



Occupational Health & Safety Advisors

PEOPLE
PREPARED
WORKPLACES
STRONGER

SEASONAL READINESS, THANKS GIVING WEEKEND 2026

Whats Covering Today?

One question worth asking before the long weekend, not after it.

Happy Thanksgiving, from our family to yours. Thanksgiving asks us to slow down and notice what we have. Family around a table. A harvest brought in. A year now in its final quarter. It is a good weekend, and it deserves to be enjoyed without worry.

But October is also the month the workplace quietly changes shape. School has been back for a month now, and with it comes the season's first wave of colds and flu, moving from classrooms into homes and then into your workplace. People miss shifts. That is normal, and it is not a failure of anyone's effort. What matters is what happens next.

Occupational health and safety requirements across Canada require employers to provide first aid services and trained coverage appropriate to their workplace, workforce, location, and governing jurisdiction. When the trained responder calls in sick and the shift starts anyway, the workplace has a gap, whether anyone notices it or not. The certificate in your records tells you who is trained. It does not tell you who is here.

This issue is about closing that gap before the season widens it, not after.



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The trained responder called in sick. The shift started anyway. Who is covering today?

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What's Changing This Season

Cold and flu season is beginning its climb, and absences rise with it. The Thanksgiving long weekend adds its own pressure, as staff travel to see family and shifts thin out. Coverage that looked solid in September can quietly become coverage on paper only.



Not Just The Shop Floor

Workplace size and hazard level affect what first aid coverage is required. They do not erase the need for a first aid plan. Even a low-hazard office can be left exposed when its only trained responder is absent.





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THE TRAINED RESPONDER WHO ISN'T THERE

The Gap.

A certificate on the wall is not a person in the building.

A first aid program is not the box on the wall or the certificate under glass. It is a person, present, trained, and able to provide first aid promptly. Every jurisdiction in Canada places that duty on the employer. What varies is how the duty is measured: how many responders, what level of training, what equipment, and how the workplace is classified.

The gap almost never appears the way people expect. It is not usually a first aid program that was never built. It is a program that was built correctly once, and then quietly stopped matching the workplace in front of it. A responder moves to another location. A certificate lapses and nobody notices until the posting looks out of date. A responder takes a vacation, or calls in sick with the same flu moving through the building, and the shift runs anyway because the work does not stop for a gap nobody has named yet.

This is where due diligence lives. Not in having built a program once, but in being able to show, on any given day, that the program is still true.



A certificate confirms who is trained. It does not confirm who is here. Coverage has to be checked, not assumed.

Same Duty, Different Requirements



The Law Where You Work

Ontario: Regulation 1101 sets first aid station and kit requirements scaled to the number of workers on a shift, and requires kit inspections at least quarterly, with the date and inspector's signature recorded on the card. Employers may also meet the kit requirement with a CSA Z1220 compliant kit as an alternative to the itemized list. As of June 22, 2026, the WSIB renamed its approved training levels. Emergency First Aid is now Basic First Aid, and Standard First Aid is now Intermediate First Aid. Training relied upon for Ontario compliance must be provided through a WSIB-approved provider. Certificates issued up to June 21, 2026 remain valid until they expire.

British Columbia: A rewritten Schedule 3-A took effect November 1, 2024, replacing the old Level 1, 2, and 3 certificates with Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced. Employers must complete a written first aid assessment for each workplace, reviewed annually or whenever there is a significant change in operations, and must conduct a drill at least once a year and whenever their procedures change.

Alberta: The OHS Code requires employers to ensure enough qualified first aiders are present at the work site, with sufficient first aid supplies. Officers can and do issue administrative penalties for a shortfall on the day of an inspection, without waiting for a reported fatality or serious injury.

Workplaces governed by the Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations: Part XVI requires a first aid attendant wherever six or more employees are working at one time, and wherever two or more employees are working at a remote workplace. First aid kit requirements are scaled under Schedule I.

CCOHS provides national guidance, but guidance is not legislation. The requirements of the governing jurisdiction always prevail.

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A certificate confirms who was trained. It does not confirm who is present today.

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COVERAGE BEYOND THE MINIMUM, SHOW ME THE FINES

What Coverage Actually Requires.

The gap was visible before anyone needed the kit.

A sound coverage review considers absences, breaks, multiple locations, off-site work, response time, emergency communication, and transportation to medical care. That includes a named backup for when the primary responder is unavailable, an AED that is inspected on schedule where one is provided, clear posted information about where the station is and who is on duty, and a real plan for reaching emergency services and transporting an injured worker, especially for anyone working alone or off site.

None of this needs to be complicated. It needs to be current, and it needs to be checked, not assumed.

