



BCFED OHS Standing Committee recommendations for WCB response to COVID19

Communications

- The COVID-19 pandemic is a time for the WCB to implement an extensive communications strategy - TV ads, social media, CEO op-ed, hazard alerts, etc.
- The WCB has run campaigns on other issues – asbestos, for example. Workers, employers and the public need to see the WCB promoting safe work in this unprecedented time.
- Workers must see the WCB as a leader and taking charge of workplace health and safety with a public-facing profile similar to Dr. Bonnie Henry.
- The WCB should provide statistics to the public on a weekly basis regarding conditions in the field, the number of inspections, orders, stop-work orders and penalties issued by name of company.

Website

The WCB website needs more specific information for workers:

a) Helping workers – COVID-19 in the workplace

- It would be helpful to have a section and documents, or a list of FAQs dedicated to workers – it could be titled “Helping Workers--COVID19 in the workplace.”
- Workers have a lot of questions, for example:
 - Can WCB enforce PHO orders on physical distancing?
 - Are JOSH committees still required to meet and continue their work?
 - What kind of PPE should the employer provide?
 - Can I refuse unsafe work if I am concerned that I will contract COVID19 in my workplace?
- The BCFED and their affiliated unions would be an excellent resource for the WCB staff when putting together the list of questions and answers for workers. In addition, the WCB could also use the BCFED’s network to disseminate information.

b) Prevention line – refusing unsafe work

- It is surprising to see that the prevention line is only open Monday – Friday, 8:05 am to 4:30 pm.
- It is essential that when workers refuse unsafe work, especially around COVID19, the issue be dealt with in a timely manner.

- If workers are refusing unsafe work, there is no indication that workers can call the WCB on a weekend or after 4:30 pm to get timely assistance. That must be changed.
- If the WCB has an expedited process for refusals, their website should make it abundantly clear where workers call after 4:30pm or on the weekend, and that they will get a prompt return call.
- When a worker calls the WCB, a step-by-step outline of what to expect would be helpful.

JOHS committees

- During the COVID-19 pandemic the work of the Joint Health and Safety Committee is more important than ever. Yet, workers in many workplaces are being told by employers that there is not enough time to meet during this crisis, and therefore committees are not functioning.
- The WCB must send a clear message to ensure that workers and employers know that nothing has changed in terms of the requirements for JOHS committees to meet monthly.
- WCB prevention officers need to ensure they are talking to worker representatives on the JOHS committee

Exposure Control Plans (ECPs) – and applying the hierarchy of control

- There is little information about ECPs and how to apply the hierarchy to eliminate or minimize exposure (per 6.34).
- It is critical that the employers use this approach in consultation with the JOHSC to identify potentials for exposure by conducting a risk assessment, and problem solve how to eliminate potential exposures for work tasks.

Interagency jurisdiction

- Need to work much more closely and coordinate with the PHO and the BCCDC in regard to enforcement. The cross-jurisdictional enforcement responsibilities must be clearly communicated to employers and workers.
- It is critical to see the WCB leading the way on enforcement of its own requirements.

Workplace violence

The WCB should be providing reminders to employers of their responsibilities to prevent workplace violence and bullying and harassment:

- Affiliates have identified concerns about the increase in workplace violence, for example, in retail where cashiers are expected to enforce the physical distancing of customers.
- Agencies who provide support for women and children experiencing domestic violence are noticing an increase in activity.