and oil and gas wells have specific emergency requirements. Consult Parts 36 and 37 of the Occupational Health and Safety Code to find out more about these requirements.

Emergency response plan (sample)

Rescue and evacuation procedures

- *Call 911 for police, fire or ambulance if required.*
- *Emergency warden on duty leads evacuation.*
  - *Put on emergency vest and hard hat.*
  - *Stay calm, take control and direct other workers and customers to exit routes.*
  - *Workers meet at the main muster point in the NE corner of the parking lot. (Alternate/ bad weather location: inside the main lobby of ABC building next door.)*

STEP 6: Figure out response procedures for each emergency

For this step, write down what workers are expected to do in response to each of the possible emergency situations you have identified. This section could be anywhere from a few lines to several pages long for each emergency situation, depending on the nature of the emergency and your operations.

Be specific

Provide clear direction. The clearer and more specific your procedures are, the easier they will be to follow.

Be systematic

Your emergency response will require specific tasks to be completed in a timely manner during the emergency. Think things through carefully from start to finish for each emergency situation.

Keep it practical

Make sure what you're planning will actually work in the event of an emergency. Details can be important.

Will the **time of day** or year impact the plan? A **muster point i**n the outside parking lot won't work on an icy winter day when workers and others will need shelter.

If your place of business is open 24/7 to the public, **can you secure the site?**

Do you need to…

- Call 911?
- Sound an alarm?
- Determine the need to evacuate, lock down or shelter in place?
- Shut down equipment?
- Meet and brief first responders when they arrive and provide access for them?
- Confirm everyone on site is safe and accounted for?
- Address emergency contact requirements?

Emergency response plan (sample)

Emergency response procedures

- *Building fire*
  - *Activate fire alarm immediately.*
  - *[illegible]*
- *Medical event*
  - *Call 911 and summon first aider.*
- *Robbery*
  - *If safe, press panic button (silent).*
  - *Cooperate with the robber's demands.*
  - *Lock door when robber leaves.*
  - *When safe to do so, and if the police haven't arrived yet:*
    - *Call 911.*
    - *Call manager (evening shift).*
    - *Make notes about what happened.*

Your emergency response plan must address every situation you identify on your list, but it may not be feasible to address them all equally, right away. Prioritize the situations that are most likely to occur and pose the greatest risk of harm as you develop your plan. You must still **make sure you have interim resources and procedures in place** for any situations that need to wait for more permanent measures.

After the emergency

After an emergency situation is over, there are still certain things management will need to take care of. Keep the following information handy as part of the materials at the front of your emergency response plan binder. **Consider the following best practices:**

- If the emergency was traumatic in any way, workers may benefit from crisis counselling.

  Note: You must ensure workers reporting an injury or adverse symptoms resulting from a violence or harassment incident are advised to consult a health professional (of the worker's choice) for treatment or referral.
- Consider providing access to spiritual care.
- Have pre-sourced, pre-approved service providers in place to deal with any biohazard issues or other cleanup and restoration work.
- Report to authorities, if required.

Reporting to Occupational Health and Safety

Make sure you include legal reporting requirements in your emergency planning. Prime contractors – or employers, if there is no prime contractor – must report specific incidents to Occupational Health and Safety as soon as possible. These are:

- Serious injuries, illnesses and incidents (described in Section 33(2) of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*).
- Radiation overexposures (worker has been exposed to radiation above the limits in Schedule 12 of the Occupational Health and Safety Code).
- Incidents at a mine or mine site (described in Section 544 of the Occupational Health and Safety Code).

Prime contractors – or employers, if there is no prime contractor – must also report potentially serious incidents to Occupational Health and Safety. A potentially serious incident is an event:

- that had a likelihood of causing serious injury or illness, and
- where it's reasonable to believe that corrective action may be needed to prevent recurrence.

Call the OHS Contact Centre as soon as possible to report serious injuries, illnesses, incidents or radiation overexposures.

1-866-415-8690 (toll-free in Alberta) | **780-415-8690** (Edmonton area)

If you're not sure whether you have to report, call.

