Certificate of Recognition 2019

Information for employers and prime contractors

To obtain a Certificate of Recognition (COR) in Alberta, an employer's health and safety management system needs to meet standards developed by the Government of Alberta and our certifying partners.

Effective January 1, 2019, there are updates to the COR standards. This information bulletin answers some frequently asked questions about COR and gives an overview of the ten elements in the 2019 COR standards.

Why get a COR?

Injury and illness prevention

In 2018, the University of British Columbia (UBC) conducted a study of Alberta COR holders. The [UBC research](#) found that from 2011 to 2015, Alberta COR holders had a 21 per cent lower lost time claim rate and a 13 per cent lower disabling injury rate than Alberta employers without COR.

Lower costs

Injury and illness prevention leads to lower claim costs and reduced Workers' Compensation Board – Alberta (WCB) premiums.

As well, COR holders are eligible for a WCB premium rebate of five to 20 per cent, per year.

Morale and productivity

Workers feel valued when their employer invests in their health and safety. This in turn means better employee motivation, commitment and retention – all of which are drivers for improved productivity and social well-being.

Competitive advantage

Investing in health and safety is part of corporate social responsibility, reputation and brand management.

COR is required for many bidding processes in Alberta, especially in the oil and gas, transportation, forestry and construction sectors.

Does having a COR mean I'm compliant with legislation?

Some sections of the COR standards refer to legislation and others mirror language used in Alberta occupational health and safety (OHS) legislation. However:

- COR audits are not compliance audits, and in most elements, they are strictly looking at whether your health and safety management system meets the COR standards.
- The pass for COR certification audits is 80 per cent overall, with no element less than 50 per cent. Legislated requirements, on the other hand, must be fully met wherever they apply.
- Audits measure a single point in time – and as a voluntary program, employers can opt out of COR at any time. Compliance with legislation is required at all times.

COR holders take training and build systems that may make achieving compliance easier, but the only way to comply with OHS legislation is to meet the requirements directly.

How do I get a COR?

Go to [alberta.ca](#) and search "Partnerships in Injury Reduction" to find links to the certifying partners. Select the certifying partner that best suits your company or organization and contact them for more information. This bulletin is only an overview of the standards; for full requirements, you must refer to your certifying partner.

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Element 1

Management, leadership and organizational commitment

COR standards require that:

- Employees (senior managers, managers, supervisors and workers) know:
    - how OHS legislation applies to their work, and any work they oversee;
    - **New!** their rights and responsibilities;
    - their assigned work site health and safety roles and responsibilities; and
    - how they are held accountable.
- Current legislation is readily available.
- A health and safety policy is developed that:
    - **New!** addresses the protection and maintenance of employee health and safety;
    - is signed by the current senior manager; and
    - is communicated to all employees.
- Worker participation in health and safety is encouraged and supported by management.
- Managers demonstrate commitment to health and safety, including by:
    - setting direction and taking accountability;
    - **New!** communicating about health and safety, including getting feedback from workers;
    - participating in OHS activities;
    - **New!** ensuring supervisors have appropriate OHS training; and
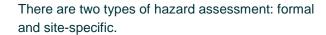   - **New!** providing resources such as time, money and equipment, for health and safety.
- Supervisors enforce hazard control use and ensure their workers have received orientations.

Element 2

Hazard assessment

Hazard assessment is a written process that evaluates existing and potential hazards at work, before they cause harm. Hazard assessment is also the basis of an effective health and safety management system.

There are two types of hazard assessment: formal and site-specific.

> A **hazard** is "a situation, condition or thing that may be dangerous to health and safety".
>
> There are four generally recognized categories of hazards: physical, chemical, biological and psychological.

COR standards require:

- Formal hazard assessment for all jobs and tasks.
- Worker participation in formal hazard assessment.
- Training for employees who lead formal hazard assessments.
- Systems for workers to report hazards.

> **Formal hazard assessment** helps prevent missed and uncontrolled hazards.
>
> Formal hazard assessments are reviewed regularly, and consider inspection and incident investigation findings; new or changed equipment or work processes; and hazards identified in site-specific hazard assessments. Hazard assessments are required at intervals, when a new process is introduced, when there are changes to operations or work processes and before the construction of significant additions or alterations to a work site.

