



HOME CARE AND
COMMUNITY HEALTH
SUPPORT WORKERS
POCKETBOOK



SafeCare BC



THE RIGHT OF WORKERS TO HAVE SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKPLACES

**OUR COLLECTIVE
CHALLENGE IS TO
DECREASE THE
NUMBER OF
INJURIES SO
WORKERS CAN
RETURN HOME
SAFELY TO THEIR
FAMILIES AT THE
END OF EACH DAY**

**CREATING SAFER,
HEALTHIER WORKPLACES
BY FOSTERING A
CULTURE OF SAFETY**

SAFECARE BC
STRIVES TO BE THE
INDUSTRY LEADER IN
ADVANCING INJURY
PREVENTION
AND SAFETY
TRAINING FOR
CONTINUING
CARE WORKERS

INTRODUCTION

This resource for home care and community health support workers has been created to raise awareness of several health and safety issues faced in home and community care.

As each workplace is unique, no single training resource will address all the hazards that may occur in daily work.

An electronic version of this booklet can be accessed on the SafeCare BC website - www.safecarebc.ca

This booklet will provide you with:

- Information on common workplace hazards
- Strategies for injury prevention
- Checklists for self-assessment to determine safety
- Additional resources

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Your Responsibilities

- **Act safely** while at work and ask questions when unsure.
- **Know the risk factors** related to your work, as well as signs and symptoms and potential health effects of injuries.
- Participate in **education and training** on established safe work procedures and the use of controls.
- **Cooperate** with your employer, joint health and safety committee (or worker representative) and WorkSafeBC officers.
- **Report signs and symptoms of injuries** to your supervisor and participate in stay-at-work/return-to-work programs.
- Report **unsafe acts or conditions** to your supervisor.

Your Rights

As a worker, you have three basic rights:

- The right to **know about workplace hazards**.
- The right to **participate in health and safety activities**.
- The right to **refuse unsafe work** without punishment.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisor Responsibilities

- Ensure the health and safety of all workers under your direct supervision.
- Know the WorkSafeBC requirements that apply to the work under your supervision and make sure those requirements are met.
- Ensure workers under your supervision are aware of all known workplace hazards and understand how to report unsafe conditions, incidents, or injuries.
- Ensure workers under your supervision have the appropriate personal protective equipment and that it is appropriately issued, regularly inspected and maintained.
- Know how to investigate unsafe acts or conditions and ensure immediate corrective actions are taken.
- Consult and cooperate with the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (or worker representative) as needed.
- Participate in developing stay-at-work/modified return-to-work programming.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Employer Responsibilities

- Establish and maintain an effective health and safety program and review each component at least annually.
- Ensure workers know their rights and understand their obligations.
- Train your staff to do their work safely and provide proper supervision.
- Provide supervisors with the necessary support and training to carry out health and safety responsibilities.
- Regularly assess clients to ensure suitable care and support, prioritizing worker safety during care.
- Address issues reported to staff promptly.
- Investigate incidents promptly and effectively, including near misses, incidents, injuries or equipment damage.
- Report incidents, as required, to WorkSafeBC.

Joint Occupational Health and Safety and Worker Representatives

A workplace with 20 or more workers employed for over a month requires a joint committee. A workplace with more than nine but less than 20 workers must have a worker health and safety representative.

A safety committee is a joint advisory group of employer and employee representatives that share responsibility and work together to promote and improve workplace safety.

Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee Responsibilities

- Promote the health and safety program
- Identify potentially unsafe workplace hazards
- Investigate incidents/injuries
- Attend and participate in safety meetings
- Make recommendations to improve workplace safety
- Intake worker's safety concerns
- Participate in the work refusal process
- Communicate concerns to the employer or senior management
- Recommend health and safety training and educational programs
- Consult/liaise with workers to commend and correct unsafe conditions
- Conduct regular inspections
- Annually review joint occupational health and safety committee
- Support annual review of the safety program

INJURY PREVENTION

Workplace injuries can be prevented by

- Knowing the hazards.
- Following workplace policies, safe work.
- procedures, training, and education.
- Asking questions when unsure.
- Participating in regular training, education, and safety huddles.
- Promptly reporting incidents.

Most common injuries

- Overexertion.
- Slips, trips, and falls.
- Violence in the workplace.
- Motor vehicle accidents.

