

Driving safety tips

OHS information for employers and workers

This bulletin is intended to raise employer and worker general safety awareness. It outlines some common driving hazards and some suggested controls you may wish to consider to help address those hazards.

KEY INFORMATION

- A vehicle is a work site when it is being used off the work site for work purposes.
- An employer is responsible for protecting workers on the work site.
- Drivers must be trained, competent and fit to operate vehicles.

A vehicle is a work site when it is being used for work purposes such as driving to deliver a parcel, driving between work locations, or driving off-road. For more information on when a vehicle is considered a work site, read [Vehicles as work sites](#).

An employer must assess a work site and identify existing and potential hazards before work begins at the work site or prior to the construction of a new work site.



-OHS Code, Part 2, section 7(1).

Responsibilities

Under Alberta's *OHS Act*, employers must do everything that is reasonably practicable to protect the health and safety of workers and others at the work site.

Workers also have an obligation to take reasonable care to protect the health and safety of themselves and others at and around the work site.

Depending on your operation, employers and workers will need to follow additional rules under Alberta's OHS legislation.

The driver

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 their 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.

Ergonomics

Ergonomics aims to reduce hazards by adjusting the design of work to fit the abilities of the workers. Applying ergonomics can help reduce the risk of injury.

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](#) offer detailed information on adjusting vehicles to improve driving comfort and safety.

Vehicle use is often associated with manual handling tasks to load and unload items from the vehicle. The Alberta Health Services video, [Manual materials handling: Vehicle ergonomics](#), has tips on lifting as well as driving position.

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Impairment

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

Employers may 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.

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
 - 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, review [B.C.'s Preferred Practices for Occupational Road Safety](#).

The bulletin [Impairment in the workplace](#) can help you recognize and address impairment issues.

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.

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
- visual inspection of tires for pressure and damage or wear
- visual inspection for leaks (e.g. puddles of fluid under or around the vehicle)
- check brake, signal lights, headlights and tail lights
- verify the vehicle has an emergency kit
- confirm horn and heater are functioning
- test brakes and park 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.

- 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

As a hazard, road conditions are difficult to control.

For current road conditions in Alberta, visit [511 Alberta](#).

Reduce risks by properly planning each trip.

Things to consider:

- 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, high volume construction)

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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](#).

Working alone

A worker is working alone if they are alone at a work site and assistance is not readily available in case of an emergency, injury or illness. Workers who drive for their job often find themselves working alone.

In addition to following the rules of the road, employers have legislated responsibilities when a worker is working alone.

The employer must:

- Provide the worker an effective way of communicating with individuals who can respond if the worker needs assistance.
- Provide appropriate first aid and emergency supplies.
- Have a procedure to track the whereabouts of the worker that takes into account the hazards that might be involved.

Other controls may include:

- Have workers review the organization's safe driving policy on a regular basis.
- Allow sufficient rest time for workers who are travelling on long trips.

Read [Occupational health and safety working alone requirements](#) to learn more.

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.

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
- roadmaps
- 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

Contact us

OHS Contact Centre

(Complaints, questions, report serious incidents)

Anywhere in Alberta

- 1-866-415-8690

Edmonton and surrounding area

- 780-415-8690

Deaf or hearing impaired

- 1-866-232-7215 (Alberta)
- 780-427-9999 (Edmonton)

File a complaint online

alberta.ca/file-complaint-online.aspx

Report a potentially serious incident online

alberta.ca/report-potentially-serious-incidents.aspx

Report a mine or mine site incident online

alberta.ca/report-mine-or-mine-site-incidents.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

BC'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

Occupational health and safety working alone requirements (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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