

ASK AN RSA

With Elyse Taylor, Vancouver Island

In this monthly feature, we invite readers to submit a question for a BCCSA Regional Safety Advisor (RSA) to address. This month's RSA is Elyse Taylor, who serves Vancouver Island.

Question:
How often do workers need to be trained and retrained?

Answer:
WorkSafeBC requires employers to ensure workers are competent and capable of performing their assigned tasks safely. Worker training and retraining is an ongoing process that must be integrated into the overall health and safety program.

Workers must receive comprehensive initial training before starting work. Retraining must be provided whenever necessary to maintain competency, or as specified by WorkSafeBC. Some training, such as first aid, has a mandated retraining schedule, while other training may be less formal.

Employers must ensure training programs: cover all regulatory requirements and address specific risks; are delivered by qualified individuals; include ongoing competency evaluation; are delivered in a language workers understand; and are appropriately documented. Employers are responsible for establishing retraining schedules so workers can perform their tasks safely and competently. In addition, employer, client, or site policies may impose additional or more specific training requirements, as WorkSafeBC regulations represent the minimum standard.

Training and retraining should occur when:

- Regulations or industry standards require it.
- Hazard and risk assessments identify training needs.
- New tasks, equipment, processes, hazards or conditions are introduced.
- An incident or near-miss occurs, indicating knowledge gaps.
- A worker has not performed a task for an extended period.
- Workplace observations reveal unsafe performance.
- A worker requests additional training.
- A new orientation program is implemented.
- Employer or site policies specify training.

Many organizations schedule refresher training annually or every two to three years as part of their safety management system. The key principle is that training must always be current, practical, relevant to the hazards present, and documented.

An effective training program includes formal sessions delivered by qualified individuals as well as ongoing on-the-job instruction and demonstration. Employers must maintain detailed training records to demonstrate due diligence and regulatory compliance.

What Employers Should Do:

- Establish a structured training program ensuring all workers receive initial and refresher training as needed.
- Ensure training is regularly updated, delivered by qualified individuals in an accessible format, and documented with dates, content, reports from qualified individuals who provided training, and worker acknowledgment.
- Verify understanding through observation, demonstration, or assessment, and schedule refresher sessions based on hazards and industry standards.

What Workers Should Do:

- Attend and actively participate in all training, apply safe practices daily, report knowledge gaps, request extra training if needed, and inform supervisors if a refresher is required.
- Acknowledge receipt and understanding of all training provided.

Regulatory References & Resources:

- Workers Compensation Act, Part 2, Division 4, Section 21(2)(e) – General Duties of Employers
- OHS Regulation Part 3.22–3.25 – Training and Supervision of Young or New Workers
- Other topic-specific training requirements (e.g., fall protection, confined space, WHMIS) are found throughout the applicable regulations and guidelines.

Need Help?

Your Regional Safety Advisor is available at no cost to guide you through developing and implementing an effective worker training and retraining program.

Contact us: rsa@bccsa.ca or Regional Safety Advisors: BC Construction Safety Alliance (BCCSA).