

## Overview

Each year, WCB-Alberta sets a policy development plan to confirm the policy reviews planned in the coming year. These planned priority areas reflect feedback from stakeholders received in a variety of ways. To that end, the Board of Directors approves a number of policies for review—to update benefits, define services, modernize language, etc. **In working through the policy plan, we are committed to ensuring our policies reflect current legislation, research and stakeholder feedback.**

In 2020, the focus of the policy project plan was on the Government of Alberta (GOA) legislative review and on completing projects that began in 2019. The pandemic has resulted in a few, non-urgent projects started in 2019 to move to a revised completion date in 2021.

## 2020 Policy Reviews

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Policy Reference*</i>
<b>Government of Alberta Legislative Review</b>	The GOA has announced a legislative review in accordance with section 159 of the <i>Workers' Compensation Act (WCA)</i> . In addition to the <i>WCA</i> , the review is expected to include all related entities such as the Workers' Compensation Board and the Appeals Commission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 03-01, Part II, Application 6, <i>Psychiatric or Psychological Injury</i></li> <li>• 04-01, Part II, Application 4, <i>Cost-of-Living Adjustments</i></li> <li>• Various, including Policy 04-01, Part II, Addendum A, <i>Maximum Compensable Earnings</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>Status – Year-end</b>	<p><b>Ongoing</b> Bill 47, reflecting the results of the Government's review, received Royal Assent December 9, 2020.</p> <p>There are numerous changes with varying effective dates. For the purposes of the required policy updates, the key dates are January 1, 2021, and April 1, 2021.</p> <p>Updates to psychological injury, cost-of-living adjustments, and maximum compensable earnings were completed for January 1, 2021, and work on the remaining policy updates is ongoing and includes duty to cooperate, egregious conduct, and fairness review process.</p>	

\*Current policy documents can be found in the *Policies and Information Manual* <https://www.wcb.ab.ca/about-wcb/policy-manual/>. An overview of the policy development and consultation process can be found on the website: <https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/public/policy/Policy-development-and-consultation-process.pdf>

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Policy Reference*</i>
<b>Employer Services Policy Review</b>	WCB-Alberta began a review of its employer services policies in 2019. This includes all 06 and 07 policies, with some exceptions (see: <i>Experience Rating and other Pricing Adjustments Policy Review</i> ).	<b>06-01, Employers and Workers</b> <b>06-02, Optional Coverage</b> <b>06-03, Premiums</b> <b>07-01, Classification</b> <b>07-02, Experience Records</b> <b>07-03, Financial Administration of Safety Association Grants</b>
<b>Status – Year-end</b>	<b>Complete</b> The first set of Employer Services policy changes were approved by the Board of Directors on January 28, 2020. For details, see: <a href="https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/public/policy/manual/transmittal_2020_02.pdf">https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/public/policy/manual/transmittal_2020_02.pdf</a> The second set were approved by the Board of Directors on November 24, 2020. For details, see: <a href="https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/public/policy/manual/transmittal_2021_01.pdf">https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/public/policy/manual/transmittal_2021_01.pdf</a>	
<b>Pension Midpointing</b>	Question 7 of Policy 04-04, Part II, Application 5, addresses the process when a new permanent clinical impairment (PCI) assessment indicates a change in disability. The existing language refers to the midpoint as being between the initial and current assessment; however, this does not recognize that some workers have had successive PCI assessments. WCB’s approach has been to follow the intent of the policy by midpointing between the last assessment and the current one, which produces the most reasonable and fair outcome. The proposed policy changes confirm this practice and ensure that the policy language reflects the intent.	<b>04-04, Permanent Disability, Part II, Application 5</b>
<b>Status – Year-end</b>	<b>On track</b> This project was approved for public consultation in 2019; but was deferred due to COVID-19. The 60-day online consultation was completed and the policy will be brought forward for approval to the first Board of Directors’ meeting in 2021.	

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<i>Topic</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Policy Reference*</i>
<b>Finalizing 2019 Projects</b>	A number of projects that began in 2019 planned to be finalized in 2020. This includes policy revisions related to the definition of permanent total disability and medical cannabis.	<b>04-04, <i>Permanent Disability</i>, Part I and Part II 04-06, <i>Health Care</i>, Part II</b>
<i>Status – Year-end</i>	<b>Deferred</b> COVID-19 led to timelines being pushed forward and given that work incorporating the legislative changes is now underway, projects have been deferred until 2021.	
<b>Annual updates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual update of various benefits to which COLA is applied, including annual compensation tables.</li> <li>• Annual review of funeral costs.</li> <li>• Annual review of the clothing allowance for severely injured workers who use assistive devices.</li> </ul>	<b>All associated policy documents</b>
<i>Status – Year-end</i>	<b>Complete</b> Work was completed in Q4.	
<b>Experience Rating and other Pricing Adjustments Policy Review</b>	WCB-Alberta plans to begin a review of policies related to Experience Rating, Partnerships in Injury Reduction, and Industry Custom Pricing. Related aspects of cost relief will be included in this review.	<b>07-02, <i>Part II, Application 2, Application 3, Application 7</i> 05-02, <i>Cost and Entitlement Adjustments</i></b>
<i>Status – Year-end</i>	<b>NOTE:</b> work on the project will not begin until the updates flowing from the Bill 47 legislative changes are completed.	

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## 2020 Additional Policy Projects

<i>Policy Project Topic</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Policy Reference*</i>
COVID-19 Cost Relief	The impact of COVID-19 on employers' experience records has been extensive. Recognizing this, WCB has worked within our existing policy framework to provide cost relief to employers with COVID claims and costs related to the provincial shutdown that happened earlier in 2020. As part of this, a non-substantive change to Policy 07-02, Part II, Application 2, Question 14, has been made to expand state of emergency criteria.	07-02, Part II, Application 2
<i>Status – Year-end</i>	<p><b>Complete:</b> The revised policy has been published. For more information, see: <a href="https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/public/policy/manual/transmittal_2020_03.pdf">https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/public/policy/manual/transmittal_2020_03.pdf</a></p> <p>WCB is working on the necessary system changes to implement the cost relief automatically by the end of the year.</p>	
Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS)	In response to the pandemic, the federal government created a federal wage subsidy program, which pays employers directly to retain, rehire, and/or hire employees. WCB's challenge is to determine if the wages paid to workers under the CEWS program are assessable or not.	Various (no changes required)
<i>Status – Year-end</i>	<p><b>Complete:</b> An update is available on WCB's website, see: <a href="https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/employers/EFS_Canada_emergency_wage_subsidy.pdf">https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/employers/EFS_Canada_emergency_wage_subsidy.pdf</a></p> <p>Taking existing legislation and policy into account, and recognizing that premiums ought to be paid if a worker is working, WCB has determined the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CEWS is assessable</b> if an employer receives the subsidy and uses the amount to supplement wages for an <u>employee who is actively working</u> (either on site or at home).</li> <li>• <b>CEWS is not assessable</b> if an employer receives the subsidy and uses the amount to supplement wages for an <u>employee who is not working</u>.</li> </ul>	

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