

Protecting the workers' compensation system

WCB-Alberta is committed to deterring, detecting and prosecuting those who abuse the funds held in trust to help workers and employers.

Abuse occurs when an individual is intentionally dishonest in order to obtain money, goods or services to which he or she is not entitled. The workers' compensation system is based on self-reporting, which means we rely on people to be honest – and they are! However, there is a small percentage who are not, which can add up to big costs to the system.

The cost to the public

Abuse of the workers' compensation system costs us all. The ripple effect includes lost jobs and profits, lower wages and benefits and higher costs for goods and services – in part because employers are forced to pay higher premium rates to cover increased claim costs.

What does abuse look like?

Those who choose to intentionally abuse the system face the possibility of criminal and civil proceedings, as well as fines. We should all be alert for signs of system abuse. You can help by watching for the following indicators:

- **Unlawful deductions**
If an employer has unlawfully deducted premiums from a worker's wages, WCB-Alberta may repay the worker and collect that amount from the employer.
- **Agreement to waive workers' compensation**
No one can enter into an agreement to waive entitlement under the Workers' Compensation Act (WCA).
- **Interfere with a report of accident**
Employers may not intimidate a worker into not reporting a claim.
- **Claim offences**
False or misleading information cannot be provided to WCB-Alberta in connection with a claim or a return to work.

- **Employer account offences**
False or misleading information cannot be provided to WCB-Alberta in connection with an employer account, or possess or use a forged or false clearance certificate.
- **Service provider offences**
One cannot knowingly make a false or misleading statement or representation to WCB-Alberta for the purpose of obtaining payment for goods and services.

Special Investigations Unit

WCB-Alberta's own Special Investigations Unit (SIU) was established in 1994. It consists of one manager, 12 investigators and two support staff. Granted Alberta Peace Officer status under the Police Act, the unit investigates allegations of system abuse and lays charges when appropriate. Of the charges laid by the SIU, more than 90 per cent result in conviction. Those charged may be prosecuted under the Criminal Code of Canada or under Provincial Offences legislation. Those convicted face jail sentences, court fines and may be ordered to repay any monies obtained fraudulently.

Where can suspected system abuse be reported?

You can report suspected abuse anonymously to WCB. Over half of SIU's referrals come from WCB staff and the rest are tips from employers, workers, family members, neighbours and others who appreciate that abuse of the system is costly and wrong.

Report any suspected system abuse by calling:

- 780-498-3999 (Edmonton)
- 403-517-6200 (Calgary)
- 1-866-922-9221 (Toll-free in Alberta)
- 1-800-661-9608 (Toll-free outside Alberta)