Notify Occupational Health and Safety about mine, mine site or potentially serious incidents online at oirportal.labour.alberta.ca/pre-screening.

- Report mine or mine site incidents as soon as possible.
- Report potentially serious incidents after your incident investigation is complete.

Find more on reporting incidents to Occupational Health and Safety in *Additional resources* (Injuries, illnesses and incidents) on page 43.

Notifying Occupational Health and Safety is separate from any notice you are required to give to the Alberta Workers' Compensation Board or other authorities, such as the police. As a prime contractor or employer, a best practice is to assign reporting duties to a particular role, rather than an individual – for instance, to the shift supervisor, not to Joe Smith.

STEP 7: Assign specific tasks

Assign individual workers to each task

An employer must designate the workers who will provide rescue services and supervise evacuation procedures in an emergency.

Occupational Health and Safety Code, Part 7, Section 117(1)

Where possible, **assign different tasks to different people** and cross-train as needed. The plan needs to be flexible enough to account for varying levels of staffing. One person cannot realistically be responsible for every task.

Make sure the **individuals** you designate to lead the response **are willing, capable and trained** to do the task competently.

Assign designated emergency response workers for every shift. Ideally, backup workers trained in a specific role will be available to respond if they are needed. However, organizations with limited staff during particular shifts may want to assign multiple roles to an individual worker.

By law, workers must not be assigned to or undertake tasks or assignments that they cannot do **in a healthy and safe manner.**

Every employer shall ensure that workers engaged in the work of that employer are adequately trained in all matters necessary to perform their work in a healthy and safe manner.

***Occupational Health and Safety Act*, Part 1, Section 3(2)**

A worker who is not trained in extinguishing grease fires can't be expected to fight a kitchen fire

Without proper training, a worker can't be expected to clean up blood or bodily fluids.

Emergency response plan (sample)

Emergency response and training requirements

Shift	Position/names of trained workers	Training received	Training frequency
Morning	*Manager*	*Fire extinguisher*	*Annual refresh*
Morning	*Cashier*	*Intermediate first aid*	*Every 3 years with annual CPR*
Mornning	*Manager*	*Emergency warden*	*Annual refresh*
Afternoon	*Manager*	*Fire extinguisher*	*Annual refresh*
Afternoon	*Cashier*	*Intermediate first aid*	*Every 3 years with annual CPR*
Afternoon	*Manager*	*Emergency warden*	*Annual refresh*
Evening	*Attendant*	*Fire extinguisher*	*Annual refresh*
Evening	*Attendant*	*Intermediate first aid*	*Every 3 years with annual CPR*
Evening	*Attendant*	*Emergency warden*	*Annual refresh*

You will need to update this part of the plan every time there are changes to related staffing and worker training.

Now that we've worked through the emergency response plan template step-by-step, please take a look at the full template on the next pages. (Remember, you can find the **customizable templates** for this tool kit online at ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp040tmp.)

Emergency response plan template

Emergency response plan (template)

This is one example of an emergency response plan template. **If you choose to use this template, make sure you customize it to your work and work site.**

Section 1: General information

Employer:

Address:

Completed by:

Date:

Potential emergencies

(For example: medical event, flood, fire, robbery. Refer to your hazard assessment to determine which hazards could require rescue or evacuation. List those here.)

Section 2: Work site resources and procedures

Emergency and personal protective equipment, including fire protection requirements

(For example: alarms, sprinklers, fire suppression systems, fire extinguishers, hoses, fire doors.)

Equipment	Location	Operating procedures

First aid

(For example: type and location of first aid kit and supplies; first aiders per shift; first aid room if applicable; transportation plan.)

Type of first aid kit/supply	Location

Shift	First aider names
Morning	
Afternoon	
Evening	

Location of first aid room: (if applicable)

Transportation plan:

List and location of emergency facilities

(For example: fire station, hospital, police.)

Facility name	Address	Distance from work site

Alarm and emergency communication requirements

(For example, type of alarm, paging or PA system.)

Type	Details

Rescue and evacuation procedures

- (Procedure)
  - (Procedure steps)
- (Procedure)
  - (Procedure steps)

Emergency response procedures

(Detailed procedures to be followed for each identified emergency, including who is responsible for what.)

