

# Incident reporting and investigation

## OHS information for employers and prime contractors

This bulletin describes incidents that prime contractors – or employers, if there is no prime contractor – must report to Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS). It includes how and when to notify OHS, and incident investigation requirements.

### KEY INFORMATION

- You must report certain types of incidents to OHS.
- You must investigate reportable incidents and provide an investigation report to OHS.
- Incident reporting and investigation requirements are set out in Section 33 of the OHS Act.
- The OHS Contact Centre is available for incident reporting 24 hours per day, every day of the year.

### Call OHS 1-866-415-8690 as soon as possible if:

- A worker has died at work or from an injury or illness connected to the work site.
- You believe a worker has been or will be admitted to hospital (beyond treatment in an emergency room or urgent care facility) because of a workplace injury, illness or incident.
- A person has been injured or become ill because of:
  - An unplanned or uncontrolled explosion, fire or flood.
  - A crane, derrick or hoist collapse or upset.
  - A (full or partial) building or structural collapse or failure.

### DON'T DISTURB THE SCENE

No-one can disturb the scene of a serious incident, illness or injury described above, unless:

- An OHS officer or police officer gives you permission to do so.
- They need to attend to a person who is ill, injured or killed.
- They need to prevent further injuries, illnesses or incidents.
- They need to protect property endangered by the incident.

The scene is the immediate area where the injury, illness or incident occurred. You also cannot alter, move or remove equipment, documentation or other information related to the injury, illness or incident.

If you're not sure, call the OHS Contact Centre (1-866-415-8690).

### Other reporting requirements

You must call the OHS Contact Centre **as soon as possible** to report that a worker has been [overexposed to radiation](#).

You must report the following online at [oportal.labour.alberta.ca](https://oportal.labour.alberta.ca):

- Mine or mine site incidents ([Table 2 on page 7](#)). **Report online as soon as possible.**
- A serious incident where there is no related injury or illness to any person. **Report online as soon as possible.** Note that as used here, a serious incident means:
  - an unplanned or uncontrolled explosion, fire or flood that had the potential to cause serious injury or illness;
  - a crane, derrick or hoist collapse or upset; or,
  - a (full or partial) building or structural collapse or failure.
- Potentially serious incidents ([page 5](#)). **Report by submitting your potentially serious incident investigation findings after your investigation is complete.**








### Incident reporting and investigation

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## Overview: Reporting to OHS

This table summarizes the reporting requirements described on page 1 of this bulletin.

Call OHS (1-866-415-9690) if you're not sure whether you have to report an incident.

What happened	Notify OHS
Worker fatality at the work site	 1-866-415-8690 as soon as possible
A workplace, injury, illness or incident that results in:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a worker fatality</li> </ul>	 1-866-415-8690 as soon as possible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a worker being admitted to hospital</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a worker injury or illness that the employer believes may lead to hospital admission</li> </ul>	
A worker is overexposed to radiation	 1-866-415-8690 as soon as possible
An unplanned or uncontrolled explosion/fire/flood; a crane, derrick or hoist collapse or upset; or a (full or partial) building or structural collapse or failure, where:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a person is injured or becomes ill</li> </ul>	 1-866-415-8690 as soon as possible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there are no related injuries or illnesses</li> </ul>	 <a href="https://oportal.labour.alberta.ca">oportal.labour.alberta.ca</a> as soon as possible
A mine or mine site incident	 <a href="https://oportal.labour.alberta.ca">oportal.labour.alberta.ca</a> as soon as possible
A potentially serious incident	 <a href="https://oportal.labour.alberta.ca">oportal.labour.alberta.ca</a> when the incident investigation is done

## Investigate the incident

The prime contractor must complete an investigation into any reportable incident. If there is no prime contractor, the employer must carry out the investigation. There are several steps in an incident investigation.

### Collect information

An investigation starts with a fact-finding mission that collects information about what happened. Some ways to collect information include:

- Taking pictures of or sketching the scene.
- Interviewing workers and witnesses.
- Listing equipment and materials being used.
- Reviewing health and safety records, such as inspection reports, training summaries and/or past incident reports.

Use the information collected to paint a complete picture of the incident. From there, you can start to look at why the incident happened and how to prevent recurrence.

### Identify causes

There are a number of models you can use to identify incident causes. These range from simple domino models to complex models such as root cause analysis.

The simple model below groups incident causes into five categories:

- **Task** looks at the work procedures used at the time of the incident.
- **Material** asks if equipment and materials contributed to the incident.
- **Environment** considers the physical work environment.
- **Personnel** asks relevant questions about the people directly involved in the event.
- **Management** looks at organizational factors, such as management systems, hazard assessment and control processes, or worker orientation and training.

