

Things to Know When You've Lost Your Job

Losing a job is very traumatic both financially and emotionally. Here are some of the things you might want to know if this happens to you.

- There are different ways you could lose your job:

- A temporary layoff if your employer does not have work (termination complete if layoff continues after 60 days);
- Termination of your job without cause, on reasonable notice (or pay); or
- Dismissal (being fired) for just cause.

Each of these situations has rules an employer must follow.

- If you have been temporarily laid off, then your employer may maintain your work relationship for 59 days with no notice. You can be recalled with one week's notice. You must return to work within 7 days of the return date in the recall notice. If you are not recalled within 59 days, then you must be paid termination pay. The 59 days can be extended if a collective agreement with a union allows it.

- If your employment is terminated, the amount of notice you are entitled to depends on how long you have worked for your employer. Here is a table that explains "minimum notice" periods:

Notice Period	Duration of Employment
1 week	3 months to 2 years
2 weeks	2 to 4 years
4 weeks	4 to 6 years
5 weeks	6 to 8 years
6 weeks	8 to 10 years
8 weeks	10 years or more

- Your employer can give you pay instead of notice or a combination of pay and notice. All of your wages, holiday pay, vacation pay and overtime must be paid to you within three days of your date of termination.
- In some situations you are not entitled to any notice of termination. Some of these situations include:
 - you have been employed for three weeks or less;
 - you were employed for a fixed term or task of less than a year, or you worked on a seasonal basis;
 - you refused offers of reasonable alternative work;
 - you were on a temporary layoff and you did not return to work within 7 days after being asked by your employer in writing to do so;
 - You worked in the construction industry (except for office and fabrication workers)
 - You were on strike or were locked out of your workplace; or
 - Your employer can't fulfil your contract because of unforeseen or unpreventable circumstances.
- Has your employer told you that you are out of a job immediately for bad behaviour of some kind? If so, this is called dismissal. There are different rules for employees who have been dismissed.

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- One category of dismissal is called “dismissal with cause”. This means that, based on your behaviour or actions, your employer feels justified in ending your employment relationship without notice and without severance pay. Examples of this kind of serious misconduct include habitual harassment of a fellow employee, unexcused absenteeism, illegal behaviour, major incompetence, or constant neglect of your duties.
- You may dispute the facts upon which your employer dismissed you for cause. In this case, you can consider taking legal action on the basis of “wrongful dismissal”. Such an action could be based on your rejection of your employer’s characterization of your behaviour. You could also consider taking action for wrongful dismissal if the proper rules under the *Alberta Employment Standards Code* were not followed about notice and termination pay. If this happens to you, you should call a counsellor at Alberta Employment Standards, or you could consult an employment lawyer.
- There is also a type of dismissal called “constructive dismissal”. This happens when your job is not formally terminated but your employer substantially alters the terms of your employment so that continued employment there is intolerable. For example, your salary, hours of work, position, or working conditions are substantially changed without your consent or without cause. In this case, you may choose to leave your job rather than accept these new conditions and you could claim to have been “constructively dismissed.” If this happens to you, you should consult an employment lawyer.
- Here are some places you can go to for help:
 - Alberta Employment Standards Offices:
<http://work.alberta.ca/employment-standards.html>
 - Lawyer Referral Service:
http://www.lawsociety.ab.ca/public/lawyer_referral.aspx
 - Alberta Human Rights Commission:
www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca
 - Calgary Legal Guidance:
www.clg.ab.ca
 - Edmonton Community Legal Centre (ECLC):
www.eclc.ca

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