INCIDENT REPORTING

Workplace incidents, defined as any unplanned events that occur during work activities and have the potential to cause harm, should be reported promptly. This proactive approach ensures the safety and well-being of all employees while facilitating the identification and mitigation of workplace hazards.

Notify your supervisor immediately if you're involved in or witness an incident. This allows the organization to assess risks, implement corrective actions, and provide necessary support to those affected.

Reporting an incident

- If you are injured, report to first aid and your supervisor.
- Seek medical attention if required.
- If equipment or tools are damaged, report them to your supervisor as soon as possible.
- Work with your supervisor to complete the necessary paperwork and participate in the investigation process.
- If you require medical attention or time away from work, the incident must also be reported to WorkSafeBC. (teleclaim: 1-888-967-5377)
- Participate with your supervisor to develop a meaningful and effective stay at work or gradual return-to-work plan that allows you to return to your regular duties.
- Speak with your supervisor if unsure about your organization's incident reporting procedures.

Home care and community health support workers often drive or take transit to a client's home as part of their job.

While **commuting between clients**, transportation is your mobile workplace.

Being prepared for unexpected incidents is the best form of prevention.

Preventing Hazards Related to Driving

- Review your driving schedule to ensure it's appropriate for the tasks and conditions.
- Plan your route before you leave.
- Maintain an emergency car kit (including personal item) suitable for unexpected work and weather events.
- Be aware of the weather and road conditions.
- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear for changing weather conditions.
- Check to see that you have enough gas in your car.
- Perform a walk-around car check before each use.
- Ensure that your car is in good working order. This includes ensuring your headlights, brake lights, and turn signals work.
- Follow your organization's road safety policies and procedures. If you are unsure about any details ask your supervisor for more information.
- If you think you are being followed, drive to the nearest police station, fire hall or hospital and sound your horn to get attention.

Are You Prepared?

- ✓ I have had a good night's sleep, and I have a clear state of mind.
- ✓ I am fit to drive.
- ✓ I am not impaired by drugs, alcohol, or prescription medication.
- ✓ I have had something to eat, and I have a snack or water with me.
- ✓ My family, employer, and clients are aware that I will be unavailable to answer calls, texts, and emails while driving.
- ✓ My car is prepared for the day's work and any weather or road conditions that I may encounter (e.g. mud and snow or snow tires for winter).
- ✓ I have an emergency preparedness road kit (see Reference/ Resources – Winter Road Safety).
- ✓ I am aware of what to do in the event of a motor vehicle accident (see Reference/Resources – Motor Vehicle Crash Sheet).
- ✓ I know to contact my supervisor immediately if it is unsafe for me to drive.
- ✓ I know how to contact emergency support (911/ roadside assistance).

Working alone may require additional safety measures to ensure you can get support when needed and protect yourself from harm.

Preventing Hazards Relating to Working Alone

Before arriving at the client's home:

- Ensure that you are settled, prepared, and ready for this work.
- Review the care plan, relevant documentation, or communication reports.
- Scan the area, the neighbourhood and the entrance to the client's home.
 - If no concerns are identified, approach the client's home.
 - If concerns are identified, go to a safe location and report to your supervisor.

Once inside the client's home:

- Observe the client and the behaviour of any other person at home.
- Continue to assess the client and the home environment as you work.
 - If no concerns are identified, continue to do your work.
 - If concerns are identified, consider the risk to yourself and whether this task needs to be done right now.

- If you cannot reduce the risk and feel threatened, leave and report to your supervisor.

A point of care risk assessment can be used to guide you through these questions. (see resources section for point of care risk assessment).

WORKING ALONE

Are You Prepared?

Before entering the client's home

- ✓ My supervisor has provided me with the check-in procedure for working alone.
- ✓ I have checked the area for hazards.
- ✓ I have completed the check-in procedure.
- ✓ I am alert and aware of my surroundings.
- ✓ I am wearing practical footwear that will allow me to leave quickly if necessary.
- ✓ I have read the client's care plan.
- ✓ I have a charged phone on or near me while working, so I can call for help if needed.
- ✓ My phone has my supervisor's contact number and emergency numbers.
- ✓ I know my organization's check-in/out process and know how to use my organization's app (if used).
- ✓ I have a clear route that I can take if I need to leave quickly.
- ✓ I know what to do if I feel threatened or unsafe.
- ✓ I know to contact my supervisor or emergency services immediately if it is unsafe for me to proceed.