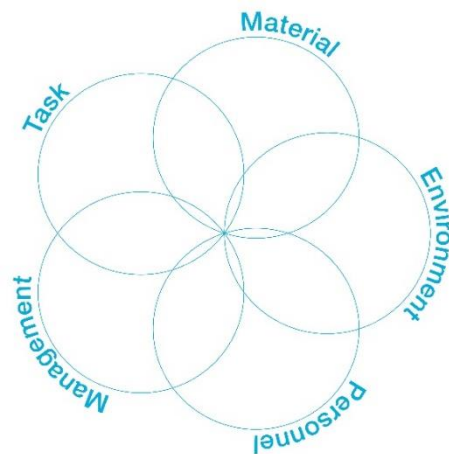


Illustration: Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

Investigators who use this model ask questions about each category so they can identify all the reasons an incident happened. Note that there need not be causes in each category, and there can be multiple causes in any category.

### Corrective actions

As causes are identified, it may become apparent that corrective actions are needed. Well-designed corrective actions relate directly to the root causes of an incident, and are specific and constructive. Corrective actions put new controls in place, or improve existing controls. Controls must always follow the hierarchy described in Section 9 of the OHS Code: for more information, read [Hazard assessment and control](#).

If corrective actions have been identified, they must be implemented to be effective. As the prime contractor or employer, make sure you assign specific action items to individuals and follow up to ensure they're carried out. Share any changes with workers.

## Investigation reports

The OHS Act requires the prime contractor at the work site – or the employer if there isn't a prime contractor – prepare and distribute a report that outlines the circumstances of the injury, illness, incident or worker exposure and the corrective actions taken, if any, to prevent a recurrence.

Investigation reports should not include any personal information, such as the names or identity of workers, witnesses and investigators.



Privacy laws govern personal information sharing. If you believe personal information is necessary in your report, make sure it is authorized under privacy law.

Find a report template and sample in the [Occupational health and safety starter kit](#).

### Report distribution

- If your work site is required to have a health and safety committee or representative, you must provide a copy of the investigation report to them.
- If there is no health and safety committee or representative, you must make the report available to your workers.

### Providing an investigation report to OHS

- You must provide your investigation report to an OHS officer on request.
- When you notify the OHS Contact Centre of a radiation overexposure, the OHS Contact Centre will direct you on how to submit your incident investigation report.
- In cases where you must report to OHS online as soon as possible, you must also submit your investigation findings online (at [oirportal.labour.alberta.ca](http://oirportal.labour.alberta.ca)).
  - You must submit your potentially serious incident investigation findings online, when your investigation is complete.

### Report retention

You must keep a copy of your incident investigation report readily available for at least two years.

## OHS follow up

After an incident is reported, OHS may contact anyone that has information related to the incident.

OHS officers have a number of investigation authorities they can employ. These include:

- Visiting the scene of the injury, illness or incident.
- Collecting information, including electronic documents that relate to the health and safety of workers, and asking questions or taking statements from people as needed.
- Seizing or taking samples of any substance, material, product, tool, appliance or equipment that was present at, involved in, or related to the incident.
- Entering any place at the work site where the incident occurred or where the officer believes related information exists.
- Using the employer's data storage, information processing or retrieval devices and systems to examine electronic information.
- Requiring documentation from anyone who has information related to the incident.
- Exercising any inspection authority.

OHS officers also have authority to enforce compliance with legislation in a number of ways. These include issuing orders, writing tickets, issuing administrative penalties or making referrals to prosecution. For more information, read [Roles and duties of an OHS officer](#).

## Don't interfere

It is against the law to interfere with or hinder an officer performing their duties and functions. For example, you cannot:

- Deny an officer access to all or part of a work site.
- Tell an officer that they must make an appointment to complete their work.
- Refuse to let an officer interview a worker in private.
- Fail to provide an officer with any documents or information that they require.

## Incident reporting and investigation

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## Understanding potentially serious incidents

Section 33(5) of the OHS Act gives the two criteria that define a reportable potentially serious incident. These are:

- The incident had a likelihood of causing a serious injury or illness.
- There is reasonable cause to believe that corrective action may be needed to prevent recurrence.

