

BULLETIN

Changes provide stronger safety regulations

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Recent amendments to the Workers Compensation Act are meant to improve workplace health and safety and to provide stronger tools to WorkSafeBC officers for enforcing the Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

Bill 9 received Royal Assent on May 14, 2015 and makes a number of changes to Part 3 of the Workers Compensation Act. Some of those have already come into effect and others will be phased in over the coming months. The changes are due to recommendations in a report written by Administrator Gordon Macatee, released in July 2014. Macatee was appointed to the role following 2012 mill explosions in Prince George and Burns Lake, where four workers died and many more were injured.

Although Macatee's appointment and recommendations were in response to mill safety concerns, changes brought about through Bill 9 apply to all BC workplaces.

One of the important changes that HSA members involved in joint occupational health and safety committees should be aware of has to do with tighter time frames for incident investigations. Employers are now required to investigate and issue preliminary reports within 48 hours of an incident and to submit a full investigation report to WorkSafeBC within 30 days, unless an extension is granted. As was the case previously, worker reps and the JOHS committee should be involved in those investigations.

BILL 9 HIGHLIGHTS

Changes to the Workers Compensation Act include:

- expanded stop work order powers (in effect May 2015)
- changes to employer incident investigations (in effect May 2015)
- expanded injunction powers (in effect May 2015)
- changes to penalty due diligence (in effect May 2015)
- compliance agreements (effective Sept. 15, 2015)
- employer citations (to be implemented in early 2016)
- request for reviews (effective Sept. 15, 2015)
- additional members on Workers Compensation Board of Directors (effective Sept. 15, 2015)

Learn more about these changes on the WorkSafeBC website at worksafebc.com.

FURTHER RESOURCES

The following documents, also available on the WorkSafeBC website, provide summaries and an overview of the Bill 9 changes to the Workers Compensation Act:

- Legislative Change: A Primer on Stop Work Orders
- Legislative Change: A Primer on Employer Incident Investigations
- Legislative Change: A Primer on Injunctions and Due Diligence

WorkSafeBC has published revised occupational health and safety policies related to the Bill 9 amendments. These are available on their website as updates to the Prevention Manual and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation page.

For more information about these changes, please refer to the WorkSafeBC website (worksafebc.com) and enter "bill9faqs.pdf" in the search box in the top right corner.

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