

Driving safety

OHS information for employers and workers

This bulletin provides occupational health and safety (OHS) information regarding vehicles being driven for work purposes.

KEY INFORMATION

- A vehicle being used away from a work site for work purposes is itself considered to be a work site under OHS law.
 - When a vehicle is a work site, employer and worker work site health and safety responsibilities apply in regard to the vehicle.
- There are a number of controls that may help address hazards pertaining to vehicles being driven for work.

Legal responsibilities

Under Alberta's *OHS Act*, employers must do everything that is reasonably practicable to ensure the health and safety of workers and others at their work site. Workers, too, must take reasonable care to ensure the health and safety of themselves and others at and around their work site.

When a vehicle (even a personal vehicle) is away from a work site and is used for work purposes (e.g. delivering a parcel or being driven to another office), it is considered a work site under the *OHS Act*. In such situations, the employer and worker responsibilities to ensure work site health and safety apply.

Note that a vehicle being used on a work site (e.g. to haul material) is considered to be equipment on that work site, not a separate work site itself.

For more information, see [Vehicles as work sites](#).

Hazard assessment and control

Under Part 2 of the OHS Code, employers must assess a work site and identify existing and potential hazards before work begins at the site.

For this reason, when a vehicle is being used off-site for work purposes and thus is considered a work site, the employer must identify hazards pertaining to the use of the vehicle (and then eliminate them, or control them if they cannot be eliminated).

Competency and training

Employers are responsible for ensuring workers are trained, competent, and fit to operate vehicles when they are driving for work. The workers are required to take training and apply what they learn on the job. Workers must not carry out work that they are not competent or fit to perform.

An assessment of someone who is required to drive as part of their job must address their qualifications, competencies, and health and fitness.

- Ensure the worker has a valid operator's licence, including training appropriate to the type of driving and type of vehicle used.
- Ensure drivers of commercial vehicles meet the medical standards for drivers.

Working alone

Workers who drive for their job sometimes meet the definition of "working alone" under OHS legislation. A worker is considered to be working alone under OHS legislation when both of the following conditions are met:

- Workers are working by themselves.
- Assistance is not readily available to the worker if there is an injury, illness or emergency.

When a worker is working alone, the employer must:

- Provide the worker with an effective means of communication with the employer or a person designated by the employer. This must be a radio, a phone, or some other effective means of electronic communication.
- Contact (or have the designate contact) the worker at regular intervals appropriate to the hazards associated with the work.

If effective electronic communication is not practicable, the employer or designate must visit the worker, or the worker must contact the employer or designate at intervals appropriate to the nature of the hazard associated with the work.

For more details, see [Working alone](#).

Hazard controls

There are a number of controls that may help address hazards pertaining to vehicles being driven for work purposes. Several of these are detailed below.

Safe-driving policy

A safe-driving policy can help make sure workers drive as safely as possible when doing their jobs. Involve workers in the development of the policy.

The policy can address:

- The organization's commitment to safe driving.
- The organization's stance on:
 - seat belt usage;
 - impairment;
 - vehicle maintenance; and
 - distracted driving.
- Driver competency.
- Driver training.
- Driver, supervisor and employer responsibilities.
- Emergency preparedness.
- Incident reporting and investigation.

For more information on developing a safe driving policy, see [British Columbia's Preferred Practices for Occupational Road Safety](#).

Ergonomics

Ergonomics aims to reduce hazards by adjusting the design of work to fit the abilities of workers. Applying ergonomic principles can help reduce the risk of injury in a variety of work settings.

Different vehicles offer a variety of adjustable features for the seat and steering wheel. In an ergonomically adjusted vehicle, a driver should be able to:

- Get in and out of the vehicle easily.
- Comfortably reach the steering wheel, pedals and controls, with the natural curves of the back still supported by the backrest.
- Easily see mirrors, and see out of the front and side windows.
- Incorporate regular rest breaks to move and change position.
- Comfortably perform non-driving tasks, when parked, as required (for example, filling in log books or using a laptop computer).

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety's [Driving and ergonomics](#) fact sheet and Road Safety at Work's [Set your driving position](#) web page offer detailed

information on adjusting vehicles to improve driving comfort and safety.

Workers sometimes have to load or unload items from a vehicle. Alberta Health Services' [Manual materials handling: Vehicle ergonomics](#) video has tips on lifting items into or out of vehicles, as well as tips on proper driving position.

Pre-trip inspection

A pre-trip vehicle inspection for light vehicles, such as cars, vans and pickup trucks, can help prevent issues on the road. Consider including the following in a pre-trip inspection:

- Check oil and fuel levels.
- Ensure windshield is clean and not damaged.
- Check windshield wipers and wiper fluid.
- Visually inspect tires for pressure and damage or wear.
- Check for leaks (e.g. puddles of fluid under or around the vehicle).
- Check brake lights, signal lights, headlights, and tail lights.
- Verify the vehicle has an emergency kit.
- Confirm horn and heater are functioning.
- Test brakes and parking brake when beginning to drive before entering traffic.