Show Me the Fines

Three cases. Two provinces. The gap was visible before anyone was hurt.

**Abbotsford, British Columbia: Administrative penalty, \$152,309.88.**

WorkSafeBC inspected a mushroom growing facility operated by Highline Mushrooms West Limited and issued an administrative penalty after finding no qualified first aid attendant on site, a repeated violation. The finding was straightforward: the workplace did not have adequate first aid attendants or services available to promptly treat an injured worker.

**Sherwood Park, Alberta: Administrative penalty, \$2,000.**

Dream Paradise Hospitality Ltd. received a \$2,000 administrative penalty covering two contraventions: insufficient qualified first aiders at the work site, and inadequate training for workers handling hazardous chemicals.

**Edmonton, Alberta: Administrative penalty, \$3,000.**

2029020 Alberta Ltd., a restaurant-sector employer, received a \$3,000 administrative penalty on August 18, 2022, covering an incomplete hazard assessment and deficiencies involving first aiders and first aid supplies.

» **Note:** the Alberta cases are administrative penalties issued directly by an OHS officer, not court convictions. Say "administrative penalty" in the same breath as the dollar figure both times, so a reader does not mistake these for guilty pleas.

These are not stories about tragedy. They are stories about a gap an officer found on an ordinary day, without waiting for a reported fatality or serious injury. That is the lesson underneath all three: the shortfall was visible before the first aid kit was ever needed.

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The gap was visible to an officer before anyone needed the first aid kit.

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DUE DILIGENCE RECORD, CONFIRM IT, SIGN IT, FILE IT

October Readiness Checklist: First Aid Coverage.

Confirm who's here today. Sign it. Date it. File it.



Section A: Coverage

☐	Is a trained first aid responder present, qualified, and able to respond promptly on every shift, at every location, right now, not scheduled to arrive later?
☐	Is there a named backup responder for when the primary is on break, on vacation, or absent?
☐	Do workers who work alone or off site have a confirmed way to reach help and be transported if injured?



Section B: Equipment and Records

☐	Has the first aid kit been inspected on schedule, with the date and inspector's signature recorded on the card?
☐	Is the AED, where one is provided, inspected and in working order?
☐	Are treatment records completed and stored confidentially, separate from where personal medical information could be seen by others?
☐	Are all legally required first aid postings current, and can the supervisor promptly produce valid certificates for the responders providing coverage?



Section C: Preparing for the Season

☐	Has flu and cold season absence planning been discussed with supervisors, so a sick call does not leave a shift uncovered?
☐	If staff are traveling for the Thanksgiving long weekend, has coverage been confirmed for every affected shift?
☐	Has this review been documented, signed, and filed as a due diligence record?

Completed By: _____

Title: _____

Location: _____

Date: _____



A quiet reminder for anyone driving to see family this weekend: impaired or exhausted driving remains one of the most preventable risks on the road, at Thanksgiving or any other time.





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DUE DILIGENCE RECORD, CONFIRM COVERAGE BEFORE THE SEASON WIDENS THE GAP

Your October Action Plan

Coverage is not what's posted. It's who's here.

- 1

Confirm coverage today, not this week. Walk your workplace and identify who is actually present and trained to respond right now, on this shift, in this building.
- 2

Name your backups. Every primary responder needs someone who can step in when they are out, and that person needs to be known to the whole team, not just written on a schedule.
- 3

Check your kit and your AED. Confirm the inspection card is current, the contents are complete, and anything used or expired has been replaced.
- 4

Confirm how help arrives. Make sure emergency contacts are current and that anyone working alone or off site has a real way to reach assistance and get to care.
- 5

Document it and file it. A program that exists only in memory cannot be proven later. Sign it, date it, and file it where it can be found.

First aid coverage can disappear without anything dramatic happening. One sick call, one vacation day, or one shift change can leave a program that looked complete yesterday incomplete today, and the gap can emerge quietly: on an ordinary day, when the name on the wall is not the person in the building.

A first aid program is never finished. It is built once, and then it has to keep being true, week after week, shift after shift, through every absence the season sends your way.

This weekend, gather with the people who matter to you, and be grateful for what the year has brought so far.

And when you are back, before the next shift starts, ask the only question this issue is really about: who is covering today, and can you prove it.

OMHAS PROGRAMS AND COMPLIANCE SUPPORT

First Aid Program (OHS-PROG-07), Emergency Action Plan (OHS-PROG-06), First Aid Coverage Calculation Worksheet, First Aid Responder List, First Aid Kit Contents and Inspection Records, and First Aid Treatment Form. OMHAS can assess, organize, document, and monitor your first aid system. Required responder certification must come from a training provider approved or recognized in your jurisdiction. Contact us to review where your program stands.



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