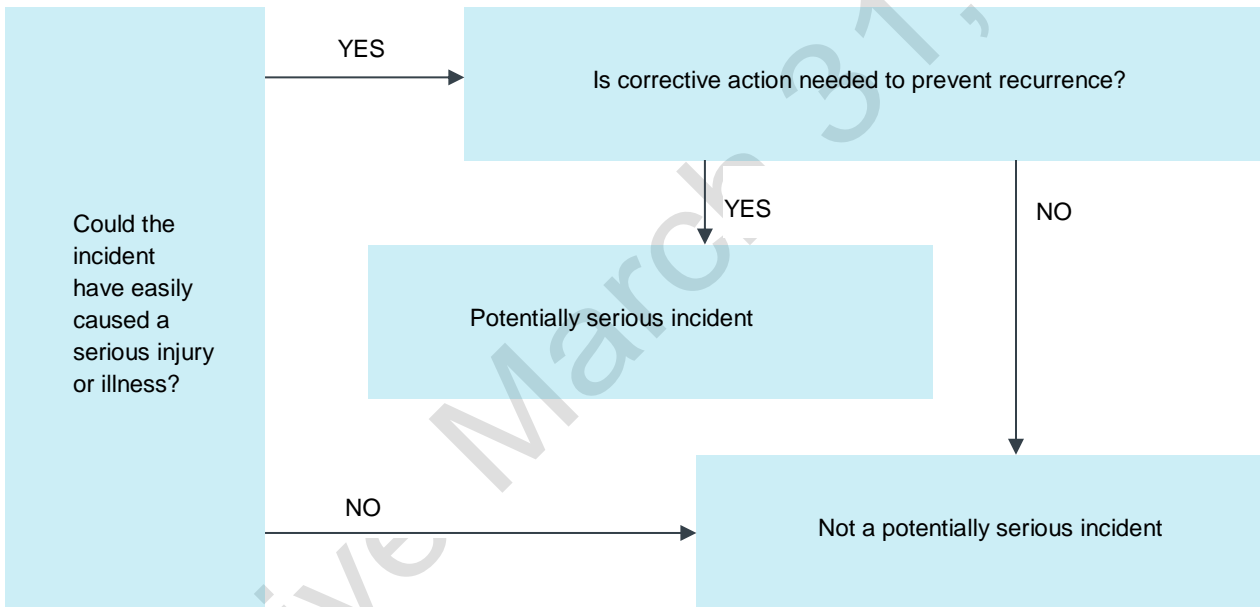
A potentially serious incident does not need to involve an injury and is not limited to workers. If someone who isn't a worker is involved, it's a potentially serious incident if it resulted from work activities at the work site or could have happened to a worker. (See examples 10 and 11 in [Table 1](#)).

Details collected from potentially serious injury reports are used for information and education purposes. OHS may follow up if there is evidence of a current or ongoing serious health and safety concern.

**Figure 1** (below) and **Table 1** (below and next pages) can help you determine if an event is a potentially serious incident.

Visit the [Report potentially serious incidents](#) web page to learn more.

**FIGURE 1. POTENTIALLY SERIOUS INCIDENT DECISION TREE**



**TABLE 1. POTENTIALLY SERIOUS INCIDENT EXAMPLES**

Potentially serious incident		Not a potentially serious incident
1	A worker wearing a hard hat is struck on the head by a falling object and although stunned, recovers without injury. Several more, larger and heavier objects fall near the worker. If the worker had been in a slightly different position, they may have experienced a serious injury.	Workers are working overhead on a platform. There is netting in place to catch falling objects and the ground below work area is quarantined with barriers. A worker drops a hammer and it falls into the netting.
2	An armed person storms onto a work site and threatens workers with death. The armed person robs the work site and leaves. Workers are not physically injured but experience psychological harm. The potential for serious incident in this example is high, given the many factors	Two workers get into an argument at work. The work site has violence and harassment policies and a manager observes the argument and quickly de-escalates the situation.

