



When WCB officers arrive at your site

When WCB Prevention officers turn up at your work site, they are there to ensure a safe and healthy workplace by providing education and consultation as well as checking for compliance with the Workers Compensation Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

You'll recognize Board officers by the WCB hard hat and WCB vest they will wear. Officers will also have identification showing that they are Board employees.

On arrival, an officer will usually begin by finding the most senior person on site. However, if there is an imminent hazard, dealing with that hazard is the first priority. Normally, the foreman or supervisor would accompany the officer as he or she walks around the site. At larger sites, a worker representative will join the walk-through. At smaller sites, officers often talk to workers as they encounter them.

If the foreman or supervisor is not on site, the inspection will still continue. Once a Board officer is on site, they will conduct an inspection. Officers will turn up without notice, unless invited by the employer, as the 'sentinel' effect of what they do is part of their routine duties. As an officer goes through the site, notes and photographs may be taken and these are used in the inspection report. On some occasions a Board officer may be accompanied by a member of staff with a specific expertise – say in engineering, or ergonomics. And from time to time there may be more than one Board officer conducting the inspection - though this is fairly rare.

The first thing an officer will check is first aid – is there someone qualified to administer first aid on site, is there an appropriate first aid kit? It is also important to determine if there is a requirement for a Notice of Project, and whether one has been filed with the Board. An officer will also be looking for personal protective equipment such as hard hats, safety boots and safety glasses. As well, guardrails, railings, secured ladders, safe passageways and fall protection are reviewed and safe work procedures, especially for mobile equipment like cranes, concrete pumps, forklifts or trucks are checked.

If the officer is conducting a complete inspection, he or she tries to cover the entire site. If something major is going on at the site, or if the Board's presence has been requested in response to a specific complaint, all the places on the site may not be covered.

At the end of the inspection, the officer will return to the vehicle, and will prepare the inspection report, which is given to the supervisor on site. Employers are required to post a copy of that report for seven days.

If the officer has found no infractions or contravention of the Regulation or the Act, a "clean sheet" inspection report is issued. If problems have been observed, the officer issues an order or orders to ensure the unsafe conditions are corrected and also to ensure the Board is notified when that has happened.

Whenever possible, officers will present their reports to the employer or their designate on site that same day.

In my next column, I will discuss why officers might arrive at your site, and what to do if you disagree with orders written or penalties assessed.

For more information on preventing injuries in construction, visit our Construction Health and Safety Centre at <http://construction.healthandsafetycentre.org>.

SEND US YOUR IDEAS AND QUESTIONS

I would like to include your ideas and questions in future columns. Send your ideas for future columns to me at dnelson@wcb.bc.ca or call me at (604) 231-8631 or toll free in B.C. at 1 888 621-7233.