CLIENT HANDLING

Manual client handling and other physical tasks can lead to overexertion of your muscles, causing injury.

Musculoskeletal injuries are sprains and strains to the muscles and surrounding tissues, which can have a life-long impact.

These are the leading types of injuries for home care and community health support workers.

If you have an injury caused by overexertion or repetitive movement, you may see redness or swelling, dull or aching pain, or experience weakness.

Preventing Musculoskeletal Injuries

- Ensure you have reviewed the client assessment and are familiar with the mobility requirements of your client.
- Use equipment, such as portable lifts, transfer boards and rails whenever possible.
- Read the care plan and check for hazards to assess the risks every time you transfer or reposition a client (See Resource Section – Point of Care Risk Assessment).
- Avoid awkward positions as much as possible and ask your client to assist when appropriate.
- Report changes in the client's abilities so that the care plan can be adjusted.
- Report workplace injuries early so they can be treated quickly.
- Check out additional resources and tools on SafeCare BC's website.

Are You Prepared?

- ✓ I have reviewed my client's care plan and know my client's mobility needs.
- ✓ I have ensured the room is tidy and clutter-free to allow me space to work.
- ✓ My supervisor has provided me with instruction and training on the safe use of available mechanical aids or other equipment.
- ✓ I am providing my client with cues to help me with all transfers and repositioning tasks.
- ✓ I have reported information about my client's changing condition that affects their ability to transfer or follow directions.
- ✓ I am aware of the signs and symptoms of a musculoskeletal injury and will report to my supervisor if I am injured.
- ✓ I know to notify my supervisor immediately if it is unsafe for me to proceed.

VIOLENCE AND BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE

Violence and bullying include a continuum of behaviours and actions.

Violence and bullying may include the attempted or actual physical force, humiliation, intimidation, threatening statements or behaviours that give a worker a reasonable cause to believe they are at risk of injury or harm.

Examples include verbal aggression, insults, harmful hazing, derogatory names, vandalizing personal belongings, and spreading rumours. Violence in the workplace consists of actions of sexual and domestic violence.

Working closely with clients and their family and friends, sometimes in isolated locations and difficult circumstances, can put you at risk.

Violence, bullying, and aggression are not part of your job.

VIOLENCE AND BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE

Preventing Violence and Bullying in the Workplace

- Read the care plan and monitor signs in the client's behaviour to help you decide how to respond safely.
- If your client (or someone else in the home) has a known history of violence, you should be aware of:
 - The documented signs.
 - Actions, items, or conditions that may trigger an unwanted interaction.
- Before, and while providing care, you should always conduct a point of care risk assessment to make sure it is safe to start or continue.
- If you identify a risk that cannot be mitigated, you must:
 - Stop providing care.
 - Leave the client's home and move to a safe location.
 - Report to your supervisor to develop a plan and eliminate or mitigate the risk.

Are You Prepared?

- ✓ I have followed my organization's check-in procedure.
- ✓ I have my charged phone to call for help if needed.
- ✓ I have read my client's care plan.
- ✓ I know how to detect and address early signs of responsive behaviours.
- ✓ I have a clear exit path, so I can quickly leave if needed
- ✓ I know that I do not have to tolerate bullying, harassment or violence.
- ✓ I know I can leave if I feel threatened or unsafe.
- ✓ I know to contact my supervisor or emergency personnel immediately if it is unsafe for me to proceed.

Civility and respect include positive, respectful interactions between people in which everyone is treated with dignity, fairness, and professionalism.

Prevention

- Actively listen to your co-workers without interrupting.
- Choose words and tone that are respectful and courteous.
- Be willing to lend a helping hand or offer support to co-workers.
- Approach disagreements with an open mind and a solution-oriented mindset.
- Report inappropriate behaviour to your supervisor (see Reference/Resources - Civility Toolkit).

MORAL DISTRESS

Moral distress is psychological distress. It may occur when one's morals, values, or beliefs don't align with those of co-workers, clients, or organizational policies or procedures.

Prevention

- Be curious and open to your feelings and the feelings of others.
- Ask your supervisor about education and training to improve conflict resolution, moral reasoning and ethical decision-making.
- Ask your supervisor about the employee and family assistance plan (EFAP) resources and support.
- Connect with peer support resources. The handbook's resources section provides contact information for peer support.

