

Alberta Announces Changes To The Occupational Health And Safety Code, Effective Spring 2023



In December 2022, the Alberta Government [introduced legislation](#) which will amend Alberta's *Occupational Health and Safety Code* (the "**Code**") effective March 31, 2023 (the "**Amendment Regulation**").

The changes brought by the Amendment Regulation will affect employers' health and safety obligations, including with respect to first aid requirements, transportation of injured or ill workers, and personal protective equipment ("**PPE**") standards.

Notable Changes

Emergency Transportation Plan

The Amendment Regulation introduces a requirement for employers to develop an emergency transportation plan, which must, among other things:

- be suitable, with consideration had for the distance to be travelled and the types of illnesses or injuries that may occur at the work site;
- ensure vehicles are suitable and readily available; and

- include systems that allow the persons being transported to communicate with the health care facility to which the ill or injured worker is being taken.

First Aid Kits

First aid kits must meet new standards, a change which may require employers to purchase new first aid kits or otherwise supplement their existing first aid kits with additional items. A table comparing the current and upcoming kit requirements can be found [here](#).

PPE Standards

Revised technical standards are introduced for PPE contemplated in the Code. PPE that previously had to meet a technical standard if manufactured on or after July 1, 2009 must now meet the updated standard if manufactured on or after March 31, 2023. Employers do not need to purchase new PPE if its current equipment meets the standard that was in place at the time of its manufacture and otherwise remains in good working order.

Noise Exposure

The threshold for conducting a noise exposure assessment is reduced from 85 to 82 decibels. Further, employers are now required to ensure that hearing protection devices used and worn by workers have been fit tested in accordance with updated standards.

Oil and Gas Wells

Additional health and safety obligations are introduced for employers or prime contractors involved in activities and/or ancillary processes associated with the exploration, drilling, and extraction of oil, gas, or geothermal energy, as well as the decommissioning of related wells.

New obligations include a requirement for an employer or prime contractor to provide a site-specific orientation to a worker before that worker comes onto the work site for the first time, which orientation must contemplate, among other things:

- site-specific hazards;
- work procedures that must be followed;
- hazard controls in place to protect workers;
- required PPE;
- an emergency response plan;
- processes for reporting hazards;
- site-specific processes for addressing undue hazards, work refusals and resolution; and
- any other matter required to ensure the health and safety of workers at the work site.

Other Changes

Additional changes will affect the parts of the Code respecting, among others:

- explosives;
- mining;
- overhead powerline and electrical utility workers;
- work in confined spaces; and
- the control of hazardous energy.

Conclusion

Employers should carefully consider their health and safety policies and practices to assess whether any changes are necessary to ensure compliance with the changes brought by the Amendment Regulation. If you have any questions about the Amendment Regulation or require any other employment related advice, please contact any member of our Labour & Employment Team.

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