

Team building activities

Team building activities are activities or events carried out for the purpose of building employee morale or cohesiveness, strategic planning, recognizing good performance and staff appreciation. Many employers are not aware that team building activities may be covered by workers' compensation.

Unfortunately, team building events may present a risk of illness or injury. When planning team building activities, you should assess and control any health and safety hazards, as you would for any employment activity.

General compensation principles

The nature of the activity is not the determining factor for coverage. What is important is whether you directed the activity or whether there was an expectation the employee attend. **Voluntary activities are not covered.**

Given the individual circumstances of each claim, WCB looks at the following factors to determine whether a team building injury is covered under the workers' compensation system:

- Did the injury occur on your premises?
- Was the activity held during work time?
- Was the employee paid for the time?
- Was the activity for your benefit as an employer?
- Was the employee in that time and place due to employment reasons?
- Did you direct or supervise the activity?
- Was the employee's participation in the activity mandatory or voluntary?
 - Did you encourage participation?
 - Was there an expectation that the employee attend?
 - Was the employee concerned about potential unfavourable treatment for non-attendance?

[See Policy 02-01, Part II (especially Applications 1: Employment Hazards, and 2: Time and Place)].

Scenario 1: Injury while participating in a scavenger hunt

As a way to build staff morale, ABC Manufacturing Company holds a scavenger hunt at a local historical site. Although the employer indicates participation is not mandatory, employees generally feel they need to demonstrate that they are team players and most, if not all, participate in the team building event. One of the employees, Henry, is stung by a bee and misses two days of work due to a bee sting allergy. Is Henry covered?

Yes. The team building event is covered because all employees are generally expected to attend. In addition, insect bites are covered as an employment hazard if the worker's employment caused them to be in a time and place where they were exposed to insects (Policy 02-01, Part II, Application 1: Employment Hazards).

Scenario 2: Injury during strategic planning

The manufacturing company holds an annual retreat in the mountains to set corporate goals for the coming year. Abdul is injured when the chair he is sitting on during the meeting suddenly collapses. He falls to the floor, suffering a concussion and broken tailbone. Is Abdul covered?

Yes. The entire team is required to attend and the chair is considered a hazard of the premises.

Scenario 3: Injury during travel from a team building activity

On the way home from the retreat, Michaela suffers a neck injury in a motor vehicle accident. Is Michaela covered?

Likely yes. When a team building activity is covered, travel to and from the team building activity is also covered if the activity was held off-site. However, regular commuting to and from work is not covered. Adjudicators will consider whether Michaela was on a personal deviation from her route home when the motor vehicle accident occurred (Policy 02-01, Part II, Application 3: Travel).

Scenario 4: Injury during Corporate Challenge

Jessie signs up for lawn bowling at the Corporate Challenge. They break two toes when they drop a ball on their foot. Is Jessie covered?

Likely no. Participation in the Corporate Challenge is generally voluntary.

For more information on WCB policies, visit our website at www.wcb.ab.ca/about-wcb/policy-manual/.