- (Emergency)
  - (Procedure steps)
- (Emergency)
  - (Procedure steps)

Emergency response training and requirements

(List the positions or names of workers trained to use each type of emergency equipment and those trained in rescue and evaluation procedures.)

Shift	Position/names of trained workers	Training received	Training frequency
Morning			
Afternoon			
Evening			

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Implement the plan

STEP 8: Train the emergency response team

The workers who are given roles in your emergency response plan must be trained for those roles.

First aiders must be trained as required in Part 11 of the Occupational Health and Safety Code.

A prime contractor or, if there is no prime contractor, an employer must ... except as provided in subsection (3), ensure a worker who is designated as a first aider has successfully completed training in first aid from an approved training agency, ….

Occupational Health and Safety Code, Part 11, Section 181(1)(b)

Rescue and evacuation worker training requirements are in Part 7 of the Code.

An employer must ensure that designated rescue and evacuation workers are trained in emergency response appropriate to the work site and the potential emergencies identified in the emergency response plan.

Occupational Health and Safety Code, Part 7, Section 117(2)

Workers who are assigned other roles in emergency response plans must be trained in accordance with Section 3(2) of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

Every employer shall ensure that workers engaged in the work of that employer are adequately trained in all matters necessary to perform their work in a healthy and safe manner.

***Occupational Health and Safety Act*, Part 1, Section 3(2)**

The National Fire Code (2023 Alberta Edition) also requires supervisory staff to be properly trained in fire and emergency plans. (In the fire code, **supervisory staff means those occupants of a building who have some delegated responsibility for the fire safety of other occupants** under the fire safety plan.) For specific requirements, see *Additional resources* (Fire safety) on page 43.

Figure out who needs what training

Keep training relevant to the individual roles assigned. For example, the worker who will be responsible for shutting off the gas needs to know where the shut-off valve is located and how to use it. That worker probably doesn't need to be specially trained in crowd management or public relations.

Decide who will provide the training

You may want to use in-house expertise if it's available. Alternately, you can consider options such as online training or an external consultant.

in-house training

external consultant

online training

Designated workplace first aiders must be trained by a training agency approved by Occupational Health and Safety. For a list of **approved first aid training agencies**, visit alberta.ca/first-aid-training.

Consider asking local emergency response organizations to share their expertise. They might be able to provide insight or feedback as you work to ensure an effective training program.

Training must be up to date

Very few work sites stay the same over time. Workers, the work environment and emergency response roles will change.

new staff

new neighbour

expanded operations

Even if everything remains unchanged in the workplace, worker training needs to remain current. Certifications can lapse and safety standards evolve.

Keep track of training

Recording who receives what kind of training will make it easier to ensure workers will be effective in an emergency situation. Make sure you include refresher training in your training records.

Good training records can:

help identify if there are any gaps

signal when workers are due for refresher training

confirm expectations of worker competency

Emergency response training summary record (template)

This is one example of an emergency response training record. **If you choose to use this template, make sure you customize it to your work and work site.**

Employer:

Completed date:

Reviewed date:

Address:

Summary table: training completion dates

Provide the training completion date for any emergency response training taken by workers.
For first aid training, also specify the level of training the worker completed.

Worker's name	**First aid training** (specify level)	**Rescue and evacuation**	**Emergency warden**	**Fire extinguisher**	**Emergency response plan**	**Other training** (specify name)

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STEP 9: Communicate the plan and procedures to all workers

Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, employers must keep health and safety information including work practices and procedures readily available and provide them to workers, as well as to the health and safety committee or representative, if there is one, and the prime contractor, if there is one.

In addition to providing access to the written emergency response plan, **employers must ensure workers are adequately trained in all matters necessary to protect their health and safety**. This includes emergency response training. Employers can also consider including information about the emergency response plan and procedures during orientations, job-specific training and regular staff meetings. Always keep a record of training that workers have received.

Workers must know about the emergency response plan.

Among other things, **everyone needs to know** who has been assigned responsibilities in case of an emergency and what those responsibilities are.

