

First Aid Regulations – Ask The Expert



Under new Federal first-aid requirements, kits no longer make you compliant with OHS rules.

Amendments to Part XIII of the Canada Labour Code make first aid a proactive readiness requirement.

QUESTION

I recently read that there have been updates to federal first aid requirements – could you expand upon the updates and what this means for OHS managers?

ANSWER

Although the federal updates are still being finalized, the direction is clear. The focus is shifting to:

- Improved training requirements.
- Greater emphasis on response capability.
- Better planning for isolated and remote workers.
- Stronger recordkeeping and documentation.
- Updated equipment standards.
- Clearer expectations around AEDs and modern tools.
- Post-incident psychological support.
- Ensuring adequate coverage across shifts, floors, and workplaces.

EXPLANATION

The language of the amendments leans toward real preparedness. That is a meaningful change. The federal government is sending a message that first aid is part of a living safety system, not a resting kit on a shelf.

Regulators are also becoming more interested in the concept of proximity. Who can respond? How quickly? With what level of skill? On what floor? In what building? On which shift? In which vehicle? For which tasks?

This is why OHS managers can expect more scrutiny around things like emergency drills, response mapping, and the practical accessibility of equipment.

Even before the amendments are fully implemented, there are steps federally regulated employers can take to stay ahead. The most important is to treat first aid as a capability, not an inventory item.

OHS managers can begin by mapping where their trained responders physically are at any moment. They can identify gaps in shift coverage and geographic coverage. They can talk to supervisors about real-world response scenarios. They can evaluate whether workers feel confident using AEDs, responding to mental health emergencies, or calling for help.