

# 2018 was certainly a significant year for our system.

As we near the end of the year, I find myself reflecting on what we achieved in 2018, and what it takes to make this system work.

Looking back at how our system has evolved this year, one thing is clear: it takes each and every one of our system partners to make this work. You have been on this journey with us, and this system would not function without your commitment and care.

Every day we see proof of your dedication to the system through employer success stories, like STEP Energy, whose health and safety program made a difference when Kory was injured on the job (read their story on page 10). We see your investment through participation in health and safety programs (like Partnerships in Injury Reduction), and through engagement in the policy consultations we held earlier this year (on page 7 learn about how you can sign up to be notified of opportunities to provide input on our policies).

Your commitment and investment in the workers' compensation system have helped ensure its stability and build the strong foundation we have today. I'm looking forward to next year and all that we'll accomplish. With this strong foundation, we're in great position to continue evolving, and always supporting a safe, healthy and strong Alberta, together. 

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**Do you have an idea for a story?** *We would love to hear from you.*

*Please contact Jamie Hall at [jamie.hall@wcb.ab.ca](mailto:jamie.hall@wcb.ab.ca) or 780-498-3968.*

## Are you an employer with workers?

If so, you're required to fill out an annual return reporting your workers' insurable earnings paid in the last year, along with the earnings you expect to pay in the upcoming year. This is important information to ensure you're paying the correct premium amount.

The deadline to file your annual return is February 28, 2019. Filing your return online is quick and easy. Built-in calculations, error checking and simple navigation make the process easier than ever. All you need is your account number and password, which will be mailed out starting at the end of December.

Need help filling out your return? Check out the online demo located at [wcb.ab.ca](http://wcb.ab.ca) > Insurance and premiums > Annual returns. 

## Guaranteed Coverage Amount changes coming in 2019

The Guaranteed Coverage Amount (GCA) is the amount of insurance that personal coverage holders can purchase without having to substantiate earnings prior to benefits being paid. We recently reviewed the GCA benefit levels to ensure they reflect the current economy and wages paid within the province.

In 2019, we are adding another 28 industries that will have a GCA. We will also add one more benefit level. Currently we have three benefit levels: \$30,000, \$35,000 and \$40,000. In 2019, we are increasing the levels to \$35,000, \$40,000, \$45,000 and \$50,000.

For a complete list of the GCA industries and amounts, check out our employer fact sheet at [wcb.ab.ca](http://wcb.ab.ca) > search: guaranteed coverage. 

## Changes to the employer and worker reports of injury forms

To ensure that we're capturing the right information and following up with effective support, we've added some new questions to both our employer and worker report of injury forms (C040 and C060).

New legislation introduced in September makes it even more important for all Alberta employers and their workers to work together to have a solid return-to-work plan in place. The updated forms now ask for acknowledgement of responsibility and current status of the following:

- returning an injured worker to the same job or an alternative job after a workplace accident.
- offering and participating in modified work.
- employer-provided health benefits following an accident/injury (and any associated premiums paid by the employer and/or worker). >>

The updated forms are now available in Electronic Injury Reporting. Submitting the forms online ensures timely and accurate reporting. You can also submit the forms by fax, and both the revised employer and worker forms can be downloaded from our website: [wcb.ab.ca](http://wcb.ab.ca) > search: report of injury.

Questions? Call us toll-free at 1-866-922-9221. 

## Financial support now available during review and appeal

Interim relief is financial support that may be available to workers and employers while a decision is under review or appeal. Introduced with the September 1, 2018 legislation changes, it is available to workers and employers, and is provided in exceptional circumstances. Interim relief is intended to ensure employers can continue operating while

waiting for a decision during the review and appeal process. For workers, it is intended to ensure the worker can meet basic living expenses while waiting for the decision on the issue under review or appeal.

Here are three things you'll want to know as an employer:

1. Applications for interim relief are reviewed independently and separately from the decision for which you are requesting a review or appeal.
2. If your worker is granted interim relief, the costs associated are charged to your account only if the request for review or appeal is successful and the worker is granted additional wage-loss benefits. The costs will be considered part of the wage-loss benefits owing to the worker.
3. The application for and status of interim relief is shared only with the Dispute Resolution and Decision Review Body (DRDRB) or the Appeals Commission, who decide on whether to grant interim relief. 

# Have you met your obligation?

*You had a worker who was injured on the job. After some time away from work to recover from his injury, your worker returns to work on modified duties. Shortly after his return to work, your worker fails a routine drug test, so you fire him. Have you met your obligation to reinstate your worker?*

**Possibly.** Whenever a worker has returned to work after an injury and is terminated within the first six months, WCB presumes the employer did not meet their obligation. You will need to demonstrate that the termination had nothing to do with the work injury. This includes ensuring that the drug test the worker failed wasn't due to medication they're taking for their work injury.

Here are the other factors WCB will review to determine if you've met your obligation:

- What does your company's drug and alcohol policy say about failed tests? Did you follow the policy?
- Did your worker know about the policy?
- Have other employees failed the test? If so, did you follow your policy with them?

If you can demonstrate that you had a drug and alcohol policy, the worker was aware of it, and you have a record of enforcing it, you may have enough evidence to demonstrate that the termination was not due to the injury or claim, which means your obligation has been met.

*Please note:* In these circumstances, each case is reviewed based on its own merits. If you have a similar claim and would like to ask questions about the specifics of your claim, call the case manager assigned to the claim. 

