

British Columbia

LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Workers' Compensation

Jul 13: WorkSafeBC proposed keeping average workers' compensation base rates at \$1.55 per \$100 of assessable payroll. Rates will decrease for 30% of employers, stay the same for 22%, and increase for 48%. Base rate increases won't exceed 15%. The agency will also distribute \$960 million in surplus funds through discounted rates and assessment credits.

Action Point: In addition to earning workers' comp rebates, [studies show that companies with COR or similar recognition have lower injury rates.](#)

Respiratory Protection

Jul 22: WorkSafeBC announced that revised [OHS requirements](#) for use of tight-fitting respirators will officially take effect on November 6. The new rules eliminate the term "clean shaven" and replace it with new language requiring employers to ensure that nothing is allowed to intrude between the skin of a worker's face or neck and the respirator seal, or otherwise interfere with the proper functioning of the respirator.

Action Point: Requiring workers who use tight-fitting respirators to be clean shaven can expose you to discrimination liability risks when shaving would violate a worker's religion. Find out more about workers' rights to safety policy exemptions and other reasonable accommodations and [how far you must bend PPE rules to accommodate workers' religion.](#)

Material Handling

Jul 22: WorkSafeBC approved significant [changes](#) to OHS regulations (Part 12) governing automotive lifts, portable vehicle lifting devices, jack stands, ramps, and other vehicle supports used in repair shops, dealerships, fleet maintenance facilities, tow truck operations, etc. The amendments update equipment technical standards, expand OHS requirements beyond traditional automotive lifts to a broader range of vehicle support equipment, and clarify employers' obligations for equipment inspection, maintenance, use, and worker protection when vehicles are raised.

Effective date: March 1, 2027.

Action Point: Jacks and automotive lifts are extremely hazardous. Find out how to implement an effective [Tire, Wheel & Rim Servicing Safety & Compliance Game Plan](#) at your workplace.

Crane Safety

Jul 22: WorkSafeBC approved [changes](#) to OHS regulations provisions affecting employers' obligation to certify certain kinds of dangerous equipment as being safe for use, including tower cranes, placing booms, masts, and truck-mounted concrete pumps with integral placing booms. The changes address how often certification is required and how and where certification records are kept. Effective date:

September 1, 2027.

Action Point: Use the OHS Insider [Cranes/Hoists/Lifting Device Compliance Game Plan](#) to prevent crane violations at your workplace.

Training

Jul 6: British Columbia expanded skilled trades certification to tower and mobile crane operators to ensure consistent training and certification standards and improve crane safety. Result: Individuals working as tower or mobile crane operators have one year to register as an apprentice with SkilledTradesBC or take the skilled trades certification exam and become a journey person before the new requirements take effect on July 5, 2027.

Heat Stress

Jul 21: With temperatures climbing into the mid-30s in some parts of the province, WorkSafeBC reminded employers to take steps to protect workers from heat-related illness. Between 2021 and 2025, WorkSafeBC accepted 335 heat-related injury claims, including 47 in 2025. Outdoor workers in construction, agriculture, transportation, and public works are at high risk, as are indoor workers in kitchens, warehouses, and manufacturing facilities, especially in spaces without air conditioning.

Action Point: Find out how to implement an effective [Heat Stress Safety & Compliance Game Plan](#) at your workplace.

Young Workers

Jul 23: With many companies hiring seasonal staff during the summer, WorkSafeBC reminded employers that young and new workers remain at higher risk of workplace injury during their first months on the job. In 2025, WorkSafeBC accepted more than 7,000 claims from young workers who were injured on the job in BC. Between 2021 and 2025, 18 young workers lost their lives due to workplace incidents. Research shows that while young workers value safety, many hesitate to speak up about unsafe work.

Action Point: Find out how to implement a legally sound and effective [New and Young Workers Safety and Compliance Game Plan](#).

Transportation Safety

Jul 20: Under newly proposed [regulations](#), new drivers won't have to pass the second road test to progress to a Class 5 licence. Instead, they'll be subject to a driving record assessment showing whether they meet the minimum driving experience as a novice driver. Unsafe behaviours, including convictions for speeding and electronic device use, will result in re-starting the "novice" driving period. Drivers who pass the assessment will be eligible to move to a Class 5 licence with a 12-month restricted period during which they'll be subject to a zero blood-alcohol and drug restriction. Effective date: October 19, 2026.

New Laws

Aug 1: New [regulations](#) took effect to streamline Employment Standard Branch employee complaint and dispute-resolution processes under the *Employment Standards Act* and *Temporary Foreign Worker Protection Act*. In addition to promoting quick resolution of straightforward complaints, the new rules require

employers who appeal determinations to deposit amounts owed before the appeal proceeds.

New Laws

Jul 30: The federal government announced an investment of more than \$152 million in 54 new infrastructure projects across British Columbia through the Strategic Priorities Fund. The money will go to infrastructure projects that are beyond the financial capacity of a single local government, under the province's Build Communities Strong Fund (BCSF) Community stream.

New Laws

Jul 2: The federal government will provide billions of dollars in funding for major development projects across the province under the new Canada-British Columbia Cooperative Prosperity Agreement Central, including up to \$3 billion for the Fraser River Tunnel Project, along with commitments to the Red Chris mine expansion and North Coast Transmission Line. The Agreement also confirms that the North Coast tanker ban will be fully maintained without modification and that BC will get compensation for environmental risk if the federal government imposes a pipeline on the province.

