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BULLETIN

WORKING FROM HOME – EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES

Although the province has announced plans to reopen businesses in a phased approach, many local government employees will be working from home longer than anticipated. WorkSafeBC is partnering in the BC government's phased approach by developing resources for businesses preparing to reopen, as well as publishing guidelines for employers who will continue to have their workers work from home.

To support the continuing practice of working remotely, WorkSafe has shared the following guidance on employer responsibilities for ensuring an employee's workspace is healthy and safe:

1. Employers should be aware of the key health and safety requirements for workers who are working from home

A number of health and safety requirements are equally applicable for at-home workers as they are for traditional workplaces. These include reporting workplace injuries and requirements for education and training, along with the worker's duty to follow safe work procedures. In addition, check-in procedures may be required if the employee is working alone or in isolation, meaning if they are working in circumstances where assistance would not be readily available in case of emergency, injury, or ill health. The *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation* requires employers to develop and implement a written procedure for checking the well-being of such workers, which must include the time interval between checks and the procedure to follow in case the worker cannot be contacted.

2. Employers should review and update their health and safety policy for working from home, and ensure employees understand their role and responsibilities

Such a policy should require employees to conduct an assessment of their workplace and report any hazards to their manager or employer. A policy may also include: protocols for evacuating from the home or temporary workplace to a safe location if necessary; information on how to contact the employer in case of emergency; a discussion of safe workplace practices; instructions on how to report any work-related incidents or injuries; and, a discussion of ergonomic considerations.

3. Employers must adapt certain health and safety requirements for at-home staff

Some health and safety requirements will need to be administered in different ways, for example outlining the role of the worker's supervisor, performing ergonomic assessments and implementing control measures, and special consideration in following up on reported incidents in advance of any work being done from home.

Please contact us if you need any assistance drafting a work from home policy or have any questions about your WorkSafe obligations for employees who are working from home.

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