SUPPORT FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SELF-CARE

Support for psychological self-care refers to the resources and programs available to support their psychological well-being.

Prevention

- Take time to reflect on your emotions, thoughts, and experiences regularly. Self-reflection and journalling can help you identify areas of stress or concern.
- Add self-care activities into your daily routine. This could include exercise, meditation, hobbies, or spending time with loved ones.
- Connect with co-workers, friends, or professionals when you are struggling.
- Promote self-care practices.
- Establish clear boundaries to minimize burnout and maintain balance.
- Maintain a toolbox of stress management techniques. Examples include deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or mindfulness.

UNRESTRAINED ANIMALS

Unrestrained animals, either as you approach a home or inside the home, can create an unsafe work environment.

The threat of injury from an animal is not part of your job.

Animals may be territorial and perceive you as a threat.

When animals perceive a threat, they typically:

- Move or shy away (a flight response).
- Show signs of heightened interest or concern (pricked ears, raised hackles, showing of teeth, growling/snarling).
- Strike out – unprovoked (fight response).

UNRESTRAINED ANIMALS

Are You Prepared?

- ✓ I have reviewed the care plan for any information about pets in the home or near the client.
- ✓ I have checked my surroundings for the presence of unrestrained animals that may threaten my safety.
- ✓ I know that if I am unsure, I have the right to request that the animal be restrained or removed from the immediate area.
- ✓ I know I have the right to refuse to provide care if I perceive a risk to my safety.
- ✓ I know to contact my supervisor immediately if I feel it's unsafe to proceed.

Slips, trips, and falls are the second most common injury for home care and community health workers.

As you enter a client's home, there may be uneven or slippery surfaces outside.

Weather, outside environment, and clutter inside the home may result in tripping hazards.

Preventing Slips, Trips, and Falls

- Plan ahead and avoid rushing.
- Focus while walking ahead. Looking at your phone or reading paperwork can cause you to trip.
- Wear footwear that has a soft rubber sole, allowing for good traction.
- Use walkways that are well-lit and maintained. Taking shortcuts can increase the chance of slips and trips.
- Minimize the number of objects carried into the client's home at once. Take more than one trip when necessary.
- Consider rolling carts, properly fitted backpacks or appropriate storage bags to ensure balance and good posture.
- Use handrails when climbing stairs.
- If you find it unsafe to enter the home, don't go in and report unsafe conditions to your supervisor.

Are You Prepared?

- ✓ I am wearing appropriate footwear.
- ✓ I have checked to ensure good lighting outside and inside the home.
- ✓ I have checked walkways and stairs to ensure they are in good repair and clear of debris.
- ✓ I will keep my work area tidy to eliminate slip and trip hazards.
- ✓ I will avoid multi-tasking and holding large or obstructive objects so that I can see where I am going.
- ✓ I will report unsafe conditions if I see them.
- ✓ I know what to do if I am injured.

Exposure to hazardous drugs and infectious diseases pose a health risk.

Hazardous drugs include antineoplastics and cytotoxic drugs, certain hormone therapies, antiviral drugs, antibiotics, and synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl and carfentanyl.

Infectious diseases may be airborne, spread between animals and humans, or transmitted through bloodborne contact, either through direct or indirect exposure.

Are You Prepared?

- ✓ My supervisor has instructed me on safe handling, care, personal protective equipment use, and disposal protocols specific to the risk of exposure.
- ✓ I can ask my supervisor to review the exposure control plan if I have any concerns.
- ✓ Before entering the home, I reviewed the safe handling, care and disposal protocols specific to the client.
- ✓ I have reviewed the client's care plan, safe handling, care and disposal protocols.
- ✓ My supervisor has provided me with an adequate supply of appropriate personal protective equipment.
- ✓ I understand the policies and procedures and can ask my supervisor when questions arise.

- ✓ I know how to practice safe hand-washing techniques before and after care.
- ✓ I will notify my supervisor immediately if I have an unprotected exposure.
- ✓ I know how to collect more PPE.
- ✓ I know to contact my supervisor immediately if it is unsafe for me to proceed.

The air quality in a client's home is important to your health.

Air quality can be affected by gases, smoke, mould, bacteria, extreme temperatures and humidity.