COR standards provide the following steps for formal hazard assessment:

- Systematically identifying:
    - all jobs in an organization or at a work site;
    - all tasks done in each job; and
    - all existing or potential hazards, related to each task.
- Risk evaluation and control implementation for all hazards.
- Regular review and updates.

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A site-specific hazard assessment is performed anytime there may be changing conditions at the work site. This may be required before each work shift begins or at intervals during the work shift. The purpose of a site-specific hazard assessment is to:

- Determine if new hazards are present that need to be controlled.
- Ensure required controls are in place to address identified hazards.
- Identify any other condition present that may create a hazard to workers.

In essence, a site-specific hazard assessment is a day-to-day look around to ensure the work site is healthy and safe before work begins.

Element 3

Hazard control

Hazard elimination and control flow directly from hazard assessment.

If a hazard cannot be reasonably eliminated, employers must take measures to reduce the risk of harm. These measures are called controls and they follow a hierarchy of use – that is, used in order, and only moving to the next level, if the first level is not reasonably practicable. This hierarchy is fundamental to OHS best practices and required in COR standards.

- **Engineering controls** reduce risk at the source. They are the most effective type of controls, and must be considered first, if a hazard cannot be eliminated. Examples include:
  - equipment guards;
  - sound barriers or insulation that reduce excessive noise levels; or
  - ventilation systems for exhaust.
- **Administrative controls,** such as codes of practice, safe work procedures and training, are the next best option and make work safer - if they are known, followed and kept current. Examples required in the COR standards are:

New!
  - violence and harassment prevention plans that meet or exceed legislated requirements; and

  - preventative maintenance programs.
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE)** is worn by an employee. PPE is the least effective control and should only be used in combination with other controls - including but not limited to, training on proper selection, use and maintenance.
- **A combination of controls** may be used as a last option, if justified by better worker safety. Combinations are the last resort in hazard control because they rely on all combined controls working as expected.

COR standards also require that employers have systematic processes in place to ensure:

- Controls are implemented, employees are using them and their use is enforced.

Alberta OHS officers doing compliance inspections or investigating work site incidents often encounter situations where controls are not in use – even though the controls are required under law; included in the work site hazard assessments; included in worker training and available for use at the work site.

Elements 1, 2 and 3 help employers put checks and balances in place to make scenarios like this less likely.

- New or updated control use is communicated to affected employees.

Element 4   **New!**

Joint work site health and safety committees (HSCs), and health and safety (HS) representatives

COR standards require an HSC for employers with 20 or more workers, and HS representatives for employers with five or more workers, for work lasting 90 days or more.

(Note this is the COR standard requirement. Please refer to legislation for legal requirements.)

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COR holders must ensure:

- HSC terms of reference, or HS representative policy and procedures guidelines meet or exceed legislated requirements.
- HSC member/HS representative contact information is posted.
- Systems are in place:
  - for the HSC or HS representative to address health and safety concerns and complaints, and provide recommendations; and
  - to ensure timely resolution of health and safety concerns and complaints.
- Committee meeting minutes are posted.
- HSC members and HS representatives are trained for their role, and know their duties and responsibilities.

Element 5

Qualifications, orientation and training

COR standards require employers systematically ensure and verify:

- All employees have the right qualifications for their positions.
- Health and safety orientations cover critical information, including OHS rights and obligations, and are completed and signed off before a new or re-assigned employee starts regular duties. **New!**
- Job-specific training:
  - includes identifying hazards and related controls;
  - **New!** assesses worker competency (including appropriate practical demonstrations); and
  - is provided to new and re-assigned workers.
- Ongoing or refresher training is provided at set intervals, or if required by operational changes.

Competent means, "adequately qualified, suitably trained and with sufficient experience to safely perform work without supervision or with only a minimal degree of supervision".

To train a worker means, "to give information and explanation to a worker with respect to a particular subject-matter and to require a practical demonstration that the worker has acquired knowledge or skill related to the subject-matter."