[Road safety at work: Tips for conducting vehicle inspections](#) has more details on vehicle inspections.

This pre-trip inspection is not the same as inspections required under Alberta legislation for commercial drivers.

Impairment

Worker impairment can result from any physical or psychological condition that affects the worker's ability to safely perform assigned work.

Employers can encourage workers to disclose known impairment that may affect workplace health and safety without needing to disclose the cause of the impairment. The risk of injury or illness increases when the hazard is not identified and/or not controlled.

Consider developing an impairment policy to clarify the organization's definition of impairment and the consequences of working impaired.

For more information, see [Impairment in the workplace](#).

Vehicle maintenance

Improperly maintained vehicles can result in dangerous conditions ranging from a worker stranded with a flat tire to a collision with another vehicle due to worn tires or faulty brakes.

A vehicle owner's manual will have a maintenance schedule for what would be considered typical use of the vehicle. However, a maintenance schedule should also consider the age of the vehicle and the driving conditions.

- Employ a certified technician to perform maintenance where required.
- Require drivers to perform a pre-trip inspection.
- Have a certified technician do a thorough inspection of each vehicle regularly.

For recommendations on vehicle maintenance, see [Road safety at work: Maintenance that's right for you and your vehicle](#).

Road conditions

It's important to know the conditions ahead before setting out and during travel. For current road conditions in Alberta, visit [511 Alberta](#).

Reduce risks by properly planning each trip. Things to consider in a trip plan include:

- Type and condition of vehicle.
- Weather forecast.
- Time of day (e.g. sun glare at sunrise and sunset, nighttime driving).
- Schedules, distance, and timing of the trip.
- Type of road the vehicle will travel on (e.g. divided highway, undivided highway, city or country roads, dirt roads, gravel roads).
- Route plan.
- Potential for wildlife.
- Any known risk associated with the route (e.g. high-collision areas, roads with heavy traffic, construction zones)

The type of road a vehicle will travel on is an important factor to consider. In Alberta, the majority of fatal collisions happen in rural areas, whereas injury and property damage collisions happen more often in urban areas. For more information, visit [Collision, vehicle and licence statistics](#).

Vehicle emergency kit

Preparing for an emergency while on the road can give a worker and their employer peace of mind. It can also mean the difference between life and death if an emergency occurs.

The [Alberta Emergency Management Agency](#) recommends that a basic emergency kit for vehicles include the following items:

- Food that won't spoil.
- Water (in plastic bottles so they won't break if frozen; change every six months).
- Blanket.
- Extra clothing and shoes.
- First aid kit.
- Seatbelt cutter.
- Small shovel, scraper and snow brush.
- Candle in a deep can and matches.
- Whistle.
- Road maps.
- Flashlight (battery-powered or crank).
- Radio (battery-powered or crank).
- Booster cables and tow rope.
- Fire extinguisher.
- Warning light or road flares.
- Sand, salt or cat litter (non-clumping).
- Antifreeze and windshield washer fluid.

In an emergency situation, turn on your vehicle's emergency or hazard flashers and stay in the vehicle with your seatbelt on. If you choose to exit the vehicle, wait ahead of your car and stay well off the road.

Contact us

OHS Contact Centre

Anywhere in Alberta

- 1-866-415-8690

Edmonton and surrounding area

- 780-415-8690

Deaf or hard of hearing (TTY)

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

Notify OHS of health and safety concerns

alberta.ca/file-complaint-online.aspx

Call the OHS Contact Centre if you have concerns that involve immediate danger to a person on a work site.

Report a workplace incident to OHS

alberta.ca/ohs-complaints-incident.aspx

Website

alberta.ca/ohs

Get copies of the OHS Act, Regulation and Code

Alberta Queen's Printer

qp.gov.ab.ca

OHS

alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx

For more information

Alberta Health Services – Manual materials handling:
Vehicle ergonomics

youtu.be/iFaCOreCvVY

British Columbia's Preferred Practices for Occupational Road Safety

roadsafetyatwork.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/ORS-Preferred-Practices.pdf

Driving and ergonomics fact sheet (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety)

cchohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/driving.html

Collision, vehicle and licence statistics

alberta.ca/collision-vehicle-licence-statistics.aspx

Driving for work: Developing safe practices for employers and workers (BP014)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp014

Hazard assessment for driving – eLearning (EL006)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/el006

Impairment in the workplace (BP033)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp033

Working alone (WA002)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/wa002

Road safety at work

roadsafetyatwork.ca

Vehicles as work sites (LI066)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li066

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Classification: Public

