

Partnerships in Injury Reduction for Trucking

An overview of the COR and SECOR programs and financial incentives for carriers

Background

Safety management systems are used by companies to meet safety-related goals while looking for problems and opportunities for improvement. These systems are as diverse as the organizations that implement them.

According to Section 16 of Alberta's [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#), Provincially-regulated employers that regularly employ 20 or more people need to have a "health and safety program" [1].

Regardless of size, all employers need to meet the requirements of all legislation that apply to their operations, so employers that are small enough to be exempt from Section 16 above still need internal processes to meet their safety-related legal obligations. A safety management system is a tool to accomplish this task.

The rest of this bulletin will provide an overview of a safety management system employers can adopt: the Government of Alberta's Partnerships in Injury Reduction (PIR) program. PIR presents employers with a clear pathway to implementing a safety management system – it also comes with significant financial incentives as well.

Partnerships in Injury Reduction (PIR)

PIR started in Alberta in 1989 under the original name of Partnerships in Health and Safety [2]. The PIR program is a collaboration between the Government of Alberta, employers, industry associations, and the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) for the purpose of reducing injury rates in Albertan workplaces.

The employer must choose a Certifying Partner to participate in the PIR program and obtain a COR. A Certifying Partner is a health and safety organization that oversees the COR auditing process, provides training to the employer, and can offer industry-specific advice to organizations to help make the process of obtaining a COR less generic and more applicable to the unique needs of the employer. AMTA is a Certifying Partner for employers in the trucking industry [3].

It is important to highlight that participating in PIR is voluntary. There is no legal requirement to have a COR and use PIR's safety management system. A company can build their own system or adapt a different safety system to their operations. But, choosing the PIR program offers several significant benefits:

1. COR holders are eligible for industry rate discounts from WCB (more on this in a later section).



2. Certifying Partners like AMTA are available to work with employers to implement a COR-acceptable safety system. For example, AMTA's Workplace Support Services (WSS) team will work with carriers to improve their safety program, are familiar with the COR requirements, and have experience with transportation-specific safety systems.
3. Research points to the effectiveness of a PIR safety management system at Albertan employers. In a study published in the journal of **Occupational and Environmental Medicine** [4, 5], Albertan employers with a COR performed better in terms of both lost time and disabling injury rates. It's worth highlighting that transportation employers were named as one of the industries benefitting most from COR.

Employers interested in implementing a safety management system or improving an existing one can contact AMTA for details on how the program can benefit their workplaces.

Certificate of Recognition (COR)

To participate in the PIR program, employers with 11 or more employees need to obtain a COR. The basic process to obtain a COR is [6]:

1. Select a Certifying Partner that represents your industry. AMTA represents companies in transportation.
2. Set up a safety management system that is up to the COR standard.
3. Get an external COR audit.
4. Maintain the safety management system by participating in the three-year COR cycle.

AMTA's COR program examines the following eleven safety system elements [7]:

1. Management, leadership, and organizational commitment.
2. Hazard identification and assessment.
3. Hazard control.
4. Health and safety representatives (or committees).
5. Qualification, orientation, and training.
6. Other parties at the work site.
7. Inspections.
8. Emergency response.
9. Incident investigation.
10. System administration.
11. National Safety Code (NSC) quiz.

The above list can be thought of as 10+1 elements. The first ten items represent occupational health and safety management system elements, and the eleventh item represents the unique safety and compliance requirements motor carriers must meet. Adding an NSC component to our COR program allows AMTA to ensure our COR holders are operating commercial vehicles in a safe and legal manner.

Once an employer has passed an external audit and obtained a COR, they enter the 3-year COR audit cycle.

Once every third year an external auditor audits the employer's safety program, and the two intermediate years the employer performs a maintenance audit of their safety program using their own internal COR auditor (an individual certified by AMTA but who works for the employer).

Small Employer Certificate of Recognition (SECOR)

For employers with 10 or fewer employees, obtaining a SECOR is an option [8]. SECOR certification allows small businesses to participate in the PIR program by implementing a safety system and adhering to an audit cycle that are tailored to smaller organizations. For small companies worried about how to go about building an OHS program, AMTA's SECOR program and training allow for a simple, tried-and-true method of addressing more safety-related concerns with minimal investment.

Financial Incentives for Carriers

Alberta's PIR program is unique amongst commonly-available safety management systems because it provides a direct financial incentive for implementation [9]. PIR does this by having an agreement in place with Alberta WCB to give COR-holding employers a 5% industry rate discount (and 10% for the first year the employer obtains their COR as an extra incentive to put a safety program in place) [10].

