

Backgrounder: Occupational first aid regulatory changes

In April 2023, WorkSafeBC's Board of Directors approved amendments to Part 3 of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulation, relating to the provision of occupational first aid. These amendments will take effect November 1, 2024, to give employers time to obtain any required first aid training and equipment necessitated by these changes.

Background

The requirement to provide first aid services appropriate to the workplace is a basic responsibility of all employers. The requirements for first aid listed in Schedule 3-A of the OHS Regulation have been in place for almost 20 years with minimal updates.

Over this time, there have been improvements in both first aid training and equipment, as well as the issuance of two standards from the Canadian Standards Association (CSA):

- CSA Z1210-17 First aid training for the workplace — Curriculum and quality management for training agencies
- CSA Z1220-17 First aid kits for the workplace

These standards provide national guidance on workplace first aid training programs and first aid kits.

WorkSafeBC also identified challenges with the current regulation requirements related to appropriate emergency transport for injured workers in remote areas.

Objective of the regulatory amendments

The purpose of the amendments is to strengthen the current requirements in Schedule 3-A, with a focus on high-risk remote industries, and to harmonize the OHS Regulation with the first aid training and first aid kits framework in CSA Z1210-17 and CSA Z1220-17.

Key amendments

Determining first aid requirements

Under the amended OHS Regulation, employers will have a two-part duty to establish their workplace first aid requirements by doing both of the following:

- Provide at least the supplies, facilities, and first aid attendants required by Schedule 3-A
- In consultation with workers, perform a written risk assessment for each workplace to determine any additional equipment, supplies, facilities, attendants, and services necessary to ensure injured workers can be promptly provided first aid and transported to medical treatment

Schedule 3-A is also being amended to consider four workplace characteristics when determining the minimum levels of first aid supplies, facilities, and attendants required:

- Number of workers at the workplace
- Hazard rating assigned to industry
- Whether the workplace is “remote” — meaning it is more than 30 minutes surface travel time from the nearest ambulance station
- Whether the workplace is “less accessible” — meaning it cannot be safely accessed by ambulance, or it includes one or more hazardous work areas that cannot be safely accessed by ambulance personnel

Terminology

Terminology for the certification of first aid attendants has been changed from Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 to Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced to align with CSA Z1210-17. These naming convention changes will not affect the validity of first aid certificates currently held by attendants, and the Regulation allows for a three-year transition period to ensure current first aid certificates remain valid until their current expiry date.

Emergency transportation

The amendments clarify and extend the existing requirements for emergency transportation. In workplaces where emergency transportation is required under Schedule 3-A, written first aid procedures need to identify how workers will be accessed and moved if there are barriers to first aid, and the location and method of emergency transport where required. Drills will now be required annually or when first aid procedures change, to ensure procedures are effective.

The amendments allow for more flexibility in the type of emergency transportation selected for use, while providing performance-based requirements that modes of transport must meet. If air transportation is the primary or only method of emergency transport, the amendments also require employers to ensure that an appropriate aircraft is reasonably available when work is occurring, and that compatible stretchers are available.

Guidelines and resources under development

WorkSafeBC is developing guidelines and additional resources on the following topics to support employers in implementing the new requirements:

- Conducting first aid assessments and developing written procedures
- What factors constitute a “less-accessible” workplace
- How to count workers for the purpose of determining minimum requirements for first aid
- Required contents for first aid kits
- Requirements for dressing stations and first aid rooms
- Requirements for emergency transportation

Updates will be released in the fall of 2023.

Resources will be published on our website: visit [First aid requirements](#).

For more information

Details of the changes, including explanatory notes, are available on our website: [Part 3 – Minimum Levels of First Aid](#).