WorkSafeBC Goes After Bullying and Harassment



Three new WorkSafeBC occupational health and safety policies regarding workplace bullying and harassment, approved in March 2013, are now in effect in British Columbia. The policies clarify the obligations of employers, supervisors and workers in preventing workplace bullying and harassment.

WorkSafeBC defines bullying and harassment as “any inappropriate conduct or comment by a person towards a worker that the person knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause that worker to be humiliated or intimidated, but excludes any reasonable action taken by an employer or supervisor relating to the management and direction of workers or the place of employment.”

Under the new policies, companies and organizations must understand their duties to prevent and address workplace bullying and harassment, including:

- Not engaging in bullying and harassment of workers and supervisors.
- Developing a policy statement for their workplace.
- Taking steps to prevent or minimize bullying/harassment.
- Developing and implementing procedures for dealing with incidents and complaints.
- Informing and training workers and supervisors.
- Conducting annual reviews of the policy statement and procedures for reporting and dealing with incidents and complaints.

Supervisors in BC must not engage in bullying and harassment of other workers, supervisors or the employer and must apply and comply with the employer’s policy on bullying and harassment.

Workers also must not engage in bullying or harassment of other workers, supervisors or the employer and must report any bullying/harassment they observe or experience in the workplace. They must also follow company policies and procedures on bullying and harassment.

“There are negative effects of bullying and harassment on workers and workplaces,” says WorkSafeBC. “Not only can bullying and harassment impair work performance and lead to increased absenteeism, it can lead to depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. It not only affects workers subjected to this behavior, but also can negatively affect witnesses and bystanders as well.”

While WorkSafeBC says it currently has no plans for an enforcement blitz, its prevention officers will respond to enquiries and concerns about bullying and harassment.

Related content:

Share this safety talk, covering what victims of bullying must do to address the problem, with your workers.

If you are in Canada: Workplace bullying in Canada is more common than you might think. Here are some disturbing statistics concerning the problem.