Element 6 **New!**

Other parties at or in the vicinity of the work site

This element helps employers take reasonable measures to keep everyone on, or close to, a work site healthy and safe.

Two standards in this element apply to all COR holders:

- Providing visitor orientations.
- Having a process in place to take into account and protect any persons who pass by or are close to the work site and could be harmed by work site activities.

Other standards in this element apply to COR holders who contract out work to other employers or self-employed persons. These COR holders must:

- Develop and use a selection process that includes health and safety criteria.
- Provide site orientations and communicate site-specific policies and procedures to employers and self-employed persons under their direction.
- Communicate hazards and controls to all external work site parties carrying out work or receiving products on site.
- Have processes in place so employers and self-employed persons under their direction know:
  - their work site responsibilities, including alerting others on site about unsafe conditions and reporting and investigating work site incidents; and
  - how they will be held accountable, if they don't follow site rules and carry out their responsibilities.

- Have systems in place to:
    - communicate operational changes that affect health and safety to other employers and self-employer persons on site; and
    - regularly monitor their contracted employers and self-employed persons.
- Ensure health and safety information is readily available to affected work site parties, as per legislated requirements.

Element 7

Inspections

COR holders must have and follow a formal inspection process. This process has to meet or exceed applicable legislated requirements including:

- Inspection frequency.
- Participation from employees at all levels of the organization, including workers.

New!

COR standards also require:

- Training for inspection leads.
- Inspection checklists or forms.
- A system to correct identified deficiencies.

> **Inspection processes** depend on the nature of your business. When customized to work sites and operations, formal inspections can proactively identify new hazards, and help confirm that the controls in place are working.

Element 8

Emergency response

A serious emergency can affect health, safety and incomes.

Sometimes, emergencies are unforeseeable. Emergency response planning can help reduce the severity of loss.

COR standards require employers to reference applicable legislation, and:

- Identify all potential emergencies at the work site.
- Develop a written emergency response plan for every potential emergency.
- Have emergency communication systems in place.
- Ensure all employees have had appropriate training, and know their responsibilities under the emergency response plans.
- Conduct drills, and use the results to improve planning and keep emergency response plans current.
- Ensure emergency equipment, including first aid supplies and facilities, meets legislated requirements.

Element 9

Incident investigations

Incident investigation is an important part of illness and injury prevention.

COR holders must have incident reporting and investigation procedures that include:

- Reporting requirements, including timelines, for:
    - work refusals;
    - incidents; and
    - occupational illness.

New!

- Requirements to:
    - identify causal or contributory factors; and
    - implement corrective actions.
- Management/supervisor oversight.

As well, COR standards require:

- Training is provided to employees who conduct investigations.
- Workers participate in investigations.

New!

- Investigations are completed in a timely manner.
- Investigation findings are communicated to employees.
- Employees know about and use their incident reporting procedures.

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COR reporting adopts legislative requirements – such as section 40 of the OHS Act, Part 4 of the Alberta *Workers' Compensation Act* or other applicable legislation– but also goes beyond legislation. For example, COR holders must have internal reporting requirements and investigation procedures for near misses, defined in the COR standards as, "An undesired event that under slightly different circumstances could have resulted in personal harm, property damage, or loss."

Want more about COR?

Visit **alberta.ca**, and search "Partnerships in Injury Reduction" for:

- More about the program
- Links to the certifying partners
- Current COR holder list

Element 10

System administration

This element focuses on record keeping, evaluation and continuous improvement.

In addition to following their audit cycle, COR holders must ensure that they:

- Have systems in place for two-way communication between management, workers, and the HSC and/or HS representative.
- Make OHS information readily available for employees. **New!**
- Analyze statistics and records, at least once per year, to identify trends and potential system improvements.
- Develop and carry out annual health and safety action plans that include follow-up on identified deficiencies.
- Communicate system evaluation and action plan results to employees.

Contact Alberta OHS

OHS Contact Centre

Anywhere in Alberta
- 1-866-415-8690

Edmonton & area
- 780-415-8690

Deaf or hearing impaired:
- 780-427-9999 (Edmonton)
- 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta)

Website

Go to **alberta.ca** and search "occupational health and safety"