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**COVID-19 information and resources**

## COVID-19 and returning to safe operation

WorkSafeBC recognizes the importance of worker safety as businesses look to resume operations following COVID-19 related work stoppages or interruptions. The following materials provide employers with information and resources to assist them in ensuring the risk of exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19 is minimized at their workplace.

Employers need to develop a plan that reduces the risk of exposure. That plan will address how:

- Your workplace is organized and arranged

- Some specific activities are carried out

- You clean and sanitize

- Changes and precautions will be communicated to everyone at the workplace

The following steps are provided to help you develop a plan to ensure you are minimizing the risk of COVID-19 appropriately, and that your business can operate safely. Note that this information and guidance represents the minimum requirements and you may identify additional risks and measures specific to your business.

WorkSafeBC will not be reviewing or approving the plans of individual employers, but during a WorkSafeBC inspection we will ask employers about the steps they have taken to protect their workers. You must ensure that workers understand the measures you are taking to reduce the risk as many will have concerns about returning to work. Involve them in the planning process as much as possible to ensure their concerns are heard and addressed.

### Guide to reducing the risk of COVID-19

1

#### **Assess the risk at your workplace**

Employers must assess their workplaces in order to identify places where the risk of transmission is introduced. This process must involve frontline workers, supervisors, and joint health and safety committees and/or worker representatives. You should continue to assess the workplace after operations resume to ensure risks are identified and managed.

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads in several ways, including through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, or from touching a contaminated surface before touching the face. To understand the risk at your workplace, consider the following questions:

- Where do people congregate, such as break rooms, production lines, or meeting rooms?
- What job tasks or processes require workers to come into close proximity with one another or members of the public?
- What materials that are exchanged, such as money, credit cards, and paperwork?
- What tools, machinery, and equipment do people come into contact with in the course of their work?
- What surfaces are touched often, such as doorknobs, elevator buttons, light switches, equipment, and shared tools?

## 2

### **Implement measures to reduce the risk**

You must select and put measures in place to minimize the risk of transmission.

#### **Cleaning and hygiene**

- Provide adequate hand-washing facilities on site for all workers and ensure the location is visible and easily accessed. Develop policies around when workers must wash their hands, including upon arriving for work, before and after breaks, after handling cash or other materials, before and after handling common tools and equipment.
- Implement a cleaning protocol for all common areas and surfaces, including washrooms, equipment, tools, common tables, desks, light switches, and door handles. Ensure those engaged in cleaning have adequate training and materials.
- Remove any unnecessary tools or equipment that may elevate the risk of transmission, including items like coffee makers and shared utensils and plates.

#### **Maintaining physical distance**

- Consider reducing the overall number of workers at the workplace at one time. This may be done by implementing work-from-home schedules or rescheduling some work tasks.
- Ensure that the appropriate number of people are in each area of a workplace to prevent workers from coming too close to one another or members of the public. This may be done by posting occupancy limits (e.g., on elevators, washrooms, and other small spaces), and limiting the number of workers at one time in break locations.

- Maintain a distance of two metres between workers and others wherever possible, by revising work schedules, organizing work tasks, and employing the use of dollies or other aids for work tasks that would typically be done by more than one person.
- Implement measures to ensure workers can maintain a distance of two metres when serving or working with or near members of the public.

#### **Where physical distance cannot be maintained**

- Where distance cannot be maintained, consider separating people with partitions or plexiglass barriers.
- Where other measures are not sufficient, consider the use of masks or gloves, understanding that these have limitations.

### **3**

#### **Develop policies**

Develop the necessary policies to manage your workplace, including policies around who can be at the workplace, how to address illness that arises at the workplace, and how workers can be kept safe in adjusted working conditions.

- The provincial health officer and the BC CDC have issued the following guidance around self-isolation, which must be reflected in your policies:
  - anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 including fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat and painful swallowing, must self-isolate at home for a minimum of 10 days
  - anyone under the direction of the provincial health officer to self-isolate must follow those instructions
  - anyone who has arrived from outside of Canada, or who is a contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case, to self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms
- Prohibit or limit visitors.
- Have a plan around workers who may start to feel ill while at work, including who they should notify and how they will travel from the workplace to their home.
- Will you have workers working alone to reduce the risk of transmission? If so, you need to have procedures (</en/health-safety/hazards-exposures/working-alone>) for these workers to ensure they are safe.
- If you will have employees working from home, you need to develop work from home procedures (</en/about-us/news-events/announcements/2020/April/new-resources-support-health-safety-while-working-from-home>) to ensure workers are working safely.

### **4**

#### **Develop communication plans and training**

You must ensure that everyone entering the workplace, including workers from other employers, knows how to keep themselves safe while at your workplace.

- Be sure everyone is trained on the measures you have put in place and the policies around staying home when sick.
- Post signage, including occupancy limits and effective hygiene practices. Signage should also be posted at the main entrance indicating who is restricted from entering the premises (including visitors and workers with symptoms).
- Ensure workers are adequately supervised to ensure they know what to do.

5

### **Monitor your workplace and update your plans as needed**

- Things may change as your business operates. If you identify a new area of concern, or if it seems like something isn't working, take steps to update your policies and procedures. Involve workers in this process.
- Ensure that workers can raise safety concerns. This may be through a worker representative in workplaces of 9 to 20 employees, or through a joint health and safety committee for workplaces of more than 20 employees. Employers with fewer than 9 employees must also have a way for workers to raise health and safety concerns at the workplace. Work with these committees and workers to resolve any identified safety issues.

