

## What is a Certificate of Recognition and what are the benefits of obtaining one?

A Certificate of Recognition (COR) is a document issued jointly by a Certifying Partner and Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry, Workplace Partnerships (AEII). The COR recognizes that an employer's health and safety management system has been evaluated by a certified auditor and found to meet the Partnerships standard.

- Effective health and safety management systems have been shown to contribute to the reduction of workplace injuries. Eliminating the social and financial effects of injuries can in turn strengthen the business success of participating employers.
- Achieving and maintaining a COR is required for earning financial incentives through the Partners in Injury Reduction (PIR) program offered by the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB). It is not unusual for Alberta corporations to expect bidding contractors to hold a valid COR.

*Note: For employers with ten or fewer employees there is a Small Employer COR (SECOR) and for employers with eleven to thirty employees, there is a Medium Employer COR (MECOR). These are available through most Certifying Partners. Contact a Certifying Partner for more information.*

## How do I acquire a COR and how long will it take?

To obtain a COR employers are required to take the following steps:

1. Contact a Certifying Partner.
2. Develop and implement a health and safety management system that meets the Partnerships standard (this usually requires taking training with the Certifying Partner).
3. Select an appropriate audit instrument recognized by the Certifying Partner.
4. Select an external auditor acceptable to the Certifying Partner.
5. Have an audit completed and achieve a pass mark (not less than 80% overall with not less than 50% in any one element).
6. Submit the audit to the Certifying Partner for quality assurance review.
7. Request the Certifying Partner to issue a COR if the audit meets quality assurance standards.

If an employer already has a comprehensive health and safety management system in place, the time required to obtain a COR could be less than three months. For those establishing a new system, the amount of time required to complete the process could be twelve months or more.

## What is a health and safety management system?

A health and safety management system is a process put in place by an employer to minimize the incidence of injury and illness at the workplace. This is accomplished through identifying and assessing workplace hazards and controlling the risks and potential risks to workers in all workplace operations. The scope and complexity of a health and safety management system varies depending on the type of workplace and the nature of work performed.

To be effective, the following components are considered essential and form the basis of the Partnerships management system:

- Clearly stated employer policy and management commitment.
- Identification and analysis of health and safety hazards at the workplace.
- Control measures to eliminate or reduce the risks to workers from identified hazards.
- Worker competency and training.
- Inspection program.
- Incident reporting and investigation.
- Emergency response planning.
- Program administration.

### What is a health and safety audit?

The audit is a comprehensive review of an employer's health and safety management system. To qualify for a COR an audit must be carried out by a certified external auditor. The certified auditor must use an audit instrument that is approved for the Partnerships program, is appropriate to the industry and operations of the employer, and is acceptable to a Certifying Partner. An audit typically covers the basic elements of a health and safety management system (outlined in the previous question) and can include personnel interviews, a documentation review and workplace observation by the certified auditor.

### How do I obtain an audit and how much does it cost?

To arrange for an external audit an employer should:

1. Have a health and safety management system in place.
2. Contact a Certifying Partner to request a list of certified auditors.
3. Select an auditor with appropriate experience and qualifications for their industry and operations.
4. Arrange with the certified auditor for the audit to be undertaken.

*Note: Where an employer has operations that are covered by more than one WCB account number or industry code, it is important to clearly identify which operations are to be included in the audit and which WCB account number(s) and industry code(s) will be linked to the COR.*

When arranging for an audit, employers should ask about the auditor's qualifications and experience, and establish a cost estimate for the entire process (including a written report and recommendations). Employers should request references and check with previous clients as to the level of satisfaction.

The cost of an audit varies depending on the size and complexity of the employer's operation. Auditors will usually quote a daily rate, based on the number of employees to be interviewed, sites to be visited, documents to be reviewed and the scope of operations to be included in the overall audit process.

*Note: Employers should verify that the auditor they choose to work with is qualified and acceptable to the Certifying Partner who will review the audit. When an employer contracts with a consultant to help in the development and implementation of a health and safety system, that consultant cannot audit its own work.*

### Who reviews the audit and issues the COR?

To qualify for a COR, the final audit report (including audit instrument with auditor notes) must be forwarded to a Certifying Partner for a quality assurance review **within 45 days of completion**, accompanied by a request to review the audit and issue a COR.

The Certifying Partner reviews the audit and, upon confirmation that all quality assurance standards have been met, requests that AEII issues the COR to the employer.

*Note: The audit may be sent to the Certifying Partner directly by the auditor, however, the onus is on the employer requesting the COR to ensure it is received by the Certifying Partner.*

## How long is the COR valid and how do I maintain it?

The COR is valid for three years from the date of issue, providing that all maintenance requirements are met. The COR issue date corresponds to the last date of data collection by the auditor.

To maintain a COR, an employer is required to have a maintenance audit conducted within the first calendar year after the COR issue date, and again within the second calendar year. Maintenance audits must be undertaken by a certified auditor and may be an employee of the company.

Maintenance audits are subject to the same quality assurance review as external audits.

*Note: Employers are expected to maintain their health and safety management system at all times, and to comply with applicable Occupational Health and Safety Legislation. Significant infractions may result in a requirement for further audits of an employer's health and safety management system to maintain the validity of their COR.*

## How do I renew my COR?

To renew a COR, an employer must arrange for an external audit, have it completed and reviewed by a Certifying Partner **prior to the COR expiration date**.

The same standard for a pass mark is required to renew a COR as to acquire a COR, usually not less than 80% overall with not less than 50% in any one element. The quality assurance standards for renewing a COR are the same as for issuing a COR.

## Where can I get training to help me obtain a COR?

Most Certifying Partners offer advice and training in how to develop, implement and audit a health and safety management system to the standard required to achieve a COR. Health and safety consultants also offer a variety of services to employers wishing to obtain a COR.

## What is a Certifying Partner?

A Certifying Partner is an organization that has committed to working in partnership with AEII towards improving health and safety for Alberta workers. Certifying Partners provide training, review audits and issue CORs to employers whose audits meet quality assurance standards.

## How do I know when I am a member of a safety association that is a Certifying Partner? What can I do if I am not a member?

To determine if your association is listed as a Certifying Partner, contact them directly or check your WCB assessment notice. Your notice will indicate if you are contributing part of your premium to one of the funded safety associations, indicating that you are automatically a member.

Most Certifying Partners are willing to accept associate members, or may have a separate fee schedule for non-members. If an employer is not a member of the associations listed, they may choose to contact a Certifying Partner that provides services to employers who are not served by an industry specific association, such as the Alberta Association for Safety Partnerships or the Alberta Safety Council.

**To obtain the most current information**, contact the Workplace Health and Safety Contact Centre (780) 415-8690 (toll free 1-866-415-8690) or visit our website at [industry.alberta.ca/whs-partnerships](http://industry.alberta.ca/whs-partnerships)