

# Developing a First Aid Plan

## OHS information for employers

### Introduction

Health and safety programs at the workplace aim to prevent injuries and illnesses, but sometimes, despite the best prevention efforts, injuries and illnesses occur. Planning for emergencies and having a First Aid Plan is not only legally and morally the right thing to do, it makes sense from a business point of view.

The purpose of this Safety Bulletin is to describe the basics of a First Aid Plan, which is one component of an overall Emergency Response Program. The Bulletin describes the factors to consider when developing and implementing a First Aid Plan, and includes explanations of what should be included in terms of first aid services, equipment, supplies, records, communication and transportation.

### How do you develop the plan?

When planning for first aid at a work site, the first step is to review the potential and known hazards at the work site, and the types of injuries and illnesses likely to occur. Consider information such as the number of workers at the work site per shift, the type of work that is done, hazards to which workers are exposed, and distance from a health care facility as defined by OHS legislation. How close medical treatment services are to the work site will also help determine the services and supplies needed.

This review helps determine the potential injuries and illnesses and the extent of the First Aid Plan that may be required. **When developing a First Aid Plan, keep in mind the worst case scenario.**

### FIRST AIDERS

Alberta's OHS Code, Part 11 First Aid, specifies the number of first aiders, their level of first aid training and supplies and equipment required at work sites. These are based on three criteria:

- 1) how hazardous the work is;
- 2) the time it takes to travel to a health care facility; and
- 3) the number of workers at the work site per shift.

When assessing a particular work situation, you may find that the first aid supplies, equipment and services required by the OHS Code are insufficient to meet the needs of that situation. Employers are encouraged to exceed the minimum requirements in such circumstances.

The OHS Code states that designated workplace first aiders must have approved first aid training from an approved first aid training agency. Approved training agencies and courses are listed on the Occupational Health and Safety web site and these are updated on a regular basis. Before enrolling in a course, make sure it is government approved by checking the listing.

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## EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

In addition to first aid services, the OHS Code specifies the equipment and supplies that are required at a work site.

Contents of the various required first aid kits are listed in Schedule 2, Table 3, and the requirements for stocking a first aid room is listed in Schedule 2, Table 4. Where specialized equipment is made available, the employer must ensure that first aiders are trained and competent in the use of that equipment. It is recommended that medications not be included in first aid kits. Healthcare professionals designated to administer medication should have specific written medical directives from a licensed physician and these should be reviewed on a regular basis.

Training standards for the designated workplace first aider do not include administering medications, although first aiders can assist workers in taking their own medications.

## FIRST AID RECORD KEEPING

Various written records must be developed and maintained as part of a First Aid Plan. The records to include are:

- names of first aiders, including their current first aid certificates and training records;
- first aid supplies and equipment inventories;
- injury and illness first aid records in accordance with the OHS Code;
- procedures for communication, including how to summon help; and
- transportation plans for getting injured or ill workers to health care facilities for treatment.

These records are important for administrative purposes and to meet legal requirements.

## TRANSPORTATION

Employers must arrange for the transportation of injured or ill workers to a health care facility where medical treatment is available. This is a requirement in section 180 of the OHS Code, and applies to all work sites, regardless of the types of injuries and illnesses, the number of workers at the work site, the number and level of trained first aiders and the supplies and equipment required.

Transportation arrangements must be made prior to dispatching workers to a work site, and therefore advanced planning is needed.

Transporting injured or ill workers in urban settings is straightforward and does not normally require any additional, specialized planning since appropriate supplies and transportation services are readily available. There may be cases where potential work exposures require specialized treatment. In these situations, municipal emergency services may need to be contacted ahead of time so that any specialized supplies, equipment, or specific arrangements for transportation or treatment are in place.

More planning is generally required for rural and remote locations where workers may be isolated or working alone. Once again, it is important to consider the extent of possible injuries and illnesses that may occur.

The goal for the transportation section of the First Aid Plan is to get the injured/ill worker to medical treatment as soon as possible.

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Injured or ill workers can be transported by any mode of transportation that meets the requirements of the OHS Code, including a designated vehicle, a ground ambulance from a municipal ambulance service, or emergency air transportation. Prior arrangements should be made with the ambulance service that may be summoned.

If a licensed ambulance service is not available, then the means of transport being used must be suitable considering the distance to be travelled, the types of acute illnesses or injuries, must provide protection against the weather, have a means of communication with the health care facility and be large enough to accommodate a stretcher and an accompanying person. A mobile treatment centre (MTC) is sometimes used to fulfill this requirement.

Before transport in a MTC is undertaken emergency medical dispatch is to be contacted and a rendezvous with an ambulance is to be arranged. A MTC is not meant to replace transport by a licensed ambulance when available.

If an employer is operating a MTC they must ensure the appropriate permits are acquired from Alberta Transportation.

When appropriate, highly specific latitude and longitude coordinates may need to be provided. It is important to provide specific directions with highway, township or range road numbers and landmarks so that those responding can find the work site.

## **FIRST AID RECORD KEEPING**

Communication is one of the most important elements of the First Aid Plan. Communication involves informing workers about:

- who the designated first aiders are;
- how to summon the first aiders;
- what the check-in procedures are when working alone or at an isolated work site;
- where first aid supplies and equipment are located;
- when to summon transportation;
- what type of transportation is available to get injured or ill workers to medical care;
- who to call to summon transportation;
- what the back-up plan is if the first type of transportation is unavailable; and
- when to report incidents to Workplace Health and Safety.

## **Finalizing the plan**

Once developed, the plan should be endorsed by management and communicated to all workers. It should be in writing and accessible to everyone at the work site. No matter what or where injuries or illnesses occur, everyone at the work site should know how to respond and how to get help.

It is recommended that plans be tested before being finalized. Even the best plans can have gaps. It is important to have drills at least once a year, or more often if work locations, workers or other factors change. Before conducting drills, be sure to let emergency response personnel know ahead of time.

An effective First Aid Plan is one that provides appropriate, immediate and temporary first aid and, when necessary, transportation to medical treatment in a timely manner so that health is preserved, safety is protected, and injury and illnesses are not made worse.

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## Contact Us

### OHS Contact Centre

Edmonton & Surrounding area

- 780-415-8690

Throughout Alberta

- 1-866-415-8690

Deaf or hearing impaired:

- 780-427-9999 (Edmonton)
- 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta)

### Website

[work.alberta.ca/ohs-contact us](http://work.alberta.ca/ohs-contact-us)

## Get Copies of OHS Act, Regulation and Code

Alberta Queen's Printer

[www.qp.gov.ab.ca](http://www.qp.gov.ab.ca)

Occupational Health and Safety

[work.alberta.ca/ohs-legislation](http://work.alberta.ca/ohs-legislation)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[Quality Management Plan Requirements for First Aid Training in Alberta Workplaces](#)

[First Aid Records](#)

[Workplace First Aiders and Legal Requirements](#)

[Oxygen Equipment and Related Training Requirements at Work Sites](#)

[Medication in First Aid Kits](#)

[Automated External Defibrillators in the Workplace](#)

[Reporting and Investigating Injuries and Incidents](#)

[Approved First Aid Agencies](#)

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