



Helena Bryan

From writing about health and safety to creating documents for land treaties, Helena has a diverse history of telling B.C.'s stories. In our cover story, she looks at how a team at a mushroom farm revamped their health and safety program (page 7).



Sarah Ripplinger

Sarah is a marketer, writer, editor, and journalist. She brings us a "Safety spotlight" on ergonomics in manufacturing (page 12).



Gord Woodward

Gord has run his own communications and business-consulting firm for 24 years. He covers our "Ask an officer" on residential construction (right) and "Policy notes" on exposure limits (page 15).



Marnie Douglas

Marnie is a Kelowna-based writer and communications professional who began her career in journalism. She speaks with Safety Driven about how to stay safe on the road this winter (page 20).

Stay safe in residential construction



Robert Glancy
Occupational Safety Officer

Region: Port Moody
Years on the job: 11.5

WorkSafeBC recently released [Safe Work Practices in Residential Construction](#), an updated publication providing key health and safety information for the industry. We talked with occupational safety officer Robert Glancy about how the guide can be used to make work on residential construction sites safer.

Q. Who should use this guide and how will it help them?

A. [Safe Work Practices in Residential Construction](#) is a comprehensive resource for prime contractors, homeowners, employers, workers, and sub-contractors. It's designed for everyone from people new to residential construction to those with years of experience.

It covers the three main phases in the industry: planning, site preparation, and construction. Other topics include the hazards workers face when working at elevation, and tool and equipment safety. The guide provides a lot of practical information on health and safety responsibilities, common hazards and high-risk activities, risk assessments, and other things you need to know.

Q. What are some important safety factors to consider when planning a residential construction project?

A. Failure to plan and supervise for safety are key factors that can lead to unsafe acts or conditions. Our guide covers both of these points. It'll help you plan your workplace activities before any work begins, which keeps people safe and can help your bottom line by avoiding injury-related claim costs and production delays.

Ideally, you identify and eliminate hazards during the planning phase. Assess the materials, tools, and equipment workers will use and how they will use them. Encourage workers to help with hazard identification. Once you understand the hazards, assess the risks associated with them. How likely is there to be an incident and how serious could it be?

Then you can plan to eliminate the hazards or, if that's not practical, to control them. Review your plan with workers to make sure they understand it.

Q. What are some of the health and safety risks during site preparation?

- A.** One of the main ones is handling hazardous materials when demolishing an existing home. Asbestos is an example of a hazardous material and is still the number one killer of workers in B.C. To keep workers and homeowners safe, you need to hire a qualified asbestos abatement contractor. Do some research first by reviewing the guide and reading [10 simple steps to complying with asbestos abatement](#) at worksafebc.com.

Excavation and trenching are also high-risk work activities. Employers can contact their local utility owners and BC 1 Call before digging or drilling to determine the underground utilities in the area. Not all utility companies are members of BC 1 Call. If you're going to be digging and the owners of buried facilities aren't members, you'll need to identify and contact those owners directly. Certain excavation work must follow the written instructions of a qualified registered professional such as an engineer, and the guide covers those situations.

Q. What information can I find in the guide to help keep my workers safe during construction?

- A.** You'll get an overview of high-risk work activities, including working at elevation; using ladders, scaffolds, and other work platforms; concrete formwork; framing; and roofing. The guide can help you create the required plan for fall protection and review the different types of protection that are acceptable. You'll also find many diagrams that

illustrate safe use of equipment such as ladders. Another section everyone in the industry should review covers tool and equipment safety. Frequent and prolonged use of hand tools can lead to musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs), which are the most common injury in B.C. Tips in the guide help you choose the right tool for the job and provide guidance on training and supervision.

Q. I've hired a crew to renovate my home. What are my responsibilities and duties for health and safety?

- A.** The duty and responsibility for health and safety is a shared responsibility. It starts with the owner of the workplace. If you hire more than one sub-contractor to work on your house, it's a multi-employer workplace and you are now the prime contractor and have additional responsibilities under the *Workers Compensation Act*. Typically, the homeowner will hire a prime contractor who will then assume all the duties and responsibilities as the employer, once a written agreement is in place. It is the employer's responsibility to ensure workers have been provided with the information, training, and supervision necessary to ensure the safety of everyone at the workplace.

Q. Where can I get more information?

- A.** Download [Safe Work Practices in Residential Construction](#) from worksafebc.com. The publication is available in both English and Punjabi or [purchase print copies](#). For more resources, search the website for "[residential construction](#)" and "[restoration, renovation, and demolition](#)."

Looking for answers to your specific health and safety questions? Send them to us at worksafemagazine@worksafebc.com, and we'll consider them for our next "Ask an officer" feature. ☺

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