

**Alberta WCB
Policies &
Information**

Chapter:

BENEFITS

Subject:

PERMANENT DISABILITY

Authorization:

BoD Resolution 2024/06/18

Date:

November 26, 2024

REFERENCE:

[Workers' Compensation Act, RSA 2000, Sections 17, 43, 47, 48, 55, 56, 56.1, 59, 60, 60.1, 63, and 89](#)
[Workers' Compensation Regulation, Section 1](#)

POLICY:

When a compensable accident results in *permanent disability*, WCB provides *permanent disability benefits* to the worker for any *measurable permanent clinical impairment* and for any *impairment of earning capacity* attributable to the compensable injury.

This policy is effective **January 1, 2025**, except when noted otherwise in a specific policy section(s).

INTERPRETATION

1.0 Permanent Disability

A worker is considered to have a permanent disability when a work injury results in:

- a permanent measurable clinical impairment, or
- an impairment of earning capacity due to permanent compensable work restrictions, or
- both.

Permanent disability may be either *total* or *partial*.

***Permanent Partial
Disability (PPD)***

Permanent partial disability (PPD) is any permanent disability other than those defined below for permanent total disability.

***Permanent Total
Disability (PTD)***

A worker is determined to have a permanent total disability when:

- 1) the worker suffers a compensable injury listed in s.43(2) of the *WCA*, or

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Permanent Total Disability (continued)

*This policy section
applies to all claims
with a date of accident
on or after January 1,
2025*

- 2) the worker has a 100% permanent clinical impairment, or both of the following criteria are met:
 - a) the worker has a compensable injury or combination of injuries with a permanent clinical impairment greater than or equal to 75% and less than 100%, AND
 - b) as a direct result of the compensable injury(ies), the worker is permanently incapable of participating in employment (see below).

If the criteria for PTD status is reached after retirement or the worker retired prior to disablement, PTD status is not applied.

Permanently incapable of participating in employment

In this policy, permanently incapable of participating in employment is defined as an inability to perform work unless the work is so limited in quality, dependability, or quantity that stable work does not exist in the general labour market. This occurs when the worker is permanently unable to safely perform any work tasks due to severe and prolonged compensable functional, cognitive, or psychological limitations, AND they are permanently unable to perform:

- any work tasks without significant supervision, or
- the tasks of daily living and self-care without supervision.

2.0 Permanent Disability Benefits

When an accident occurs on or after January 1, 1995, WCB provides the following permanent disability benefits:

- a non-economic loss payment (NELP), which is a lump sum payment based on the measurable clinical impairment
- an economic loss payment (ELP), which is a periodic payment based on the loss of earning capacity caused by the disability. Economic loss payments are adjusted to reflect changes to impairment of earning capacity

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**2.0 Permanent Disability
Benefits (continued)**

and end if the impairment of earning capacity ends, except in the case of permanent total disability.

The method of calculating permanent disability benefits depends on the date of accident:

- For injuries occurring on or after January 1, 2018, workers may be entitled to:
 - Non-economic loss payment (see Application 2)
 - Economic loss payment (see Application 3)
- For injuries occurring from January 1, 1995, to December 31, 2017, inclusive, workers may be entitled to:
 - Non-economic loss payment (see Application 2)
 - Economic loss payment (see Application 4)
- For injuries occurring prior to January 1, 1995, workers may be entitled to:
 - Permanent disability award (pension) (see Application 5)
 - Earnings loss supplements (see Application 6)
 - Permanent injury award (see Application 10)

**3.0 Measurable Permanent
Clinical Impairment**

A permanent clinical impairment is determined by a physician, and is expressed as a percentage of total impairment. It is considered measurable if it is equal to or greater than 0.4%, based on the approved WCB rating schedule. (See Appendix D, Alberta Permanent Clinical Impairment Guide, for further details.)

For the purpose of this policy, the approved WCB rating schedule is the Alberta Permanent Clinical Impairment Guide dated June 1, 1996 (the Alberta Guides), with amendments up to and including the date of the permanent clinical impairment assessment.

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3.0 Measurable Permanent Clinical Impairment (continued)

If, in WCB's opinion, the Alberta Guides are silent as to the impairment, the physician may rely on the most current edition of the American Medical Association Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment (the AMA Guides). When a new edition is published, WCB will designate an effective date, as close as practicable to the date of publication, for use of the new edition (see Addendum B).

The edition of the AMA Guides designated in Addendum B applies regardless of the date of accident or whether the evaluation of permanent impairment is the result of a reconsideration or an appeal.

This policy section applies to all permanent clinical impairment decisions made on or after July 6, 2001. WCB will not reassess a permanent clinical impairment simply because a different rating guide was used previously.

4.0 Impairment of Earning Capacity

WCB determines an impairment (loss) of earning capacity by assessing the impact permanent compensable work restrictions will have on the worker's ability to earn in any suitable employment (see Application 1, Question 3).

Please see Part II for additional information on the following subjects:

Application

- 1 – [Determining Impairment of Earning Capacity](#)
- 2 – [Non-Economic Loss Payment - Injuries on or after January 1, 1995](#)
- 3 – [Economic Loss Payment – Dates of Accident on or after January 1, 2018](#)
- 4 – [Economic Loss Payment – Dates of Accident from January 1, 1995, to December 31, 2017, Inclusive](#)
- 5 – [Injuries prior to January 1, 1995](#)
- 6 – [Earnings Loss Supplements](#)
- 7 – [Enhancement Factor](#)

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- 8 – [Lump Sum Commutations](#)
- 9 – [Permanent Disability Benefit Advances](#)
- 10 – [Permanent Injury Award - Injuries from January 1, 1985 to December 31, 1994, Inclusive](#)

Addendum[Addendum A – Maximum Non-Economic Loss Payments](#)[Addendum B – Effective Date for use of New Editions of the AMA Guides](#)**Previous versions**

- [Policy 0404 Part I - January 2025](#)
- [Policy 0404 Part I - September 2018](#)
- [Policy 0404 Part I - April 2018](#)
- [Policy 0404 Part I - January 2018](#)
- [Policy 0404 Part I - August 2015](#)
- [Policy 0404 Part I - May 2008](#)
- [Policy 0404 Part I - January 2004](#)
- [Policy 0404 Part I - June 2003](#)
- [Policy 0404 Part I - January 2003](#)
- [Policy 0404 Part I - June 2002](#)
- [Policy 0404 Part I - January 2002](#)
- [Policy 0404 Part I - July 2001](#)
- [Policy 0404 Part I - June 2001](#)
- [Policy 0404 Part I - September 1999](#)
- [Policy 0404 Part I \(consolidated manual 1st Issue\) - February 1997](#)