Potentially serious incident		Not a potentially serious incident
	involved – any change in one factor may have led to a different outcome.	
3	A worker sweeping up and cleaning debris in a publicly accessible part of the work site received a needlestick injury from a needle of unknown origin. The worker is sent to an urgent care centre to be assessed and for follow-up care. The hazards associated with the needle are unknown.	A restaurant worker is preparing food and cuts their finger. They are treated with first aid.
4	A resident at a group home becomes aggressive towards their support worker but does not injure workers physically or psychologically. The employer was aware of the resident's tendency towards aggressive behaviour but failed to inform workers.	A resident is known to be aggressive and all staff are made aware and trained to deal with aggressive residents. A resident is aggressive with staff and the staff implement training and controls appropriately.
5	During an arrest, a police officer is assaulted by a perpetrator. Personal protective equipment failed to protect the officer and they sustained a small non-serious cut to their throat. Under slightly different circumstances the officer could have been seriously injured.	During an arrest, a police officer is assaulted by a perpetrator. Personal protective equipment and training allows the officer to de-escalate the situation.
6	A flag person is controlling traffic at a highway construction project. They step beyond the safety barrier and are almost hit by a passing car.	A flag person is standing behind a barrier while controlling traffic at a highway construction project. Vehicle operators respect the barriers and the posted speed limit. A person in a passing vehicle tosses a cigarette from their vehicle and almost hits the flag person.
7	A chemical substance is unexpectedly discharged into the open air at a product processing site when no persons were present. This was not a planned event. If a person was present, they would have sustained serious injury.	A chemical release at a plant is planned and all persons present are wearing appropriate personal protective equipment.
8	A vehicle is left unattended overnight on a slight slope at a work site with no parking brake engaged. No workers are at the work site. A mechanical failure results in the vehicle rolling down-slope. Workers arrive the next day to find that the vehicle has crashed into fencing. No one was injured. If a person was in the wrong place at the wrong time, they may have sustained serious injury.	An unattended vehicles parking brake fails, and the vehicle rolls three feet into a parking lot guard rail scratching the front head light.
9	While hoisting a motor, the weld on the lifting eye breaks. The area around and below the electric motor is not secured with appropriate controls. The motor falls. No one was injured. If a person was in the wrong place at the wrong time, they could have sustained serious injury.	While hoisting a motor, the area around and below is secured with the appropriate controls. One of the hoisting straps inadvertently releases and the motor shifts.
10	A pedestrian is walking in a sidewalk-closed area. A manhole cover is removed and there are no barriers placed around the open sewer. The pedestrian does not notice the hole and falls in. This incident could have just as easily happened to a worker.	A sidewalk is under construction and barriers are placed to restrict access to this section of the sidewalk. A pedestrian tripped over the corner of the barrier and stumbles.

## Incident reporting and investigation

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Potentially serious incident		Not a potentially serious incident
11	Workers set up a fence surrounding a work site. After hours, a gust of wind blows the fence onto the adjacent sidewalk. No persons were injured. Reinforced posts have been installed on the fence to prevent re-occurrence. A non-worker had the potential to be seriously injured from the fencing (from a work activity at the work site).	Workers set up a fence surrounding a work site with reinforced posts. After hours, a wind storm goes through the work site. A small section of the fence leaned over.

**TABLE 2. REPORTABLE MINE OR MINE SITE INCIDENTS**

OHS Code section 544(1)	The following are incidents for the purpose of section 33(3) of the act:
(a)	an unexpected major ground fall or subsidence that endangers or may endanger workers, equipment or facilities;
(b)	an unplanned stoppage of the main underground ventilation system, if it lasts more than 30 minutes;
(c)	emergency conditions that result in workers being withdrawn from a hazardous location;
(d)	electrical equipment failures or incidents that cause, or threaten to cause, injury to workers or damage to equipment or facilities;
(e)	outbursts and inrushes;
(f)	an incident involving a hoist, sheave, hoisting rope, shaft conveyance, shaft, shaft timbering or headframe structure;
(g)	the integrity of a dam or dike is affected by
	(i) cracking or evidence of weakening or subsidence of a dam or dike;
	(ii) unexpected seepage or the appearance of springs on the outer face of a dam or dike;
	(iii) the freeboard of a dam or dike being inadequate; or
	(iv) a washout or significant erosion to a dam or dike.



## 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](https://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-incidents.aspx](https://alberta.ca/ohs-complaints-incidents.aspx)

### Website

[alberta.ca/ohs](https://alberta.ca/ohs)

## Get copies of the OHS Act, Regulation and Code

### Alberta King's Printer

[alberta.ca/alberta-kings-printer.aspx](https://alberta.ca/alberta-kings-printer.aspx)

### OHS

[alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx](https://alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx)

## For more information

Director of Occupational Health and Safety Order – Disturbing the Scene

[open.alberta.ca/publications/ohs-director-order-disturbing-the-scene](https://open.alberta.ca/publications/ohs-director-order-disturbing-the-scene)

Hazard assessment and control: a handbook for Alberta employers and workers (BP018)

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp018](https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp018)

Occupational health and safety starter kit (BP035)

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp035](https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp035)

Personal exposure monitoring for ionizing radiation (dosimetry) (RAD008)

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/rad008](https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/rad008)

Report potentially serious incidents

[alberta.ca/report-potentially-serious-incidents.aspx](https://alberta.ca/report-potentially-serious-incidents.aspx)

Roles and duties of OHS officers (LI046)

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li046](https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li046)

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## Incident reporting and investigation

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