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New Harassment Rules Now in Effect for Alberta Employers

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Alberta is making important changes to how employers prevent and manage workplace violence and harassment. Effective March 31, 2024, new amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Code require all employers to implement a single, consolidated prevention plan that addresses both violence and harassment in the workplace.

The changes aim to simplify compliance, reduce redundancy, and make it easier for employers—especially those with operations across multiple provinces—to align their policies with Alberta’s legislation.

What’s Changing?

Previously, Alberta employers were required to maintain separate prevention plans for workplace violence and harassment. Each plan needed its own policy, list of procedures, and review process. According to Cristina Wendel, an employment lawyer at Dentons Canada LLP, this structure created unnecessary duplication and a greater administrative burden. Wendel clarified that

“Before (the amendments), there were four different pieces that employers had to have to be compliant... Having four separate documents also raised concerns because a lot of employers, particularly ones that have operations across the country, like to have an all-in-one and it made it difficult for them to know if they were compliant.”

Under the new rules, employers must:

- Implement one unified plan that addresses both workplace violence and harassment
- Include measures to eliminate or control hazards related to these risks
- Outline procedures to report and investigate incidents
- Ensure confidentiality for all individuals involved, whenever possible
- Inform workers about the nature and extent of any related hazards

Changes to Policy Review Requirements

The review timeline for policies has also been adjusted. Previously, employers had to review both violence and harassment prevention plans every three years, or after any incident, or at the request of a joint health and safety committee.

Now, employers only need to review the consolidated plan every three years, or if a significant incident or workplace change occurs that may affect the likelihood of violence or harassment.

This change reduces the frequency of mandatory reviews without compromising workplace safety.

Why Employers Need to Act Now

With the March 31 compliance deadline now passed, Wendel stresses the importance of reviewing and updating current policies to align with the new requirements.

Employers who fail to comply may face serious legal consequences. Tari Hiebert, a partner in Dentons’ litigation and dispute resolution group, warns that non-compliance can trigger investigations by OHS officers.

“If an employer is subject to a complaint, OHS officers can demand to see your documents and interview staff,”

says Hiebert.

“If they aren’t satisfied, they can issue a stop-work order or impose administrative penalties of up to \$10,000 per incident.”

How Employers Can Prepare

To ensure compliance, Alberta employers should:

- Review existing policies and remove redundant or outdated components
- Create a single, updated policy that includes all required elements
- Train managers and staff on reporting and investigation procedures
- Ensure employees understand their rights and responsibilities under the new policy
- Be prepared to show documentation if requested by occupational health and safety officers

These changes reflect a growing focus on making workplace safety legislation more efficient and practical. For Alberta employers, the updated Code is both a compliance obligation and an opportunity to reinforce a safer, more respectful workplace culture.

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