Poor air quality may sometimes lead to allergic reactions or eye, nose, or throat irritation.

Preventing Exposure to Toxins in the Home

- Weather permitting, ask the client to leave windows open 30-60 minutes before your visit to increase ventilation in the home.
- Ask your client not to smoke within 60 minutes before, and during, your visit.
- Ensure that any water leaks within the home are reported to your supervisor.
- If weather and conditions permit, request the client to open windows or run an air conditioner before your visit to ensure your comfort.
- If outside temperatures are expected to be high, and no air conditioning can be provided, speak with your supervisor about scheduling those appointments early in the day.
- Wear light and breathable clothing.
- Prepare for the day's weather with additional water.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Are You Prepared?

- ✓ I have ensured that the client has stopped smoking inside the house 60 minutes before my arrival.
- ✓ I know where to open windows to ensure that the home is adequately ventilated.
- ✓ I know that I should visually inspect my client's home and report any water damage or leaks to my supervisor.
- ✓ I will report to my supervisor if the indoor air quality in my client's home is unsafe.
- ✓ I know I can leave my client's home if I feel the air quality inside the house is unsafe.
- ✓ I know to contact my supervisor immediately if I feel it is unsafe for me to proceed.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Public transportation refers to buses, trains, ferries, ride-sharing or ride-hailing (Uber, Lyft, or taxi).

Are You Prepared?

- ✓ I know my route and the stop(s) I will need.
- ✓ I know the route to my client's home.
- ✓ I know the transit schedule and have scheduled my work to minimize the time waiting for public transportation.
- ✓ I have the correct transit passes and/or money for transit fares.
- ✓ I know to watch my surroundings and stay alert. Sleeping, reading, or using my phone is a distraction.
- ✓ I know to keep personal possessions close to me at all times.
- ✓ I know to use the front exit of the bus when it is dark, or I am in an unfamiliar neighbourhood.
- ✓ After dark I know to wait and get off at well-lit bus stops.
- ✓ I know to contact my supervisor immediately if I feel it is unsafe for me to proceed.

Other forms of work-related transportation may include ride-sharing (Uber/Lyft). Speak with your supervisor about whether this mode of transportation includes additional hazards.

Point Of Care Risk Assessment for Client Handling

CLIENT	ENVIRONMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the client ready, willing and able?• Has there been a change of behaviour or ability?• Can they:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow direction?• Lean forward?• Lift buttocks up off bed/chair?• Step/shuffle?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is it safe?• Is the setup appropriate for my skills, ability and available equipment?• Is there a risk of the bed or chair moving during the task?• Do I have what I need?• Can I get help?
CARE PLAN	YOURSELF
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have I checked the plan?• Any changes to the plan?• Have I been trained and have the appropriate tools?• Do I understand the task?• Is there a safer way to do this task?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Am I prepared to do the task safely?• Am I focused and settled?• Have I been trained?• Is my position correct?

Workplace Civility Toolkit

An online toolkit that provides resources that promote a respectful workplace.

visit: safecarebc.ca/civilitymatterstoolkit

General Vehicle Road Safety

Be prepared for the unexpected, and make sure you are ready with the following:

- ✓ Your car's manual.
- ✓ A spare tire that is inflated to the tire's rating or specifications.
- ✓ Tire iron that fits the vehicle's wheel nuts.
- ✓ Car jack that is appropriate for your vehicle.
- ✓ Waterproof mat for kneeling on should you have to change a tire.
- ✓ Portable tire pump that works off your car's power outlet/cigarette lighter.
- ✓ Reflective emergency road sign/triangle.
- ✓ Roadside assistance program if unable to perform basic car maintenance tasks.
- ✓ A change of clothing.
- ✓ Emergency roadside kit.

Point Of Care Risk Assessment Template

CLIENT	ENVIRONMENT
CARE PLAN	YOURSELF
	

Winter Road Safety

Give your vehicle a winter check-up and make sure you are prepared with the following:

- ✓ Four matched winter tires in good condition with at least 3.5 mm of tread. Between October 1 and March 31, most BC highways require passenger vehicles to have 3-peaked mountain and snowflake or Mud and Snow (M+S) tires.
- ✓ Ice scraper and brush for snow removal, extra windshield de-icer fluid.
- ✓ Jumper cables, flashlight, first aid kit, road flashers/flares, folding shovel.
- ✓ Energy bars, water, blanket, gloves, hand and foot warmers.
- ✓ Phone charger (hand-cranking charger is best).

