



Year-end Audit Due Date Changing to Nov 30th



There will be a significant change to the SAFE Companies program taking place in 2024 impacting employers that normally submit audits in December. *All other employers with audit due dates between January and November will not be impacted by this change.*

In consultation with the SAFE Companies Advisory Committee and BCFSC Program Committee, the year-end audit due date is being changed to November 30th. This means that all audits normally submitted in December will need to be completed (last day of data collection for BASE) by November 30th.

This new date will benefit employers and BCFSC by:

1. Providing employers that normally submit an audit in December with additional time to achieve a successful audit result and be eligible for the COR incentive.
2. Reducing pressure on external auditors to complete audits in December.
3. Allowing BCFSC staff to schedule site visits earlier in the year which will benefit injury reduction with workers.
4. Alleviating the significant audit review surge in January and February providing BCFSC staff with an opportunity to focus on preparing the COR incentive forecast for WorkSafeBC.

2024 will be a transition year as employers and auditors adjust to accommodate the November 30th due date. New Certifications or vital Re-certifications to reacquire SAFE Certification in December will continue to be accepted. For more details, [visit our website](#).

First Aid Assessments – What is Considered a Hospital

Updated OHS First Aid Regulations are coming. Until that time though, forestry companies are still required to meet the First Aid Assessment that are currently in place. When it comes to the current regulations, one of the most common questions we get when it comes to First Aid Assessments is “What is considered a hospital?” when referencing the less than 20 vs. more than 20 surface travel minutes to the hospital.

For forestry companies that work in smaller communities, it can be tough to determine if a local health clinic is a suitable alternative to the closest medical emergency centre should an incident occur.

In an effort to provide clarity, we asked an Occupational Safety Officer at WorkSafeBC to explain the Occupational First Aid guideline when it comes to hospital designations and this is what he had to say:

“Beyond the references to a hospital on the guidelines (listed in Part 3 of the OHS Regulations), the only way the “hospital” designation can be ascertained is by contacting your emergency service provider (i.e. 911) who would make the emergency ambulance call out to your exact location. They will determine who and where the emergency transport is sent based upon the patient’s needs.” In almost all cases, health clinics in most locations do not meet the immediate standard of care required for emergency situations. This is why the emergency service provider may opt to go directly to a designate hospital and, with instruction from the designated hospital, commence treatment on route in preparation for release to the designated hospital ER.

At the hospital, they know the patient will receive the appropriate care

immediately upon arrival. Whereas at a health clinic, they may or may not be able to assist in the same level of care due to lack appropriate medically trained staff on hand and/or an immediately available emergency physician or surgeon, or a lack of a fully-equipped trauma care facility capable of handling the emergency or emergency surgery needs of the patient. A hospital provides one-stop care, whereas a health clinic may require the patient to be transferred to hospital following their initial assessment for additional and required emergency treatment. By going directly to a designated hospital, the health clinic assessment and second transfer is eliminated entirely, saving precious time in providing the emergency care necessary.”

Guidelines - Part 3 - Occupational First Aid

The definition of “hospital” for the purpose of the assessment is “a hospital or diagnostic and treatment centre that has an emergency department or resuscitation area and a physician on duty, or immediately available on call, during the hours when workers might need these services.”

Facilities with the designation hospital, health care centre, clinic, diagnostic and treatment centre, first aid post,

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and diagnostic facility offer different levels of patient care and various hours of operation. Some of these facilities have B.C. Ambulance bypass protocols in place. Bypass protocols are put in place if the local clinics or hospitals are unable to receive trauma patients during certain hours. The same “bypass” rules may apply to accepting the employer’s emergency transportation vehicle or industrial ambulance.

As a result of the hours of service at the nearest treatment facility, it may be that the hospital for the day shift is closer than the hospital available for the night shift, and therefore a different table with different required first aid services would be used for the different shifts.

To determine what an organization needs to accurately submit the first aid requirements, BCFSC has provided some tips to help ascertain the requirements:

1. Research your local emergency room. If you live in areas throughout the province that have limited access to medical services, document alternative options.
2. Contact the local clinic or treatment centre to determine if they have the following:
 - An emergency department or resuscitation area
 - Medical staff and physicians on duty or immediately available on-call
 - Open during the employer’s working hours
3. Contact the emergency service provider to determine where an injured worker would be taken if called out.
4. If the company transports an injured worker, can the local health clinic accommodate the treatment required? Use a severe injury as a marker for assessment of the medical services a health clinic or volunteer services can provide.

The bottom line is, when an emergency arises at your worksite, each employer must ensure the emergency planning meets the OHS Regulation and SAFE Companies Audit requirements. Feel free to reach out to us to help you prepare for your emergency planning options. 🌱



SAFE Companies Audit Requirements for Worker Assessments and Site Inspections

By Mike Sexton, SAFE Companies Manager

Changes in operations and work crews throughout the year can affect SAFE Certification for many forestry operations. Many companies will switch the type of forestry work they conduct in a single year going from tree planting to wildfire service to road building and site excavation and yarding.

No matter what type of work is being conducted, forestry operations are considered high-risk and regular worker assessments and site inspections are necessary to meet OHS regulations especially if an operation takes on new crew members, works on a new site or adds something new to an existing site.

Worker assessments

Worker assessments are an important part of a safe and successful forestry operation and are a requirement for SAFE certification. They help to verify that each worker has the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes to perform their job safely

and productively. Worker assessments need to be documented and the level of risk determines how often they should be done.

Part of a supervisor’s duty is to ensure workers are capable of doing their work safely and to check work practices carefully and thoroughly during inspections. New and young workers require more frequent assessments to make sure they are fully aware of the risks to themselves and others. Long term employees can also develop complacency and poor habits, so they need inspections too. Their inspections may not be as urgent, but they are just as important and should not be ignored or missed.

Take a look at the OHSR 3.5 General Requirement to fully understand the regulations relating to regular inspections:

OHSR 3.5 General Requirement

Every employer must ensure regular inspections are made of

all workplaces, including buildings, structures, grounds, excavations, tools, equipment, machinery and work methods and practices, at intervals that will prevent the development of unsafe working conditions.

Site Inspections

The OHSR 3.5 regulation states workplaces must also be regularly inspected. The SAFE Companies audit recommends every 30 days, but again, this is based on risk. If there is a change to the work or site, another inspection should be completed to identify any new hazards that need to be documented, communicated and mitigated.

If you are wondering if you are meeting your SAFE Certification requirements for Worker Assessment and/or Site Inspections, contact SAFE Companies and we can walk you through it. 🌱