

**Alberta WCB  
Policies &  
Information**

Chapter:

**GENERAL POLICIES**

Subject:

**POLICY INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION**

Authorization:

**BoD Resolution 2026/02/07**

Date:

**April 28, 2026**

**REFERENCE:**

[Workers' Compensation Act, RSA 2000, Sections 6, 13.2, 17, 24, 24.1, and 24.2](#)  
[Interpretation Act](#)

**POLICY:**

This policy, Policy 01-00, provides guidance on how to interpret and apply policies in WCB-Alberta's *Policies and Information Manual* (Policy Manual).

The Alberta *Workers' Compensation Act (WCA)* provides the legislative framework for administering workers' compensation in Alberta. WCB policies describe how the *WCA* and its regulations are applied in practice.

Each policy or policy application has an *effective date*. The effective date is the date a policy or policy application *comes into force*.

Policy effective dates are not *retroactive*, they are *prospective*, except when specifically stated otherwise.

*Statutory presumptions* are also not retroactive, except when specifically stated otherwise in legislation.

When a policy is revised, the revised policy *supersedes* and replaces the current version, which then becomes the *previous version*. The revised policy is given a new *issue date* when it is published. The previous version of the policy continues to apply for adjudication of any matters during the relevant time period before the effective date of the revised policy, except when specifically stated otherwise.

If a policy is *rescinded*, except when specifically stated otherwise, the rescinded policy remains valid for the time preceding its rescission. This means the rescinded policy continues to apply for adjudication of matters arising during the period it was in effect.

**Alberta WCB  
Policies &  
Information**

Chapter:

**GENERAL POLICIES**

Subject:

**POLICY INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION**

Authorization:

**BoD Resolution 2026/02/07**

Date:

**April 28, 2026**

**Effective date:**

This policy is effective May 1, 2026, and applies to decisions made on or after that date, regardless of date of accident, except when noted otherwise in a specific policy section(s).

**INTERPRETATION**

**1.0 Policy Manual**

Under section 6 of the *WCA*, WCB’s Board of Directors has the authority to create policies. These policies are published in WCB’s Policy Manual.

The electronic Policy Manual posted on WCB’s website is the official record of WCB’s policies. The Policy Manual contains policies approved by WCB’s Board of Directors. The manual is updated as amendments are approved by the Board of Directors and serves as the final authority for interpreting and applying policies.

All policies in this Policy Manual must be consistent with the *WCA* and should be interpreted to accomplish that goal.

**2.0 *Workers’ Compensation Act***

In the Policy Manual, references to the *WCA* mean the *Workers’ Compensation Act* being Chapter W-15, Revised Statutes of Alberta, 2000, and amendments thereto.

**3.0 Effective dates**

The effective date is the calendar date a policy or policy application comes into force. When the Board of Directors creates a new policy or amends an existing policy, an effective date is given. The effective date indicates when and how a new or revised policy applies.

The two most common types of effective dates are **date of accident** and **date of decision**.

**Date of accident:** For some policies, the Board of Directors specifies that a new or revised policy applies to any accident that occurs on or after a specified date. If the

**Alberta WCB  
Policies &  
Information**

Chapter:

**GENERAL POLICIES**

Subject:

**POLICY INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION**

Authorization:

**BoD Resolution 2026/02/07**

Date:

**April 28, 2026**

**Effective dates (continued)**

date of accident is before the effective date, the previous version of the policy is used to adjudicate the claim.

**Date of decision:** At times, the Board of Directors may determine that a new or revised policy applies to all new decisions made by WCB on or after a specified date. When this type of effective date is used, both decisions on existing claims and new claims arising on or after the effective date will be made in accordance with the new or revised policy. The use of this type of effective date:

- may result in changes to future benefits or services for existing claims, but
- does not result in any adjustments to benefits previously paid on existing claims as the policy does not apply to decisions already made on existing claims.

Some policies identify another effective date that is in addition to and/or in place of date of accident or date of decision.

In rare circumstances, the Board of Directors may determine that a new or revised policy applies retroactively - that is, to decisions that were made and/or accidents that occurred as of a specific date in the past. A retroactive policy changes the applicable policy for a period that has already passed. If this type of effective date is used, it must be specifically stated in policy. Policy and legislation are not to be applied retroactively unless retroactive application is specifically stipulated in the policy or legislation itself.

**4.0 Coming into force**

Policy is a form of subordinate legislation. As indicated in the *Interpretation Act*, a new or revised policy has effect (comes into force) immediately at the beginning of the day of the effective date.

**Alberta WCB  
Policies &  
Information**

Chapter:

**GENERAL POLICIES**

Subject:

**POLICY INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION**

Authorization:

**BoD Resolution 2026/02/07**

Date:

**April 28, 2026**

**Coming into force  
(continued)**

When a policy is revised, the revised policy comes into force on its effective date and the previous (archived) version remains in effect for the relevant period before the revision. For more information, see definitions of effective dates and previous versions.

