
INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release
2024LBR0010-000892
June 10, 2024

Ministry of Labour

More workers will receive easier access to mental-health supports

VICTORIA – More workers from select occupations will be provided with easier access to workers' compensation for psychological injuries caused by work-related trauma.

Effective Monday, June 10, 2024, 11 new occupations added to the mental-health presumption under the Workers Compensation Act include community-integration specialists, coroners, harm-reduction workers, parole officers, probation officers, respiratory therapists, shelter workers, social workers, transition house workers, victim service workers and withdrawal-management workers. These join occupations, such as first responders, already covered under the presumption.

The mental-health presumption fast tracks the claims process with WorkSafeBC and provides workers faster access to treatment and workers' compensation benefits once a formal diagnosis of the psychological injury has been made. These changes will help ensure the workers who are counted on to care for others also receive the support they need.

Workers whose occupations are not covered by the presumption can still submit a claim with WorkSafeBC if they believe their mental-health illness or injury is caused by work-related factors.

The Workers Compensation Act allows the addition of other occupations to the existing presumption as new evidence becomes available. Several factors are considered when adding an occupation to the presumption, such as the nature of the work, potential for exposure to traumatic events, and information and data about psychological injuries.

The ministry reviews and considers all submissions it receives for expanding the presumption to additional occupations.

Quick Facts:

- In 2018, government amended the Workers' Compensation Act to establish a new mental-health presumption for municipal and federal firefighters, police, paramedics, sheriffs and correctional officers.
- In 2019, additional occupations were added, including emergency response dispatchers, nurses, publicly funded health-care assistants, as well as forest firefighters, fire investigators and firefighters working for Indigenous organizations.

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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What to know about the workers' compensation system, mental-disorder presumption regulation

Workers' compensation system:

B.C.'s workers' compensation system provides workers with compensation and supports for illnesses, injuries or mental-health disorders caused by their work. Funding for compensation comes from insurance premiums paid by employers.

For a claim to be accepted, medical, scientific or other evidence must establish that the condition arose from their employment, in addition to a diagnosis by a medical professional.

Mental-disorder presumption regulation:

Introduced in April 2019, the mental-disorder presumption regulation extended mental-disorder presumptions to emergency response dispatchers, nurses and health-care assistants (care aides) registered with the BC Care Aide & Community Health Worker Registry and employed in a publicly funded organization or setting.

The latest announcement involves an amendment to the regulation to extend the mental-health disorder presumption to the following occupations:

- community-integration specialist
- coroner
- harm-reduction worker
- parole officer
- probation officer
- respiratory therapist
- shelter worker
- social worker
- transition house worker
- victim service worker
- withdrawal-management worker

Presumption:

A presumption under the Workers Compensation Act provides that if a worker has been employed in specific occupations and develops a disease or disorder that is recognized as being associated with that occupation, then the condition is presumed to have been due to the nature of their work, unless the contrary is proved. With a presumptive condition, there is no longer a need to prove that a claimant's disease or disorder is work-related once a formal diagnosis has been made.

The act and regulations outline specific cancers, heart injury and diseases that impact firefighter groups with respect to presumptions. Amendments to the act in May 2018 added mental-health disorders to the list of presumptions for federal and municipal firefighters, as well as police, paramedics, sheriffs and correctional officers.

The Ministry of Labour developed two criteria for extending the mental-health presumption to other eligible occupations:

- workers in the proposed occupation must be exposed to traumatic events because of the nature of their work in that occupation; and
- the occupation can be clearly defined to designate the workers who are exposed to traumatic events due to the nature of their work.

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