

Worker Safety for B.C. Ranchers

What are my health and safety responsibilities?

Ensure worker safety

As an owner and employer of a ranch, you have an important responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all workers on your ranch. These workers include both your direct employees and those of contractors (e.g., irrigation service, livestock shipping, feed delivery, etc.)

You're responsible for ensuring that your workers are aware of all known health or safety hazards they may be exposed to at work. It's also your responsibility to fix any workplace conditions that are hazardous to the health or safety of your workers.

Provide effective supervision

You're responsible for providing effective supervision for your workers. This includes daily planning and clear communication with your workers to identify and deal with hazards and issues. All tasks a worker carries out must be monitored to make sure they are performing their job in a safe manner. Regularly review all safety plans and procedures workers use to make sure that they are current and relevant to the job, and revise as necessary if they are out of date.

Supervisors who give direction to workers must be trained on what their role involves and what responsibilities come with it. On smaller ranches, the supervisor may be one of the more experienced workers, or even the ranch owner, which means he or she may also have other job duties. Although this is not ideal, it is workable as long as the supervisory duties are carried out effectively.

Identify safety hazards and assess the risks

There are many potential hazards on a ranch depending on the types of work being performed. You must identify the hazards specific to your ranching operation. Observation, inspection, testing, and discussions with your workers can be very effective at identifying all hazards.

Once the hazards have been identified, the next step is for you to assess the risks associated with them. A risk assessment will enable you to prioritize the hazards, address hazards that need to be dealt with immediately, and help you plan how to attend to those that are not so urgent. Developing solutions to safety hazards is essential and will need to include a documented process to address the identified issue.

Conduct safety inspections and investigations

Implement a system for conducting safety inspections on the ranch. Regular inspections can eliminate or lower the risks that hazards on the ranch present to workers. Make sure you have a good understanding of the requirements for safety incident investigations and how to carry investigations out when necessary.

Provide first aid equipment, supplies, attendants, and services

You're responsible for assessing your worksite and providing the appropriate level of first aid equipment, supplies, attendants and services. A first aid assessment determines the necessary first aid coverage, facilities, training requirements and method of transporting an injured worker. Factors that affect first aid coverage include:

- The number of workers who may require first aid at any time
- The nature of the hazards and the extent of the risks on your ranch (activities on ranches often pose a high risk of injury)
- The types of injuries that are likely to occur
- Any barriers that might prevent first aid being provided to a worker (e.g., train crossings)
- The length of time that may be required to obtain transportation
- Surface travel time to a hospital

Give workers a health and safety orientation

You are required to give your workers a health and safety orientation before they start work and to keep records of the orientation. A health and safety orientation includes many elements, but the key ones are:

- Training workers in the health and safety rules of the workplace and in the tasks they will perform.
- Informing workers about the hazards they may encounter while performing their tasks.
- Providing workers with instruction and demonstration — not simply a verbal description — of work tasks that they will be required to perform when they begin work.

What is a formal health and safety program and does my ranch need one?

If you have 20 or more workers on your ranch, you are required to have a formal health and safety program. Formal programs consist of seven elements:

1. Occupational Health and safety policy statement
2. Regular inspections
3. Written instructions for workers
4. Periodic management meetings to discuss health and safety issues
5. Incident investigations
6. Records and statistics
7. Provisions for the instruction and supervision of workers

Can my ranch use a “less” formal health and safety program instead?

If you have fewer than 20 workers on your ranch, you may use a less formal program that is based on regular monthly meetings with your workers to discuss health and safety matters (i.e., toolbox or tailgate meetings).

For these meetings, you are required to:

- Make sure the meetings are focused on the health and safety of your workers. Maintain a cooperative approach as you and your workers discuss how to correct unsafe conditions and work practices.
- Document and keep all records of meetings and the matters discussed.

Even if your ranch has fewer than 20 workers, you may still be required to implement a formal health and safety program (described in the previous question) if a WorkSafeBC safety officer reviews your operation and deems it necessary. Regardless of the above, the basic duties specified in the Workers’ Compensation Act of BC and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation will still apply.

What are the safety procedures for workers working alone?

In many situations ranch workers must work alone or in isolation where assistance would not be immediately available in an emergency. The rancher must set up a system and document the process used for checking the well-being of these workers. The frequency of reporting-in by the worker and checking by the employer must be determined. This would be carried out through consultation with those workers assigned to work alone. In addition to the checking in on regular intervals, a check at the end of the shift must be carried out.

Note: This document is meant to be a brief overview of your occupational health and safety requirements and is to be used as a resource only. Not all requirements are included here and you should refer to the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation on worksafebc.com for more information.