



Employer Responsibilities

Are you an employer? If you are, there are important health and safety obligations to meet. **Employer** includes every person (or company) having in their service under a contract of hiring, whether the contract is written or oral, express or implied, a person engaged in work in or about an industry.

Here are a few examples:

1. If you hire one or more people to work on your woodlot or community forest licence area, and you give them each a paycheque and submit WSBC contributions, income tax, CPP and EI deductions on their behalf, you **are** their employer.
2. If you hire a qualified contractor (has sufficient expertise and knowledge of the work), assign them responsibilities to be aware of what is occurring in the workplace and to exercise control over the workplace on a day-to-day basis, and no one working on the area is your employee, you **are not** the employer.
3. You employ a faller to hand-fall on your licence area. You also hire ABC Contracting Ltd whose employees will skid, process, load and haul the timber. Because there are two employers working in the same area, you sign a Prime Contractor agreement with ABC Contracting Ltd. As the Prime Contractor, ABC is responsible to coordinate the health and safety activities of all employers at the worksite. However, you still have safety responsibilities to your employee – the faller.

Each employer has the following duties:

1. **Ensure** the health and safety of their workers, as well as any other workers at a workplace at which that employer's work is being carried out (e.g., this would include employees of suppliers and service providers and visitors).
2. **Ensure** workers are made aware of known and reasonably foreseeable hazards to which they are likely to be exposed.
3. **Remedy** hazardous workplace conditions (e.g., eliminate exposure to the hazard, implement administrative controls, etc.).
4. **Educate** workers of their rights and responsibilities in the workplace.
5. **Establish** an occupational health and safety program with associated policies.

6. **Provide** information, instruction, training and supervision as necessary to ensure the health and safety of workers (e.g., orientation, instruction necessary to achieve competency, safety meetings, corrective action plans).
7. **Provide** and maintain in good condition protective equipment and clothing, and ensure employees use it.
8. **Compile** and share safety information with workers (e.g., hazard information, work plans, safe work procedures and practices, etc.).
9. **Communicate** any changes in the worksite and any necessary actions (e.g., changes to plans, access, work procedures, etc.).
10. **Conduct** workplace inspections and investigations, and initiate corrective actions; this includes worksites, equipment and employees (e.g., work practices).
11. **Establish** emergency response procedures and ensure workers are familiar with them.
12. **Make** a copy of the [Workers Compensation Act](#) and regulations available to workers.
13. **Consult** and cooperate with worker health and safety representatives including WorkSafeBC.

Key things to remember:

- **Establish a safety program** - The program must identify hazards, assess risks and include measures to manage those hazards (e.g., measures that eliminate or minimize exposure to those hazards).
- **Implement and monitor** - The program must meet the needs of the workers in that workplace and it must include a mechanism the employer uses to regularly (e.g., monthly, annually) check the effectiveness of the program.
- **Practice due diligence** - An employer must take every reasonable precaution to prevent work-related injuries and health issues. Due diligence looks at what was done **before** an accident occurred, not what corrective action was taken after.
- **Multiple responsibilities** – Depending on the circumstances, you may have multiple safety responsibilities – **owner**, employer, supervisor and others. Learn about those duties in other articles in this series.

As an employer, your main obligation is to ensure the health and safety of workers at that workplace. Practically, each employer needs to ask: "Have I done all that I can reasonably do to ensure the health and safety of those workers?"

Resources – click on the links below

[Workers Compensation Act – General duties of employers](#)

[Health and Safety Support Services](#)