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## Policy

In accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA), the public has a general right of access to employer information under the WSIB's custody or control through filing a formal freedom of information (FOI) request, subject to the limited and specific exemptions to disclosure under FIPPA.

The WSIB also routinely discloses and actively disseminates certain employer information, as a matter of course without the need for a formal FOI request, if it is clear such information is not exempt from disclosure under FIPPA.

Employer information that is specifically exempted from disclosure under FIPPA is treated as confidential, and generally only disclosed to the employer or to the employer's authorized representative(s).

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the circumstances under which the WSIB may disclose employer information.

## Guidelines

### Definitions

**Active dissemination** means the periodic and proactive release of employer information without a request for access.

**Employer information** means all information relating to a specific employer supplied to, collected, or created by the WSIB and contained in existing WSIB records, but does not include claim file information. For information relating to disclosure of **claim file information**, see 21-02-01, Disclosure of Claim File Information - General.

**FOI request** means a formal written request for access to information made under the authority of FIPPA.

**Informal request** means a request for access to employer information, made by a member of the public, that may be satisfied without a formal FOI request.

**Personal information**, as defined in FIPPA, means all information about an identifiable individual. However, personal information generally does not include the name, title, contact information or designation of an individual that identifies the individual in a business, professional or official capacity.

**Routine disclosure** means the routine or automatic release of information in response to an informal request.

**Operational  
Policy**

Section

Access to Information - Employers

Subject

**Access to Employer Information****Limits to access**

The WSIB considers employer information that is specifically exempted from disclosure under FIPPA as confidential, and will generally not disclose such information to someone other than the employer or the employer's authorized representative(s).

In accordance with FIPPA, employer information will generally be exempt from disclosure and treated as confidential:

- where disclosure may reveal personal information about the owner or the workers of the employer, **or**
- where the information is a trade secret or scientific, technical, commercial, financial or labour relations information that has been **supplied in confidence**, implicitly or explicitly, to the WSIB, and
- disclosure could prejudice significantly the employer's competitive position or cause one of the other harms listed in section 17 of FIPPA.

**Confidential employer information**

Employer information which is generally treated as confidential by the WSIB includes, but is not limited to:

- payroll
- account balances
- optional insurance amounts
- the amount of unpaid premiums
- accident cost statements
- details on Schedule 2 invoices, and covered by advance notices, and
- account number and firm number (at the discretion of the WSIB, e.g. Clearance Certificates).

**Non-confidential employer information**

Employer information that is generally available to the public includes, but is not limited to:

- whether a particular employer is registered
- the employer's class or predominant class
- whether the employer is in Schedule 1 or 2
- the name and contact information of a registered employer
- confirmation that an individual has optional insurance (excluding the amount of coverage or the length of coverage)
- confirmation an individual's or an employer's account is in good standing, but not any details about outstanding amounts
- the employer's aggregated accident statistics (for example, injury rates and characteristics) where the data set consists of a sufficient number of claims to ensure the probability of re-identification of individual workers is low

**Operational  
Policy**

Section

Access to Information - Employers

Subject

**Access to Employer Information**

- the employer's aggregated benefit costs and types where the data set consists of a sufficient number of claims to ensure the probability of re-identification of individual workers is low, and
- the employer's experience rating information (see Requests concerning experience rating and retroactive adjustments section below).

**Access to confidential employer information**

The WSIB generally does not disclose confidential employer information to any person who fails to satisfy the WSIB that they are the employer, or an authorized representative of the employer. An employer (i.e. an authorized officer of the company) or an authorized representative (i.e. a third-party consultant) acting on behalf of the employer may request that the WSIB provide them with such information.

An employer may authorize a representative to act on behalf of the employer and get access to information about the employer's account. However, such representatives must be identified to the WSIB through proper authorization. A representative who is not currently authorized must file a written authorization with the WSIB before any information is released. For more information, see 21-01-02, Authorization of Employer Representatives Regarding Employer Information.

**Associated and transfer of experience employers**

Associated and transfer of experience employers may be provided with the following confidential information that allows them to understand the combined premium rate(s) assigned to them

- payroll information
- specific claims cost information
- information related to account number and firm number, at the discretion of the WSIB (e.g. Clearance Certificates).

