

# Reporting a psychological injury: Checklists for employers

As with other types of injuries, to be compensable the psychiatric or psychological injury must arise out of and occur in the course of employment. To help WCB determine work relatedness, it is critical to gather as much information as possible from the worker, co-workers, witnesses, Human Resources personnel, and any other sources that help clarify an incident or events and the role the worker played.

It is important to understand there are different types of psychological injuries: traumatic or chronic. Each may require slightly different sets of information in addition to the core facts.

## Traumatic psychological injury

Traumatic onset psychological injury (WCB-Alberta policy 03-01, part II) is an emotional reaction in response to a single traumatic work-related event or a cumulative series of traumatic work-related events experienced by a worker.

A traumatic event is defined as a direct personal experience of a work-related event or directly witnessing a work-related event, that reasonably and objectively assessed, is:

- Specific/unexpected
- Frightening, or shocking
- Having a specific time and place, and
- Involving actual or threatened death or serious injury to oneself or others or threat to one's physical integrity (i.e., assault).

Examples include a victim of a robbery or hostage-taking event, witnessing the death or severe injury of a co-worker, or providing first response to victims of severe physical trauma or fatalities.

Interpersonal relations between a worker and coworkers, management, or customers may be traumatic, and therefore cause a compensable injury, when they result in behaviours that are aggressive, threatening, or abusive.

## Chronic onset psychological injuries

Chronic onset psychological injury may also be compensable when it is an extreme emotional reaction to:

- An accumulation, over time, of a number of verifiable work-related stressors that do not fit the definition of traumatic event
- A significant work-related stressor that has lasted for a long time and does not fit the definition of traumatic event
- Bullying or harassment, defined as a repeated incident of objectionable or unwelcome conduct, comment, bullying or action intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group

Reasonable actions taken by an employer relating to management of work and employees are considered non-traumatic and non-compensable normal pressures and tensions of employment. Issues that relate to the following are typically not considered acceptable as excessive or unusual:

- Hiring employees
- Performance evaluations and/or performance corrective actions
- Staff assignments, transfer or restructuring
- Promotions, demotions, lay-offs, and terminations
- Workload fluctuations and management and/or assignment changes
- Timeline/deadline pressures
- Work environment, including health and safety concerns, and union issues

The following provides a checklist of important documents or information you will want to gather and share with WCB in case your worker(s) suffers a psychological injury.



### In all reported cases, please provide the following (if possible)

- C040 Employer Report of Injury including earnings and shift cycle information
- Help to your worker(s) in submitting their completed forms: C060 Worker Report of Injury, C844 Emotional Injury Questionnaire (to be completed by the worker)
- Any short-term or long-term disability provider name and contact your worker(s) may be working with.
- Job description and/or employment agreement
- Near-miss, safety reports, internal investigation reports, or RCMP/police reports filed as a result of the reported event(s)
- A detailed description of what occurred and how the worker was involved (directly/indirectly/not involved) in the reported event(s)
- Witness statements to the event, experience, etc...
- Any relevant medical reporting or notes you may have – memos, letters, texts, screen prints, voicemails, etc..
- A timeline of events

### For claims arising from traumatic interpersonal relations, please also provide (if possible)

- If the reported event occurred as a result of a voluntary personal relationship and/or their breakdown in the workplace, objective confirmation to support this such as witness statements

### For claims arising from chronic stressors and bullying & harassment please also provide the following (if possible)

- Documentation to clarify the normal pressures of the job and any changes that may contribute to the worker's condition.
- Documentation of any HR related matters that may relate to the injury or condition. This may include

detailed HR reports and documentation of performance management/ corrective actions or post-incident changes you have made in personnel, reporting structure, or worker duties. If it relates to staff assignments, transfers, restructuring, or promotions, demotions and lay-offs, evidence to support there were business reasons for this is helpful.

- A timeline of the events reported by the worker, including as many specific details as possible (E.g., who, what, when, where, how)
- Any documented complaints or investigation reports from the employer, police/RCMP, OH&S, etc. Depending on the timing of claim submission, the investigation may still be in progress. When this occurs, we still ask for a copy of the initial complaint submitted

### WCB-Alberta Special Investigation Unit

In some cases, our Special Investigations Unit may assist in our information gathering. Here are some examples of scenarios when extra support from this department may be needed:

- Three or more witnesses are provided to corroborate or contradict the event(s) reported and interviews are required,
- One or more witnesses wish to remain confidential,
- An employer is unable to provide internal investigation reports,
- Audio and/or video footage is submitted as evidence,
- If after repeated attempts, the adjudicator is unsuccessful in obtaining information required to adjudicate the claim.

In all cases, we're here to help if you or your worker have questions about the claim or process. Please reach out any time.