These direct financial benefits are in addition to other WCB savings an employer will receive by improving their safety performance. On top of the above industry rate discounts, WCB will further discount rates for employers that reduce their claim costs and for employers that have fewer claim costs than others in their industry [10]. To obtain these additional discounts, employers need to make measurable improvements in their safety performance by reducing their injury rates. The reason why PIR and COR help employers receive these discounts is because a COR safety management system presents a direct pathway to reducing injury rates [4, 5].

Due Dilligence

Employers of all sizes need to understand the concept of due diligence. Due diligence, according to the Centre for Canadian Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS), is "the level of judgement, care, prudence, determination, and activity that a person would reasonably be expected to do under particular circumstances" [11]. To be duly diligent, an employer needs to have a system in place to identify hazards and protect their employees, contractors, and relevant members of the public from these hazards.



Participating in PIR can be a significant part of demonstrating due diligence. However, a neglected PIR program that is only maintained for the purposes of obtaining COR/SECOR status but is not fully implemented in the employer's operations does not demonstrate due diligence. A COR audit attempts to measure the effectiveness of the employer's COR. But, an audit is a measurement of the employer's safety system at a single moment in time; the employer needs to maintain their safety system at all times and may need to take additional measures beyond the PIR program to ensure the protection of their workers.

Need Help? Contact AMTA

AMTA can provide carriers with guidance on the information presented in this bulletin. If you have any questions, please contact AMTA and our experienced staff will be happy to help. For your safety and compliance questions, please email Workplace Support Services (WSS) directly at wss@amta.ca.

For more updates like this on a variety of topics related to the trucking industry, please [sign up for our eNews](#).

References

- 1 – Province of Alberta. 2021. “Health and safety program.” In the Occupational Health and Safety Act, SA 2020 Chapter O-2.2, accessed February 1st, 2022, from <https://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/O02P2.pdf>
- 2 – Government of Alberta. Date unknown. Building an Effective Health and Safety Management System. Accessed February 1st, 2022, from <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/db1578a3-a2cb-4e1b-8c84-90250ec598fd/resource/c36b3b98-32d7-405f-bd87-2facd7630e72/download/building-an-effective-health-and-safety-management-system.pdf>
- 3 – Alberta Motor Transport Association. 2020. “What is COR?” Accessed February 1st, 2022, from <https://amta.ca/what-we-do/cor/>
- 4 – University of British Columbia (based upon research referenced in [5]). No date (2018 or more recent). “An audit-based occupational health and safety recognition program: Is certification associated with lower firm work-injury rates in Alberta?” A Research Brief published by the University of British Columbia, accessed from their “Certificate of Recognition (COR) audit program” website on February 2nd, 2022, from <https://pwhs.ubc.ca/research/policy-and-program-evaluation/certificate-of-recognition-audit-program/>
- 5 – McLeod, C., Macpherson, R., Aderounmu, A., Quirke, W., & Koehoorn, M. 2019. “O7C.6 Effectiveness of an audit-based occupational health and safety management system certification on firm injury rates in Alberta, Canada.” Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 76 doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/OEM-2019-EPL177>, accessed February 2nd, 2022, from <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2213745595/abstract/DAECC2CA8E6E4F1BPQ/1?accountid=12063>
- 6 – Government of Alberta. 2022. “Get a Certificate of Recognition (COR).” Accessed February 2nd, 2022, from <https://www.alberta.ca/get-certificate-recognition.aspx>
- 7 – Alberta Motor Transport Association. 2020. “COR and Carrier Compliance.” In COR Auditor Participant Workbook, page 24.
- 8 – Alberta Motor Transport Association. 2022. “To Achieve SECOR.” Accessed February 2nd, 2022, from <https://amta.ca/what-we-do/cor/secor-program/>
- 9 – Dyck, D.E.G..2020. “6. Alberta Partnerships in Injury Reduction Program.” In Occupational Health & Safety: Theory, Strategy & Industry Practice (4th ed.), pages 91-92. LexisNexis Canada.
- 10 – Workers’ Compensation Board Alberta. 2022. “Partnerships in Injury Reduction (PIR).” and “Resources.” Accessed February 2nd, 2022, from [https://www.wcb.ab.ca/insurance-and-premiums/lower-your-premiums/partnerships-in-injury-reduction-\(pir\).html](https://www.wcb.ab.ca/insurance-and-premiums/lower-your-premiums/partnerships-in-injury-reduction-(pir).html)
- 11 – Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. 2022. “OH&S Legislation in Canada - Due Diligence.” Accessed February 7th, 2022, from <https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/legisl/diligence.html#popup-survey-modal>