

Changes to occupational first aid requirements

Frequently asked questions

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation requirements for first aid in B.C. workplaces are changing on November 1, 2024. What are the key changes?

- First aid certification levels and first aid kit contents are being aligned with Canadian Standards Association standards. Level 1, 2, and 3 certificates and kits will become basic, intermediate, and advanced, respectively. The instruction time for the new intermediate (previously Level 2) first aid course is changing from five days to two days.
- Employers will be required to conduct and document a two-part first aid assessment for every workplace (see last question on this page). As a result of this assessment, minimum levels of first aid may change for some workplaces.
- Employers must conduct drills to test the effectiveness of first aid procedures. Drills must be conducted annually or when procedures change significantly.
- More first aid attendants may be required to attend a one-day transportation endorsement course.
- Employers will have more flexibility in selecting an appropriate method of emergency transportation.

Where can I find a copy of the amendments to the Regulation, including the revised Schedule 3-A?

You can find the amended Regulation on our website: [Part 3 – Minimum Levels of First Aid](#).

Where can I find a copy of the OHS Guidelines that will accompany the amended Regulation?

You can find the draft preliminary guidelines on our website: [OHS Guidelines for Part 3 – Occupational First Aid](#).

How do I determine the first aid requirements for my workplace?

As an employer, you need to conduct and document a first aid assessment.

First, you need to determine four factors:

- The maximum number of workers present at your workplace
- The hazard rating assigned to your workplace (low, moderate, or high)
- The distance from your workplace to the nearest BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) ambulance station
- Whether your workplace and all areas within it are accessible to BCEHS ambulance personnel

Next, use these four factors to determine your minimum first aid requirements, which are set out in Schedule 3-A of the OHS Regulation.

You must then consider other workplace factors that may require you to provide additional first aid equipment, supplies, facilities, and attendants. The goal is to ensure workers can be promptly provided with first aid and transported to medical treatment.

You must conduct your first aid assessment in consultation with your joint health and safety committee (or worker health and safety representative) if you have one at your workplace. If your workplace is smaller and you do not have a joint committee or worker representative, you should still involve workers when you do your assessment. See the draft preliminary guideline [G3.16\(3.1\)](#) for more information.

We have developed a [first aid assessment worksheet](#) to help you determine your first aid requirements.

How do I determine how hazardous my workplace is?

One of the factors in determining minimum first aid requirements for a workplace is the hazard rating. This rating is defined as how hazardous a workplace is (low, moderate, or high) compared to other workplaces.

We assign a hazard rating to each classification unit (CU) based on claims statistics as well as common hazards and risks associated with workplaces in that CU. You can find the hazard rating assigned to your CU in the assessment rate letter we send you every year, or in the CU description [on our website](#).

The hazard rating we assign is the minimum acceptable hazard rating for your workplace.

The [draft preliminary OHS Guidelines](#) provide a few exceptions to this general rule.

How do I know if my workplace is accessible to ambulances?

BCEHS ambulance personnel will not rescue workers from hazardous areas. They also cannot provide emergency transport for injured workers from workplaces that are not accessible by an ambulance with two-wheel drive. Areas that BCEHS ambulance personnel will generally not access include:

- Backcountry areas
- Areas that can only be accessed by steep or slippery slopes
- Areas with rough or complex terrain
- Areas with significant risk of avalanche, landslide, flood, or other natural hazards
- Confined spaces
- Underground work areas
- Areas only accessible by ladders, scaffolds, or temporary work platforms
- Excavations
- Areas of work at high angles, or where an unguarded fall hazard exists
- Areas where a drowning hazard exists
- Areas requiring specialized personal protective equipment or where hazardous atmospheres may exist

If you have workplaces that are not accessible to BCEHS ambulance personnel, you must develop a plan to safely transport an injured worker to an area that is accessible. Minimum first aid requirements may be greater for these less-accessible workplaces.

For more information, see the draft preliminary [guideline G3.16](#).

My workers are dispatched to different workplaces every day. Will I need to have first aid assessments, procedures, and drills for each workplace?

Not necessarily. Where the first aid requirements are the same for multiple workplaces to which a worker is dispatched, you can use one written first aid assessment that applies to all of those workplaces.

Similarly, the same first aid procedures can apply to multiple workplaces, as long as information such as pre-arranged routes to emergency medical treatment is location-specific.

You'll need to conduct annual first aid drills separately for first aid procedures that are substantially different (e.g., rescue methods or means of transport), but you may not need to conduct drills for each temporary work location.

For more information, see the draft preliminary [guideline G3.17\(4\)](#).

My workplace is in an area where hospital diversions may occur or the ambulance response may be delayed. How does this affect my first aid requirements?

Hospital diversions, emergency department closures, or other barriers may affect the time it takes to transport an injured worker to hospital. When delays are reasonably foreseeable, you need to take them into account when determining minimum first aid services and procedures, and consider travel time to the next nearest hospital.

This means that, even in urban settings, you may need:

- First aid attendants with a higher level of training
- Additional first aid supplies and equipment

- More advanced first aid facilities
- Emergency transportation capability, such as an emergency transport vehicle or industrial ambulance

In such cases, you must also develop first aid procedures that include:

- Determining if hospital diversions are in effect before making transport decisions
- Providing instructions on a pre-arranged route in and out of the workplace to the next closest hospital or emergency medical treatment centre

What kinds of vehicles are acceptable as emergency transport vehicles?

The amended Regulation provides more flexibility to employers to determine a method of emergency transport that is appropriate for workplace conditions. All emergency transport vehicles will need to:

- Be capable of safely transporting both the injured worker (secured to a stretcher) and a first aid attendant
- Have an effective means of communication between the first aid attendant and the operator of the vehicle
- Be designed and equipped to:
 - Protect injured workers from weather, dust, and excessive jarring
 - Maintain normal body temperature of injured workers
 - Provide adequate space for the first aid attendant to safely provide first aid to injured workers

First aid certification is changing from Level 1, 2, and 3 to basic, intermediate, and advanced. What is WorkSafeBC doing to help me transition to these new requirements?

There will be a transition period as first aid training providers align certification with the new standards and as employers get up to speed with the new Regulation requirements. WorkSafeBC prevention officers will consider employers' reasonable efforts to come into compliance with these new requirements, given each employer's unique situation and the availability of local first aid training providers.

To reduce pressure during the transition period, the following measures will apply:

- Valid Level 1, 2, and 3 first aid certificates will be accepted until their expiry dates (up to November 1, 2027). Starting November 1, 2024, these certificates will be accepted as equivalent to basic, intermediate, and advanced, respectively.
- For Level 2 certificates that expire between July 2 and October 30, 2024:
 - These certificates will be accepted as valid through October 31, 2024. This extension applies only to Level 2 certificates.
 - Attendants with these certificates must successfully complete an intermediate course by October 31, 2024, to work as intermediate attendants beginning November 1, 2024.
- If you wish to employ first aid attendants with WorkSafeBC-approved basic, intermediate, or advanced certificates before November 1, 2024, you can do so if you have complied with all other requirements of the amended Regulation. These requirements include preparing a written first aid assessment and written first aid procedures.

Where can I find more information?

You can find more information on our [First aid requirements](#) webpage.