Associated and transfer of experience employers may request additional confidential employer information. Access to additional confidential employer information will be granted on a case-by-case basis at the sole discretion of the WSIB.

Disclosure of confidential information to associated and transfer of experience employers is subject to the Limits to access section above.

**Verification of representative**

In all cases, the WSIB reserves the right to verify the information directly with the employer, including:

- the authenticity of the request
- the authorization of the representative, and
- the signing authority of the individual who signed the authorization.

**Written requests**

A written request generally must be submitted to obtain confidential employer information in written format. Written requests must include proper authorization if the employer representative is the requestor. Requests must include the following information:

- the correct employer name and account number
- the requestor's name
- the specific information requested, and
- contact information, i.e. where the information should be sent, and who to contact if there are any questions, etc.

For further information, see Written Requests in 21-01-02, Authorization of Employer Representatives Regarding Employer Information.

**Disclosure of employer information under exceptional circumstances**

Receivers appointed by the courts, trustees, and executors who have taken over management of an employer undergoing bankruptcy, or for a deceased employer, are entitled to the same employer information as the employer. They alone can authorize the release of confidential employer information. Satisfactory proof of status as a receiver, trustee or executor must be provided to the WSIB.

The WSIB may provide government agencies and the police with certain confidential employer information without the employer's, person's, or agency's authorization. All requests from government agencies and law enforcement agencies must be made in writing to the WSIB's Privacy Office or, in the case of fraud investigations, to the WSIB's Regulatory Services.

**Access to non-confidential employer information (routine disclosure)**

The WSIB may, from time-to-time, receive informal requests for access to non-confidential employer information.

Routine disclosure in these cases will generally be allowed where the information request is of a type that is regularly received by the WSIB and the WSIB is satisfied that a page-by-page review of the exemptions under FIPPA is not necessary.

Any area of the WSIB that receives an informal request for non-confidential employer information will advise the requester:

- whether the information and/or record is available as routine disclosure, or
- whether it will be necessary to submit a formal FOI request to the WSIB, due to exemptions under FIPPA which may be applicable.

**Operational  
Policy**

Section

Access to Information - Employers

Subject

**Access to Employer Information**

Informal requests may be submitted verbally or in writing to the WSIB. The WSIB may require that an informal request be submitted in writing where the verbal request is unclear, or where the requester wishes to receive the information in written format.

There may be a charge for supplying non-confidential employer information that is not readily available.

**Active dissemination**

The WSIB may disclose non-confidential employer information through the process of active dissemination. Methods of active dissemination include, but are not limited to, posting on the WSIB's website.

**Requests concerning retroactive adjustments**

The amount of information disclosed concerning a retroactive adjustment is limited to the years currently eligible for adjustment, see 14-02-06, Employer Premium Adjustments. Information for additional years may be disclosed at the discretion of the WSIB, based on the merits of each request.

**Accuracy of information**

When a request is made for any employer information, the accuracy of the information provided by the WSIB will be based on the information requested being correctly described in sufficient detail and the timeliness of the request. The information provided by the WSIB reflects the circumstances as they exist at the time that the WSIB provides the information.

**FOI process**

Any member of the public can make a formal FOI request for employer information to the Privacy Office. FOI requests are assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether any of the exemptions in FIPPA apply to the information requested.

If employer information is requested under FIPPA and the WSIB believes that an exemption may apply to some or all of the information, the employer will be notified of the FOI request and given an opportunity to make submissions.

**Application date**

This policy applies to all decisions made on or after January 1, 2020.

**Document history**

This document replaces 21-01-01 dated October 10, 2017.

This document was previously published as:  
21-01-01 dated January 2, 2013

**Operational  
Policy**

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Section

Access to Information - Employers

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Subject

**Access to Employer Information**

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21-01-01 dated October 12, 2004  
11-01-09 dated March 5, 2004.

## **References**

### **Legislative authority**

*Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*, as amended  
Section 181

*Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990*, as amended  
Sections 2, 10, 17, 21, 63

### **Minute**

Administrative  
#8, December 11, 2019, Page 57