

Ask the Expert

Question:

Barbara Wallace, Marks Supply Inc.

Do you know if it is mandatory for companies to have a Pandemic Policy or if it will be mandatory in the next year?

Answer:

Suzanne Bernier, Former Emergency Management Program Coordinator, WSIB

At this time, it is not mandatory for companies to have pandemic plans in place. However, certain businesses within highly-regulated industries such as banks, are required to develop business continuity and pandemic plans to ensure they fulfill their own legislative requirements. Regardless, all companies are strongly encouraged by WSIB, the province of Ontario and the federal government to demonstrate due diligence by developing such plans.

Meanwhile, Under Ontario's Emergency Management & Civil Protection Act, all government ministries, as well as designated agencies, boards and commissions, are required to develop business continuity and pandemic plans to ensure continuity of services during a pandemic or other emergency.

While the federal government has not yet made it mandatory for all companies to develop pandemic plans, they have recently announced a joint initiative with the International Centre for Infectious Diseases in Winnipeg, to develop tools and strategies to help small- and medium-size businesses plan for a pandemic.

As we are now in the midst of a global pandemic and could be facing a second wave in the fall, all companies are encouraged to develop pandemic plans to ensure protection of their own employees and effective continuity of operations during a heightened pandemic.