Industry Challenges

Jul 13: BC Timber Sales expanded its Value-Added Manufacturing Program by creating a new dedicated category that includes custom cutters and processors without their own sawmilling facilities who make value-added manufactured wood products, including specialty products like customer-specific lumber products, Japanese temple components, and windows and doors. The custom cutter and processor sector directly employs an estimated 250 people, while also playing an important role in the economy of the Lower Mainland.

Drugs & Alcohol

Jul 9: According to the BC Coroners Service, 109 people in the province died due to suspected use of toxic drugs in May. The good news is that this is the lowest number of monthly deaths due to suspected unregulated drug toxicity reported by the Coroners Service since 79 deaths were reported in February 2020. During the first five months of 2026, deaths among people between 30 and 59 accounted for 68% of drug-toxicity deaths in the province, with 76% of the victims male. Since 2021, the death rate among people 60 and older has remained relatively stable, while the death rate among those 19 to 59 has declined significantly.

Action Point: Find out [how to implement a workplace Naloxone Program to](#) save lives and prevent opioid overdose deaths at your site.

Workers' Compensation

Jul 9: WorkSafeBC revised a classification [policy](#) in its Assessment Manual to clarify that firms engaged in forest tenure operations in connection with a sawmill may be assigned to multiple classification units. The revised policy applies to all decisions made on or after January 1, 2027.

Environmental

August 14: August 14 is the deadline to comment on [proposed changes](#) to the province's processes for appealing government natural resource determinations. The new procedures, which apply to appeals heard by the BC Environmental Appeal Board and Forest Appeals Commission, are designed to make permitting and other environmental decisions faster and more efficient.

CASES

Airborne Contaminants: Hotel Hit with \$624,000 Fine for Failure to Contain Asbestos and Lead Hazards

An \$8 billion hotel developer/manager was on the receiving end of the highest reported OHS fine in not just the province but all of Canada this year. The problems began when WorkSafeBC inspectors at a hotel renovation site observed asbestos-containing material (ACM) in the drywall, as well as mould on a wall and debris from paint containing lead. The renovation workers weren't trained or certified in asbestos abatement and most of them weren't using respiratory protection. There was no negative pressure containment or decontamination in place, and the firm didn't do hazard assessments or have exposure controls plans for asbestos and lead. Additional OHS violations included failure to ensure that hazardous materials were safely contained or removed or provide WorkSafeBC a notice of project at least 48 hours before certain work activities involving ACMs began, a repeat violation. The price tag: administrative monetary penalties of \$624,051 [*Northland Properties Corporation*].

Action Point: Don't let this happen to you. Find out how to implement a legally sound [Airborne Contaminant Exposure Control Plan](#) at your workplace.

First Aid: Mill Must Use Union Workers to Serve as First Aid Attendants

In 2024, OHS regulations took effect increasing the number and certification level of First Aid Attendants ("FAAs") required at workplaces. Instead of posting union workers in the First Aid/Security classification as it had always done to meet increased first aid coverage requirements, a pulp mill decided to train non-union supervisors to serve as FAAs. The union accused the mill of violating the collective agreement. The mill claimed the assignment was valid, noting that the agreement didn't specifically address the issue. The BC arbitrator sided with the union. The collective agreement banned use of non-union supervisors for work normally performed by union workers. And serving as an on-site FAA **was** work normally performed by union members [*Cariboo Pulp & Paper Company v Unifor, Local 1115*, 2026 CanLII 75558 (BC LA), July 20, 2026].

Action Point: Find out how to implement an effective [First Aid Compliance Game Plan](#) at your workplace.

Drugs & Alcohol: Top Court Okays Opioid Costs Class Action Against Pharma Companies

BC's highest court affirmed the province's right to proceed with its class action lawsuit against opioid manufacturers, distributors, and consultants. Initially filed under the *Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act* in 2018, the lawsuit is being led by BC's government on behalf of all federal, provincial, and territorial

governments in Canada seeking to recover healthcare costs related to opioid use disorder. The suit accuses pharmaceutical companies of engaging in deceptive marketing and wrongfully promoted opioids for chronic pain, driving the nationwide addiction crisis [[Noramco LLC v. British Columbia](#), 2026 BCCA 272 (CanLII), June 24, 2026].

Airborne Contaminants: Not Letting Temp with Office Allergies Work from Home Is Not Discrimination

Claiming that something in the office building was making her sick, a client service advisor hired under a temporary contract asked for permission to work from home. The company said no because the advisor's performance didn't meet the standards required for employees to be allowed to telecommute and because the doctor's note she provided was too vague to support her need to work from home. The advisor sued the company for failure to accommodate her disability, but the human rights commission dismissed the complaint. After a series of lost appeals, she took her claim to the BC Court of Appeal, which refused to second guess the lower court's upholding the company's decision to deny permission to work from home based on its telecommuting policy and lack of clear medical information as reasonable [[McNeil v. British Columbia \(Human Rights Tribunal\)](#), 2026 BCCA 296 (CanLII), July 10, 2026].

Action Point: Although the company prevailed, the case illustrates how indoor air quality complaints can lead to liability under not just OHS but also discrimination laws. Find out [how to comply with OHS indoor air quality requirements](#).