

Restoration worksites: Roles and responsibilities

The restoration of a property after a fire, flood, or other unexpected damage can be a complex task with many hazards. Workers of different employers will often be working at the same time. To ensure the health and safety of workers, it's essential to coordinate work activities effectively. There must be a system in place to ensure that all workplace parties — including property owners, insurance agents or representatives, and trade contractors — comply with the *Workers Compensation Act* and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. Identifying or designating a prime contractor and clarifying the roles of multiple parties involved in restoration work can be challenging, but necessary.

In multiple-employer workplaces, the work of others on the site may create additional hazards. Workers can be exposed to a high risk of serious injury, disease, or death when work activities aren't coordinated and communicated on the worksite. Owners, prime contractors, qualified coordinators, employers, supervisors, and workers all need to work together to reduce the risks and keep the workplace healthy and safe.

Planning and coordination

Planning and coordination are essential for reducing risk at multiple-employer workplaces and keeping workers healthy and safe. Work should be planned, coordinated, and supervised by qualified, responsible, and experienced people.

Whatever your role at a worksite, make sure you know and understand the hazards present and the plan to keep everyone safe. When you arrive at the site, assess the potential hazards, contact the coordinator of the work activities, and get informed about the plan.



Insurance companies

Insurance companies are integral to the restoration industry. In addition to reviewing and approving costs, insurance companies have responsibilities regarding restoration worksites under the Act and

the Regulation. As an employer, an insurance company is responsible for ensuring the health and safety of its workers at the worksite.

Depending on the circumstances and the contractual relationships between the various parties, an insurance company may also have the health and safety obligations of an owner and/or a prime contractor. Refer to the following sections for further details. To avoid uncertainty, WorkSafeBC recommends that a prime contractor be designated in writing for any restoration project that's a multiple-employer workplace.

Responsibilities

The Act and the Regulation establish the responsibilities of all workplace parties. All parties must comply with the Act and the Regulation.

Owners

To ensure the health and safety of workers at a multiple-employer workplace, it's critical that the work activities are coordinated and that a system is in place to ensure compliance with the Act and the Regulation. In the absence of a written agreement to designate a prime contractor, the owner is responsible for these tasks. However, the owner may not be qualified, able, or willing to take on these responsibilities.

The owner can designate a prime contractor to do this work, as long as there is a written agreement between the parties and the prime contractor is qualified to do the work.

If the owner knows of any hazards at the worksite, the owner must provide that information to the prime contractor or employers. Note that *owner* is a broadly defined term under the Act.

In addition to the actual owner of the property, the term may include a tenant, property manager, or agent of the owner.

Prime contractors

A prime contractor must be qualified to ensure coordination of work activities and compliance with the Act and the Regulation. This means being knowledgeable about the work, the hazards involved, and the means to control the hazards, by reason of education, training, experience, or a combination thereof.

The specific qualifications required will depend on the nature of the work and the hazards that work creates. Being qualified to build a building is not necessarily the same as being qualified to address the complexities involved in the restoration of a building that may be structurally damaged or contain hazardous materials.

In multiple-employer workplaces where five or more workers have overlapping or adjoining work activities that may create a hazard, the prime contractor must appoint a qualified coordinator to ensure the coordination of health and safety activities.

The prime contractor must provide drawings showing the site layout, first aid locations, emergency transportation provisions, and marshalling station. The prime contractor also needs to provide safe work procedures for construction. Being prime contractor is no small task. It requires doing everything that is reasonably practicable to ensure the health and safety of workers.

Qualified coordinators

The qualified coordinator ensures the coordination of health and safety activities at the worksite. The qualified coordinator must inform employers and workers of the hazards and ensure those hazards are addressed for the duration of the work. The qualified coordinator needs experience in and an understanding of the work processes and equipment used.

Employers

Employers are responsible for the health and safety of all workers at the worksite. Employers must ensure the following:

- Workers are aware of all known or reasonably foreseeable health or safety hazards.
- Workers are provided with adequate instruction, training, and supervision, including site orientations.
- Supervisors are provided with adequate instruction, information, training, and supervision to supervise workers effectively.

Employers need to know how work activities are being coordinated and what hazards are at the worksite. Each employer needs to co-operate with the coordination of activities. Each employer also needs to give the prime contractor the name of the person designated to supervise that employer's workers.

Supervisors

Supervisors must be knowledgeable about the health and safety requirements applicable to the work being carried out. They must ensure the health and safety of the workers they're supervising. Supervisors must also ensure that workers are aware of all known or reasonably foreseeable hazards at the worksite. Supervisors must be aware of the coordination plan.

Workers

Workers must follow the safe work procedures provided by the employer and wear all required personal protective equipment. Workers must also report to the supervisor or employer any hazard that the worker considers likely to endanger the worker or any other person.

Regulation requirements

For requirements related to responsibilities on a restoration worksite, see the following sections of the Act and the Regulation (available on [worksafebc.com](https://www.worksafebc.com)):

- Sections 115–119 of the Act, [General duties of employers, workers and others](#)
- Section 20.3 of the Regulation, [Coordination of multiple employer workplaces](#)