

# Alberta Labour Occupational Health and Safety Follow-up



## Executive Summary

November 2018

### Who

Alberta Labour

### What

Follow-up Performance Audit

### When

We conducted our fieldwork between November 2017 and June 2018 and completed our audit on August 21, 2018.

On June 1, 2018, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.A. 2000, c.O-2* was repealed and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act, S.A. 2017, c.O-2.1* came into force. This change did not affect our audit's subject matter and our testing of the department's processes to enforce compliance with OHS legislation was on OHS orders prior to the date of the new legislation.

### Learn more

[www.alberta.ca/ministry-labour.aspx](http://www.alberta.ca/ministry-labour.aspx)

<https://www.alberta.ca/occupational-health-safety.aspx>

## Why we did this audit

Albertans go to work each day with the expectation that they will come home to their community and loved ones free of injury, illness or harm. Unfortunately, work-related illnesses, injuries and deaths still occur. A recent report by the University of Alberta Parkland Institute<sup>1</sup> estimates that there were over 170,000 workplace injuries in Alberta in 2016, including 144 fatalities accepted as compensable by the Workers' Compensation Board.

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act, Regulation and Code* and other legislation exist to help employers in Alberta minimize occupational hazards. The Department of Labour is responsible for implementing and enforcing occupational health and safety (OHS) legislation, regulation, codes and policies.

In April 2010,<sup>2</sup> we assessed whether the department had adequate systems to promote, monitor, enforce and report on its OHS goals and objectives and made five recommendations. We assessed recommendations related to inspection systems, certificates of recognition and permit and certificate programs as implemented during follow-up audits reported in July 2012<sup>3</sup> and July 2016.<sup>4</sup>

In 2016, we found the department had still not implemented the following recommendations:

- plan and report on whether key OHS programs and initiatives achieve desired results
- clarify and enforce procedures on worksite compliance with OHS legislation

<sup>1</sup> *Safer by Design: How Alberta Can Improve Workplace Safety*, University of Alberta Parkland Institute, April 2018, page 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Auditor General of Alberta*—April 2010, pages 31–52.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Auditor General of Alberta*—July 2012, pages 81–90.

<sup>4</sup> *Report of the Auditor General of Alberta*—July 2016, pages 39–48.



The objective of our follow-up audit was to determine whether the department had implemented the two outstanding 2010 recommendations.

## What we concluded

We conclude that for the period April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018, the department had implemented the two outstanding recommendations. The department:

- implemented processes to plan and report on whether key OHS programs and initiatives have achieved their outcomes
- documented, without exception, orders to comply with OHS legislation, including proper management approval for compliance order extensions

## Why this is important to Albertans

The impact of workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities reaches well beyond workers and their families and leads to broader negative economic and social consequences, which include:

- workers losing their level of income and health, and sometimes their lives
- employers facing costs such as legal expenses, additional hiring and training costs, loss of productivity and Workers' Compensation Board premium increases
- the healthcare system ultimately funding and treating unreported injuries and diseases
- pressures on government resources to inspect, investigate and prosecute

## What we examined

To assess whether the department had implemented our recommendations, we:

- interviewed key staff and examined relevant procedures
- examined the processes used to determine, calculate, verify, and report the performance measures/indicators
- examined management's program evaluation process, including the overall evaluation of cost-effectiveness and the assignment of accountability for future action plans derived from the evaluation
- tested the processes for a sample of measures/indicators
- tested implementation of a new systems control and safety officer training

- tested all OHS orders created from April 1, 2017, to September 30, 2017, confirming whether operating procedures relating to management approval of extensions were followed
- performed an analytical review of Compliance Management Information System (CMIS) OHS order data for unusual patterns or unexpected parameters from April 1, 2017, to September 30, 2017
- tested management's quality assurance process related to the above data from April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018

## What we found

### Improve health and safety program planning and reporting

The department has implemented:

- an adequate process to determine measures and indicators for each of its programs; evaluated the overall cost-effectiveness of the programs; and linked the measures and indicators to its goals, objectives and outcomes
- processes to calculate, verify, and report the measures and indicators for each of its programs.

### Enforce compliance

The department has implemented:

- clear operating procedures related to OHS orders and communicated the requirements to all OHS managers and officers
- training of all OHS officers and managers regarding responsibilities and requirements around time extensions
- an automated computer control in CMIS to require management approval of subsequent extensions
- a quality assurance process to monitor proper entry of manager extension approvals

### Read the full report at:

[oag.ab.ca](http://oag.ab.ca)

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