



INDUSTRY

SAFETY ALERT

Review your Emergency Response Plan for work in remote settings

Build an ERP for all contingencies, including worst-case scenarios.

Reviewing your Emergency Response Plan (ERP) for evacuation of a seriously injured or sick worker from a remote worksite is extremely important.

The capacity/ability of the BC Ambulance Service to reach all remote work areas in a timely manner or with necessary extraction systems cannot be guaranteed, and relying on a list of phone numbers for services that you have not thoroughly tested is not sufficient. Re-evaluate those systems and make timely changes to ensure that you can provide rescue and/or medical assistance to your employees in a time of critical need.

The “Golden Hour” indicates that life-saving interventions **MUST** be made within 60 minutes before chances of survival for critically injured patients drastically decline. This standard of response (60 minutes to hospital) should form a central reference point in your evaluation of your own emergency response procedures.

Workers in remote settings who experience anaphylactic shock, cardiac events, serious injuries such as spinal damage or serious bleeds face a much more serious situation than workers in urban settings, and their needs must be recognized and supported with appropriate services.

It is the employer’s responsibility to ensure that appropriate emergency transportation services are available for their workers as part of the first aid assessment process. If BC Ambulance Service is unable to access the worksite, or if their services are too remote or unavailable, then employers need to have other means of transporting injured workers to a hospital. This includes options such as initiating their own ground-based evacuation to meet an ambulance enroute or arranging for air transportation services. Effective communication systems are essential for this process so that workers can maintain continual communication with emergency services during a critical patient evacuation.



BC Forest Safety

Unit 8C - 2220 Bowen Road, Nanaimo, BC, V9S 1H9
Toll Free: 1.877.741.1060 | bcforestsafe.org



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Schedule 3a of the OSHR identifies situations where an Emergency Transportation Vehicle (ETV) must be provided (e.g. 16 or more workers in medium-risk work, more than 20 minutes from hospital). However, this references only the minimum requirement, and a compliant first-aid assessment process must consider obstacles to medical aid, including:

- increased distance
- limited direct access to the worksite
- other factors identified in pre-work planning

In many cases, employers must provide or ensure availability of emergency services beyond those outlined in Schedule 3a. In other words, an ETV may not be enough in many situations, and direct access to additional services may be necessary even for smaller numbers of workers.

Section 3.17.1 of the OSHR requires that employers verify availability of air service before each day of work in workplaces where air transportation is the primary means of evacuation, and ensuring they are notified if that service becomes unavailable at any time. This can include not only workplaces where workers are separated by barriers such as rivers, lakes, or deactivated roads, but also workplaces located long distances from hospitals and emergency services. Relying on BC Emergency Health Services air ambulance or merely having a phone number for a local helicopter company is insufficient for such workplaces.

Employers in remote and inaccessible locations should consider the needs of critically injured workers and the application of the Golden Hour, when deciding if air transportation is the primary means of evacuation. Appropriate solutions for such workplaces may include a sponsorship or contract with a helicopter evacuation medical service (HEMS) that specializes remote rescue and medical aid.

Review your ERP for evacuation of a seriously injured or sick worker from a remote worksite. Your ERP should confirm that:

- All workers have been trained in the use of emergency evacuation systems, including stretchers, spine boards, emergency transportation vehicles, and configuring these systems for use as quickly as possible.
- Communication systems and instructions allow workers to contact emergency services quickly and directly
- Testing of the emergency communication systems to ensure that workers understand the instructions, understand how to use the equipment, and that the equipment functions as needed. Note that dialling 911 as a test is not recommended.





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- Written instructions provide clear directions that explain how workers can verify emergency assistance has been mobilized, including:
 - the type of services deployed
 - how long until the services arrive (ETA)
 - where to rendezvous with emergency services if workers are required to initiate emergency transportation for the patient using company equipment.
 - how workers are to maintain contact with emergency services in case of changes in the situation or the status of the rescue or medical services, including instructions for establishing and maintaining contact with a potential middleperson or coordinator in the company who may be directing services from a central location (e.g. camp or office)
- When relying on air transportation as your primary means of evacuation, verifying availability of service each morning, and ensuring that you can be notified if the services becomes unavailable due to pilot or machine issues, or deployment of services to other tasks.
- Verifying that your spine boards are compatible with designated aircraft when relying on air transportation as your primary means of evacuation.
- Instructions for how patients are to be moved or extracted from difficult areas such as the bottom of a clear-cut or among standing timber.
- Consideration of additional life-saving equipment that may be needed for patients isolated from medical assistance, including but not limited to automated external defibrillators (AEDs), epi-pens, and naloxone kits, supported by training for the personnel who may potentially use such equipment.
- Verifying the status of local hospital services, including hours of operation for urgent and primary care (ER) and closest secondary options.

Satellite Communication Systems

In situations where workers are relying on a satellite communication device (e.g. InReach, Zoleo, Spot etc.), there should be clear instructions regarding the communication pattern that follows the activation of the SOS function, along with instructions for using the messaging function of the device. This may require access to the supervisor's cell phone if the device is paired with their phone.

Submitted by: Jordan Tesluk - Forest Safety Advocate for silviculture and consultant forestry in BC.

