

British Columbia

LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Laws

Jan 30: British Columbia and BC Hydro launched a new competitive process for artificial intelligence (AI) and data centres projects that prioritize clean electricity. The allocation targets for these projects are for as much as 400 megawatts for the first two years. The new requirement doesn't apply to traditional industries, like mining, liquefied natural gas, forestry, manufacturing, or hydrogen for domestic use.

Industry Challenges

Jan 21: British Columbia extended the environmental permits issued for the Mt. Milligan mine expansion near Fort St. James by seven years, allowing the project to operate until 2035. The government says the extension will preserve 574 jobs and as much as \$400 million in projected capital spending.

Drugs & Alcohol

Jan 14: Faced with disappointing results, British Columbia says it won't ask the federal government to renew the *Criminal Code* exemption it secured in 2023 when launching a new pilot program to decriminalize drug use by persons with addictions. The province affirmed that it still considers addiction a health and not a criminal justice issue and pledged to continue working to make it easier for people to get the help they need to battle it.

Action Point: Find out how to use the [OHS Insider Substance Abuse Compliance Game Plan](#) to curb drugs and alcohol at your workplace.

Drugs & Alcohol

Jan 14: British Columbia expanded its Access Central phone line providing a single point of entry connecting adults with addictions to certified health providers in their region. First launched in Greater Vancouver in 2023, the service is now available in the Fraser Health, Interior Health, and Island Health regions. Access Central will soon go province-wide once the planned new Northern Health region line goes active.

Workers' Compensation

Feb 28: February 28 is the last day for the first group of British Columbia employers to submit their actual 2025 payroll numbers and 2026 estimates to WorkSafeBC. For some employers, the reporting deadline is either March 15 or March 31, depending on the last 2 digits of their employer account number.

Workers' Compensation

Jan 20: WorkSafeBC issued an [Expression of Interest](#) seeking health professionals and medical experts to serve on a new Expert Advisory Panel charged with developing a Clinical Recovery Framework for injured workers that will clearly define what recovery means and establish evidence-informed principles to guide effective recovery management.

Environmental

Jan 27: British Columbia's Ministry of Forests established a new [method](#) of measuring the effects of silviculture investments on greenhouse-gas emissions for use in the government approval process for forest projects. The new method will ensure consistent and transparent evaluation of the environmental impact of such projects.

Environmental

Jan 26: Starting April 1, British Columbia will process mineral exploration permits within 40 to 140 days, depending on the complexity of the proposed project. If timelines aren't reached, applications will be escalated to the chief permitting officer for decision within 14 days.

CASES

Discipline: Nonculpable Safety Infractions Merit a Written Warning, Not Demotion

A paper mill demoted a senior equipment operator for failure to obey safety rules, concluding that while his intentions were good, he just wasn't capable of performing the job safely as he was trained to do. The union claimed the demotion was unfair and potentially disability discrimination since it was based on "nonculpable incapacity." The British Columbia arbitrator upheld the grievance. While a written warning would have been a reasonable response, permanent demotion was excessive. There was also evidence that the mill's perception that the operator had a mental disability factored into the demotion decision. However, the arbitrator stopped short of ordering the mill to pay damages for acting in bad faith [[Cariboo Pulp and Paper Co. v Unifor, Local 1115](#), 2026 CanLII 4947 (BC LA), January 5, 2026].

Action Point: Don't make the same mistake. Find out how to use [progressive discipline](#) effectively to enforce your workplace health and safety rules.

Workplace Violence: Second Death Threat Incident Is Just Cause to Terminate

A sawmill worker let his supervisor know "how easy it would be to kill" someone and proceeded to play a song about suicide that he described as his "new favourite song." Instead of disciplining him, the sawmill attributed the comment to the mental health issue it knew the worker had and put him on leave before allowing him to return, provided that he keep his conduct "appropriate, respectful and non-threatening" and continue receiving treatment for his condition. So, when the allegedly told a new employee that "I could kill people" in the facility, he got fired. The worker vigorously denied making the comment. After hearing from the witnesses and accused, the British Columbia arbitrator concluded that the worker did make the comment and lied to investigators in denying it. Result: The seriousness of the offence combined with the worker's history, failure to accept responsibility and lack of remorse constituted just cause to terminate [[West Fraser Mills \(100 Mile Lumber\) v United Steelworkers, Local 1-2017](#), 2026 CanLII 578 (BC LA), January 2, 2026].

Action Point: Are you doing enough to prevent violence at your workplace? Find out

how to perform a [Workplace Violence Compliance Audit](#) to find out.