

**Alberta WCB
Policies &
Information**

Chapter:

BENEFITS

Subject:

**SERVICES FOR WORKERS WITH SEVERE
INJURIES**

Authorization:

BoD Resolution 2008/02/05

Date:

February 26, 2008

APPLICATION 2: MOBILITY

1. *What is meant by the term "mobility"?*

The term "mobility" refers to an injured worker's ability to move about the environment. To improve mobility, the WCB provides necessary home and/or vehicle modifications.

2. *What kind of home modifications will the WCB consider?*

The type of home modifications provided by the WCB are dependent on the worker's functional ability as indicated by an occupational therapist's assessment.

The modifications can be minor or major. For example, when the worker is eligible for full structural home modifications, the WCB pays for changes such as:

- access to all living space (this includes the basement, but not the attic)
- widening doorways
- enlarging rooms to accommodate wheelchair maneuvering
- extensions to bathrooms and/or bedrooms
- kitchen renovations, and
- any extra costs incurred for the modifications to meet the building codes.

The WCB also provides modifications to improve the worker's access to the residence, including such things as wheelchair ramps, widening or construction of sidewalks, or concrete transfer pads.

The home modification plans must be approved by both the WCB and the worker.

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3. *Apart from the worker's mobility needs, what other factors does the WCB consider in home modifications?*

The extent to which the WCB provides home modifications depends on individual circumstances. The WCB will only consider major structural modifications when all the following conditions are met:

- the worker owns the home
- the home is the worker's primary residence
- the home is structurally sound, as confirmed by an independent certified home inspection.

Additionally, if the home is a mobile home, it must be securely blocked or on a concrete pad or foundation.

4. *What if the worker rents the home?*

When the home is rented, the WCB will not normally pay for major structural modifications. The WCB will, however, provide access to the home (for example, wheel chair ramps) and other minor modifications such as bathroom adaptations (grab bars, rails, etc.). Any modifications in a rental residence must have the written consent of the landlord.

5. *What if the worker owns the home but for structural or other reasons, it is not practical to do major home modifications?*

If, for structural or other reasons, it is not practical to modify the worker's current residence, the WCB may provide a financial grant towards the purchase of an alternate residence. The grant will normally be in an amount equivalent to the cost of approved modifications to the previous residence, however, the grant will not exceed actual costs.

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6. *Will the WCB modify any additional homes or facilities?* The WCB only modifies the worker's primary residence. However, the WCB may consider providing a temporary or permanent wheelchair ramp or lift (from the ground level to the building entrance) which gives reasonable access to one additional residence or facility (for example, a relative's home or holiday cottage).
7. *How often will the WCB pay for home modifications?* The WCB will pay for only one major home modification.
8. *Will the WCB pay for wear and tear to flooring, walls, etc.?* Effective January 1, 2000, injured workers who must use a wheelchair or similar mobility aid in their home may be eligible for a home maintenance allowance to offset the costs of the additional wear and tear. Please refer to Application 4 for information on the home maintenance allowance.
9. *Who is responsible for the maintenance of the modifications?* The structural modifications are the worker's property and the worker is responsible for their upkeep and maintenance. The WCB may retain ownership and will in any case repair and maintain special appliances or equipment which it provides. In these cases, the WCB will pay for upkeep and maintenance, however, the worker is responsible for ensuring necessary maintenance is done as required.

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10. *Will the WCB pay for general home repairs and maintenance?*

The WCB does not pay for general home repairs (for example, window replacement, roof repairs) which would be required regardless of the compensable injury. The worker may, however, be eligible for a home maintenance allowance to help cover the cost of day-to-day maintenance and additional wear and tear. Please refer to Application 4 for information on the home maintenance allowance.

11. *What equipment does the WCB provide to increase mobility in the home?*

The WCB provides any equipment or appliance which is necessary to give access to the living area of the home or is medically required. This can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- lifts, stair glides, and elevators
- home appliances such as air conditioners and static dust removers
- home security and intercom systems
- garage door openers, etc.

12. *When will the WCB consider alternative mobility aids?*

The WCB will provide the most practical form of personal transportation. For example, the WCB may provide a scooter if the worker needs an electric wheelchair and a scooter provides greater outdoor accessibility, or if the terrain at the worker's location is unsuitable for a manual or electric wheelchair. Alternatively, if the terrain is too rugged (for example, farmland or an undeveloped acreage) for a scooter, the WCB may provide an all-terrain vehicle (ATV).