STEP 10: Practice drills

In an actual emergency, there won't be time to read through your emergency response plan. Everyone needs to know what the plan is ahead of time and practice the plan with drills.

Drills are important. They:

- Reinforce emergency response training.
- Prevent panic by improving preparedness.
- Help identify gaps in the emergency response plan.
- Create an opportunity for workers to demonstrate competency.
- Promote ongoing worker engagement.

Although fire drills may come to mind first, holding drills for other types of emergencies is equally important. **Drills are an integral part of your ongoing emergency response training.**

Drill frequency

The Occupational Health and Safety Code links drill frequency requirements to ensuring worker competency. Where no other laws apply, this allows employers the flexibility to set drill schedules that will be effective for their organization, work site and the identified emergencies.

> The training exercises … must be repeated at the intervals required to ensure that the designated rescue and evacuation workers are competent to carry out their duties.
>
> **Occupational Health and Safety Code, Part 7, Section 117(4)**

Section 2.8 of the National Fire Code (2023 Alberta Edition) sets emergency planning requirements related to fire for a number of building types, as well as certain designated areas. As applicable, this section includes the requirements for fire drills, including fire drill frequency.

In general, the National Fire Code (2023 Alberta Edition) requires annual fire drills. However there are exceptions for specific types of buildings and operations – for example, schools, day cares and laboratories all require more frequent drills. For specific requirements and exceptions, see *Additional resources* (Fire safety) on page 43.

Type of drill

A full-scale evacuation or operational shutdown isn't always practical. There are drill options for every size and structure of an organization.

Providing other applicable laws are met, the occupational health and safety laws require employers to choose drills that suit their work site and emergency response plan.

The training … must include exercises appropriate to the work site that simulate the potential emergencies identified in the emergency response plan.

Occupational Health and Safety Code, Part 7, Section 117(3)

Figure out what type of drills will be the most practical and effective for your operations.

Full-scale drills: Involve many workers, active testing of the emergency response plan, complete shut down of operations and testing of alarms. May engage off-site expertise (for example, fire, emergency medical services, police). Focus is on worker response.

Role play drills/mock emergency exercises: Staging a realistic emergency situation and enacting each step of the emergency response plan. Can be a surprise drill or planned and performed with worker knowledge that it is a drill. (Avoid sparking panic by making it seem too real.) Focus is on worker response.

Table top drills: A boardroom style exercise involving as many workers as possible in a step-by-step evaluation of emergency response procedures. Does not set off any alarms or require an actual evacuation. Could be specific to one department. Can be effective for a department meeting. Focus is on problem solving rather than worker response.

Learning engagement exercises: Meant as a quick review during stand up meetings with workers. Can include discussion about possible emergency situations (what workers would do if…). Spend time to discuss the situation and answer any questions. Focus is on raising awareness and problem solving.

Let the public know about any drills that may affect them.

- Place notices in high visibility locations.
- Announce the drill is happening before it starts. Make sure the announcement reaches everyone on site.

Practice with purpose

Holding the same type of drill over and over again can be ineffective. Emergency response drills should create competence and confidence, not complacency. **Run different types of drills to train for different types of emergencies.**

Document your drills

Keep records of your drills, and what you learned from each.

- How long did it take to get everyone to the muster point?
- What went well?
- What needs improvement?

There are many ways to keep drill records. The template on the next page – part of the **customizable template package** online at ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp040tmp – is one example.

Emergency response drill record (template)

This is one example of an emergency response drill record. **If you choose to use this template, make sure you customize it to your work and work site.**

Leader conducting drill:

Department:

Drill date:

Type of drill:

Participants:

Evacuation time:

Items done well:

Items requiring improvement:

Corrective actions	Assigned to	Target date

Scheduled date of next drill:

Comments:

Reviewed by:

Review date:

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STEP 11: Update your plan and repeat

Make your drills count

Communicate the results of each drill with all affected workers.

Use what you learned to **update your plan**.

Once updates to your emergency response plan are made, and any newly identified training requirements are met, you're ready to **start planning your next drill**.