General Vehicle Maintenance

To reduce the risk of roadside breakdowns, keep your vehicle well-maintained:

- ✓ Check your oil level regularly and have your oil changed at the designated intervals.
- ✓ Change your wiper blades in spring and fall.
- ✓ Clean your wiper blades if they become streaky between changes.
- ✓ Keep your gas tank at least a quarter full.
- ✓ Check the fluid levels in your vehicle regularly, including the windshield, brake and transmission fluid.

REFERENCES/RESOURCES

Motor Vehicle Accident Crash Sheet

Date: _____ Time: _____

Location: _____

Weather and Road Conditions:

Other vehicle(s): _____

Year: _____ Make: _____ Model: _____

Driver's Name: _____ Telephone: _____

License Plate: _____ Driver's License # _____

Insurance company and policy number (if not ICBC):

Witness Contact Information

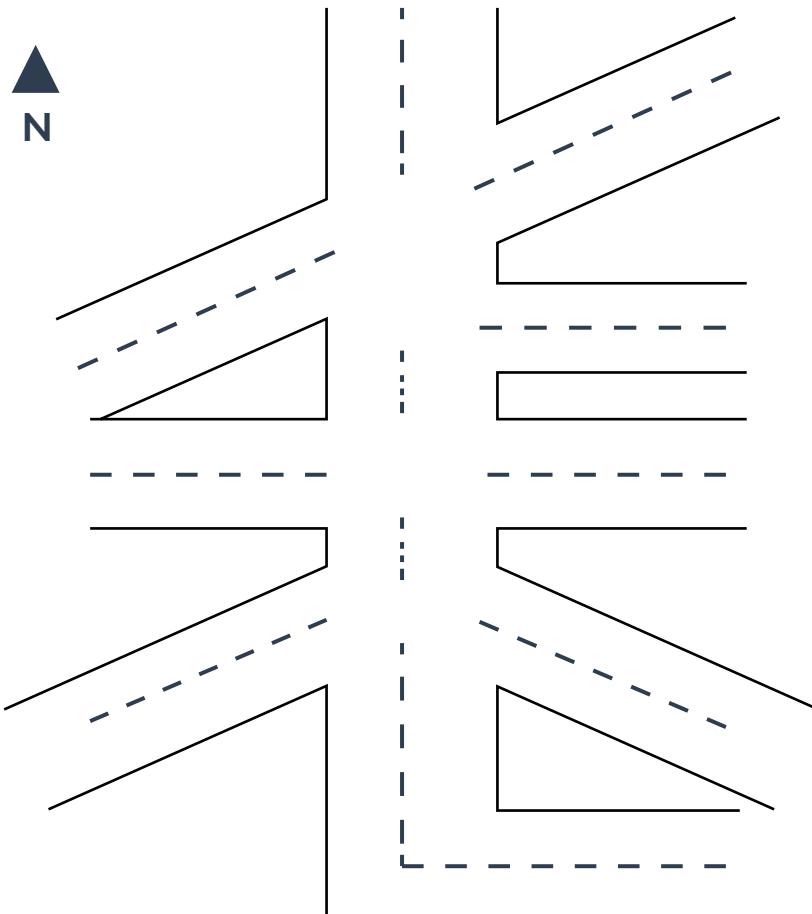
Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

REFERENCES/RESOURCES

Use This Diagram to Indicate What Happened



REFERENCES/RESOURCES

Contact Numbers

Emergency Contact: _____

Emergency Contact #: _____

Fire/Police/Ambulance: _____

Poison Control: _____

Out-of-Area Contact: _____

Coordinator/Supervisor: _____

Employer: _____

Worker Health and Safety Representative:

Employer Health and Safety Representative:

Other:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



- SafeCare BC
- WorkSafeBC
- Road Safety at Work
- DriveBC (for current road and travel conditions)
- Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC)
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
- British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union
- British Columbia Nurses Union
- Hospital Employees' Union
- Care to Speak 1-866-802-7337
- National Suicide Helpline, Call/Text 9-8-8 or 1-800-784-2433.
- BC Mental Health Support 310-6789.
- Mobile Response Team 1-888-686-3022

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