For example, if a policy is revised with an effective date of June 1, 2020, applying to all accidents on or after that date:

- the revised policy comes into force on June 1, 2020
- the previous version of the policy is archived
- claims with dates of accident prior to June 1, 2020, are adjudicated under the archived policy (not the revised policy)
- claims with a date of accident on or after June 1, 2020, are adjudicated under the new or revised policy.

**5.0 Retroactive vs prospective**

In general,

- retroactive application means applying a new rule to a past transaction that was completed before the rule was created. For example, re-adjudicating claims based on a newly implemented or revised policy is considered retroactive application.
- prospective application means the rule is effective going forward. For example, applying a new or revised policy only on or after its effective date is prospective application.

Except when specifically stated otherwise in policy, WCB policies are applied prospectively, not retroactively.

## Alberta WCB Policies & Information

Chapter:

GENERAL POLICIES

Subject:

POLICY INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

Authorization:

BoD Resolution 2026/02/07

Date:

April 28, 2026

### Retroactive vs prospective (continued)

For example:

- **Prospective application:** A revised policy is published January 1, 2024, with an effective date of January 1, 2024, applying to all decisions made by WCB on or after that date, regardless of the date of accident. The previous version of the policy is archived. Decisions made before January 1, 2024, were adjudicated under the archived policy (not the revised policy). Decisions made on or after January 1, 2024, are adjudicated under the new or revised policy, even for existing claims. This may result in changes to future benefits or services for existing claims but does not affect past decisions already made on existing claims. This means no adjustments are made to any benefits previously paid.
- **Retroactive application:** A revised policy is published February 1, 2020, with an effective date of July 1, 2000, explicitly stating that it applies retroactively to claims arising from accidents that occurred on or after July 1, 2000. If an existing or previously denied claim has a date of accident on or after July 1, 2000, it may be adjudicated under the revised policy. If the revised policy results in a benefit increase or premium decrease, the worker, dependant, or employer may be entitled to an adjustment of benefits or premiums.

Under the *Interpretation Act*, legislation is presumed to apply only from its effective date, meaning it is generally not applied retroactively unless explicitly stated.

## 6.0 Statutory presumptions

A statutory presumption is a presumption created by legislation, either under an act or regulation. In the context of workers' compensation, statutory presumptions are primarily used to presume a worker's injury or disease arose out of and occurred in the course of employment, provided that the criteria outlined in the *WCA* or

**Alberta WCB  
Policies &  
Information**

Chapter:

**GENERAL POLICIES**

Subject:

**POLICY INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION**

Authorization:

**BoD Resolution 2026/02/07**

Date:

**April 28, 2026**

**Statutory presumptions  
(continued)**

regulation are met (for further detail refer to Policy 02-01). Statutory presumptions are interpreted using the same rules that apply to all other legislation and policies.

**7.0 Supersedes**

Supersedes means to take the place of. When a policy is revised, the revised policy supersedes/replaces the current policy as of the effective date of the new policy. When a revised policy is published, it receives a new issue date. The previous version of the policy is identified in the supersedes date at the bottom of the policy document. Except when specifically stated otherwise, the previous version of the revised policy remains applicable for adjudicating matters related to periods before the effective date of the revised policy.

**8.0 Previous version**

Previous versions of policy are archived and publicly available. When a policy is revised, WCB publishes the revised policy (which becomes the current policy) in the Policy Manual and archives the previous version. A list of links to previous versions (from 1997 to the present) is included at the end of each policy document. The previous version remains applicable if it was in effect during the relevant time period. That is, except when specifically stated otherwise, the archived version is used for adjudication purposes for periods before the revised policy's effective date.

For details on changes between the current and previous versions of a policy, refer to the History of Policy Changes, which provides the most recent policy update, a list of revised policies, and a brief description of the changes. Previous policy updates (formerly called transmittals) are also archived, allowing users to track changes made to any previous version of a policy.

**9.0 Issue date**

The issue date is the date the policy is published. It is different than the effective date which is the date the policy comes into force.

---

**Alberta WCB  
Policies &  
Information**

Chapter:

**GENERAL POLICIES**

Subject:

**POLICY INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION**

Authorization:

**BoD Resolution 2026/02/07**

Date:

**April 28, 2026**

---

**10.0 Rescinded policy**

Occasionally, policies are rescinded, which is similar to the repeal of legislation.

A rescinded policy may still apply to decisions made after its rescission if it was in effect during the relevant time period. Except when specifically stated otherwise, a rescinded policy is used for adjudication purposes for periods when it was in effect.

Previous versions of policies that were restructured or rescinded can be found in Document History.