Your emergency response plan must be kept up to date. To be effective, it needs to reflect your current environment and business operations. Changes to your service offerings, renovations to your building, changes in your neighbourhood (e.g. new business neighbours, road construction/traffic patterns), or to Alberta's occupational health and safety legislation could make it necessary to adjust your plan.

An employer must ensure that an emergency response plan is current.

Occupational Health and Safety Code, Part 7, Section 115(3)

When you get to this continuous improvement stage of planning, a checklist is one way to help you keep track of your preparedness. The self-check template on the next page is one example. (This is part of the **customizable template package** online at ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp040tmp.)

Emergency response planning checklist (template)

You can use a checklist like this to help you determine if your organization is prepared for emergencies. **Customize the questions to suit your organization.**

Checklist	YES	NO
Is there a written emergency response plan for each work site that aligns with the hazards at the site?		
Does this plan include a list of potential emergencies?		
Does this plan include procedures for dealing with the identified emergencies?		
Does this plan include a list of workers who will provide emergency response?		
Does this plan include procedures for rescue and evacuation?		
Does this plan include a list of designated rescue and evacuation workers?		
Does this plan include emergency response training requirements?		
Does this plan include alarm and emergency communication requirements?		
Does this plan include fire protection requirements?		
Does this plan include identification, location and instructions for use of emergency equipment and facilities?		
Does this plan include emergency contact information?		
Do your first aid supplies, kits, equipment and facilities meet legislated requirements?		
Do you have the required number of trained first aiders?		
Do workers understand their responsibilities under the plan?		
Have workers been trained in their individual responsibilities?		
Are emergency response drills conducted regularly?		
Are all records of emergency response activities (including drills) reviewed to identify gaps?		
Is the plan current?		

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Additional resources

Emergency planning

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) – Emergency planning
ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/planning.html

Fire safety

Government of Alberta – Fire codes and standards
alberta.ca/fire-codes-and-standards

First aid

Government of Alberta – First aid in the workplace
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/fa020

Government of Alberta – First aid training
alberta.ca/first-aid-training

Hazard assessment and control

Government of Alberta – Hazard assessment and control: a handbook for Alberta employers and workers
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp018

Health and safety committees and representatives

Government of Alberta – Health and safety committees and representatives
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li060

Injuries, illnesses and incidents

Government of Alberta – Incident reporting and investigation
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li016

Occupational health and safety (general)

Government of Alberta – Guideline for Developing a Code of Practice for Confined Space Entry
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/cs001

Government of Alberta – Occupational health and safety fall protection plan
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/gs010

Government of Alberta – Occupational health and safety starter kit
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp035

Government of Alberta – Prime contractor role and duties
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li018

Vehicles

Government of Alberta – Driving safety
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp039

Government of Alberta – Vehicles as work sites
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li066

Violence and harassment

Government of Alberta – Violence and harassment in the workplace
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li045

Government of Alberta – Fuel and convenience store employer guide: violence and harassment plan
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp031

WHMIS

Government of Alberta – WHMIS 2015 – Information for employers
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/ch008

Government of Alberta – WHMIS 2015 – Information for workers
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/ch007

Canada's National WHMIS Portal
whmis.org

Working alone

Government of Alberta – OHS working alone requirements
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/wa002

Notes

Notes

Occupational health and safety legislation

This tool kit is current to September 2025.

It references:

Occupational Health and Safety Act (current as of June 11, 2025)

Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (current as of December 1, 2021)

Occupational Health and Safety Code (current as of March 31, 2025)

Find the current occupational health and safety legislation online at:

alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code

Purchase official printed versions of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, Regulation and Code Handbook from Alberta King's Printer:

alberta.ca/alberta-kings-printer

kings-printer@gov.ab.ca

780-427-4952

Suite 700, Park Plaza Building
10611 – 98 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 2P7

780-452-0668

Contact us

OHS Contact Centre

Edmonton and surrounding area: 780-415-8690
Toll-free in Alberta: 1-866-415-8690

For the deaf or hard of hearing (TTY)

In Edmonton: 780-427-9999
Toll-free in Alberta: 1-800-232-7215

Or connect with us online

Website
alberta.ca/ohs

Download PDF and provide feedback
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