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*Alternative mobility aids
(continued)*

If the WCB does provide mobility aids such as a scooter or ATV in place of a wheelchair, it will also provide and maintain lifts and a trailer to transport the aid, if necessary. The WCB will maintain and replace the mobility aid, based on reasonable use and normal life span of the vehicle. The WCB will not, however, pay the cost of adapting an ATV or other aid for road use or for any licenses required for road use. The worker is also responsible for any insurance costs, third-party liability, and for other individuals who may drive the vehicle.

13. What transportation does the WCB provide?

The WCB modifies or provides appropriate transportation for the worker based on the worker's functional ability as determined by an occupational therapist's assessment. Transportation could range from payment for disabled adult transportation services as a temporary measure, to modification of a new or existing vehicle to accommodate the worker's disability. Any vehicle modifications must meet legal requirements for such transportation.

The WCB will provide major modifications to only one vehicle at any time, but may supply hand controls for another vehicle owned by the worker.

In certain circumstances, the WCB will provide a vehicle for modification.

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14. *When will the WCB provide a vehicle for modification?*

The WCB may provide a vehicle for modification when, because of a permanent compensable disability, an injured worker:

- must use a power wheelchair; or
- uses a manual wheelchair but is medically assessed to be unable to self-transfer from the wheelchair to the vehicle from outside the vehicle.

In both cases, the worker must have a specially modified vehicle as the worker must either enter the vehicle while remaining in the wheelchair or use a power lift or other mechanized assistance to enter the vehicle.

The WCB bases its decision on the worker’s medically-assessed functional needs. The WCB also takes into consideration the worker’s transportation needs. For example, it is more practical to pay for commercial transportation as needed when a worker lives in a nursing home and requires only occasional transportation.

Type of Vehicle

If a vehicle is needed, WCB will review the available options and provide a vehicle that it considers the best value based on the options available and the worker's assessed functional needs. Workers are responsible for the costs of any additional upgrades which are not required for the compensable injury (for example, a more expensive vehicle model, upgraded audio equipment, etc.)

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*Maintenance and
Operating Costs*

The worker is responsible for operating costs and normal vehicle maintenance. Workers may be asked to provide confirmation that a regular maintenance schedule is maintained.

The WCB will pay the cost of maintaining movable specialized equipment such as lifts and ramps provided as part of the vehicle modifications.

Replacement Vehicles

Vehicles will be replaced when the current vehicle has reached the end of its useful lifespan, as determined by the WCB, or when the worker's assessed functional needs change to the extent that it is not practical to modify the existing vehicle to meet those needs.

A new vehicle is expected to remain roadworthy for at least 10 years. If the worker requests a new vehicle before 10 years because the current one is not roadworthy, WCB will evaluate the request on a case-by-case basis. Exceptional circumstances will be considered (for example, manufacturer's defects, mileage, etc.). If the worker cannot produce regular maintenance records, the replacement vehicle costs may be pro-rated between the worker and WCB.

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Terms and Conditions

The WCB will set terms and conditions such as maintenance requirements and ownership at the time the vehicle is provided.

A worker receiving vehicle modifications or a modified vehicle (the items) must sign the WCB's standard form purchase money security agreement, securing the WCB's interest against the items as a first charge*. The purposes of the security agreement include:

- the protection of WCB's interest in the items;
- prohibiting the worker from transferring the items to a third party;
- ensuring the items (or their cash equivalent) are returned to the WCB in good repair when no longer needed by the worker or in the event of a breach of the security agreement.

Provided that there is sufficient equity in the items, the WCB may agree to the registration of a second charge against the items.

* If more than one loan is secured against an item and the debtor defaults, the lender with the first charge is entitled to be paid first from the sale proceeds of the vehicle. Second charges and loans from the subsequent lenders are entitled to recover their money after the first charge has been paid.

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15. *Can the worker use a WCB-provided vehicle as collateral for a loan?*

Because the WCB already has a security agreement registered against the vehicle (see Question 14, above), in most cases the vehicle cannot be used as security for another loan unless there is enough additional equity not covered by the WCB's security agreement.

If the vehicle is to be used as collateral for a loan, the worker must first obtain the WCB's written permission before another security agreement is registered against the vehicle.

16. *Does the WCB pay for the worker's insurance premiums?*

The WCB may pay for the increased portion of the worker's vehicle or home insurance if the increase is a result of the disability. All other costs normally incurred by the general population (e.g., life insurance, health insurance, children's education, etc.) remain the worker's responsibility.

17. *When is this policy application effective?*

This policy application (Application 2 – Mobility) is effective April 1, 2008 and applies to all decisions made on or after that date, except when noted otherwise in a specific policy section(s).