6

### **Assess and address risks from resuming operations**

If your workplace has not been operating, there may be risks arising from restarting your business that you need to manage. Consider the following:

- Have you had any staff turnover, or are workers being required to change or adapt job roles, or to use new equipment? Consider training or new employee orientation.
- Will workers need time or training to refresh their skills after having been out of the workplace?
- Have you changed anything about the way you operate, such as the equipment you use or the products you create?
- Are there any processes required for start-up that might introduce risks? Consider the impact of restarting machinery, tools and equipment, or clearing systems and lines of product that may have been left when your business was closed.

## **Resolving concerns about unsafe work**

Workers have the right to refuse work if they believe it presents an undue hazard.

An undue hazard is an “unwarranted, inappropriate, excessive, or disproportionate” hazard. For COVID-19, an “undue hazard” would be one where a worker’s job role places them at increased risk of exposure and adequate controls are not in place to protect them from that exposure.

If the matter is not resolved, the worker and the supervisor or employer must contact WorkSafeBC (</en/contact-us/departments-and-services/health-safety-prevention>). Once that occurs, a prevention officer will consult with workplace parties to determine whether there is an undue hazard and issue orders if necessary

For more information, see Occupational Health and Safety Guideline G3.12 (<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/law-policy/occupational-health-safety/searchable-ohs-regulation/ohs-guidelines/guidelines-part-03#SectionNumber:G3.12>).

## **If you have a question or concern**

Workers and employers with questions or concerns about workplace exposure to the COVID-19 virus can call WorkSafeBC’s Prevention Information Line at 604.276.3100 in the Lower Mainland (toll-free within B.C. at 1.888.621.SAFE). You’ll be able to speak to a prevention officer to get answers to your questions, and if required, a prevention officer will be assigned to assess the health and safety risk at your workplace.

## **Protecting mental health**

Workers in the workplace may also be affected by the anxiety and uncertainty created by the COVID-19 outbreak. It’s important to remember that mental health is just as important as physical health, and to take measures to support mental well-being. Here are some resources that can assist with maintaining mental health in the workplace during this time.

COVID-19 Psychological First Aid Service: Information and Signup (British Columbia Psychological Association) – Free virtual counselling provided by registered psychologists.

COVID-19: Staying Well In Uncertain Times (Canadian Mental Health Association – B.C.) – Tips and information on how to reduce and manage anxiety in the workplace due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Managing COVID-19 Stress, Anxiety and Depression (Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions) - Tips and resources on things we can do as individuals and collectively to deal with stress and support one another during these challenging times.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Considerations During COVID-19 Outbreak (World Health Organization) – These mental health considerations were developed by the WHO’s Department of Mental Health and Substance Use as messages targeting different groups to support for mental and psychosocial well-being during COVID-19 outbreak.

Mental Health and COVID-10 (Conference Board of Canada) – Videos on different aspects of mental health, including coping with anxiety, job loss, and dealing with isolation.

Taking Care of Your Mental Health (COVID-19) (Public Health Agency of Canada) – Tips and resources for taking care of your mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak.

## More information

WorkSafeBC's publication Preventing exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace: A guide for employers (</en/resources/about-us/guides/preventing-exposure-to-covid-19-in-the-workplace?lang=en>) provides general information for employers around assessing and controlling the risk.

For the latest guidance, visit the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control website for health information and to see the latest news from the government of British Columbia.

The BC COVID-19 Self-assessment tool can be used to determine whether additional care and treatment is required.

The provincial health officer has issued orders, notices, and guidance to employers from various industries. Review this site frequently to ensure you are apprised of any changes that apply to your workplace.

## Resources

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### Help prevent the spread of COVID-19: Occupancy limit

</en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-occupancy-limit?lang=en>

This poster can be used to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by setting an occupancy limit for a particular address, room, or space.

Additional... ([https://www.worksafebc.com/en/forms-resources#sort=%40fcomputeditemdatefield343%20descending&f:language-facet=\[English\]&tags=Covid-19|a96b6c96607345c481bb8621425ea03f](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/forms-resources#sort=%40fcomputeditemdatefield343%20descending&f:language-facet=[English]&tags=Covid-19|a96b6c96607345c481bb8621425ea03f))

Publication Date: May 2020 | [PDF](#) | [Poster](#)

| [Download \(/en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-occupancy-limit?lang=en&direct\)](/en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-occupancy-limit?lang=en&direct)

| [Preview](#)

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### Help prevent the spread of COVID-19: Handwashing

</en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-handwashing?lang=en>

This poster can be used to promote handwashing to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Additional... ([https://www.worksafebc.com/en/forms-resources#sort=%40fcomputeditemdatefield343%20descending&f:language-facet=\[English\]&tags=Covid-19|a96b6c96607345c481bb8621425ea03f](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/forms-resources#sort=%40fcomputeditemdatefield343%20descending&f:language-facet=[English]&tags=Covid-19|a96b6c96607345c481bb8621425ea03f))

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| [Download \(/en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-handwashing?lang=en&direct\)](/en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-handwashing?lang=en&direct)

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## OFAA protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic: A guide for employers and occupational first aid attendants

[\(/en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/ofaa-protocols-covid-19-pandemic?lang=en\)](/en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/ofaa-protocols-covid-19-pandemic?lang=en)

This information sheet provides information to employers and occupational first aid attendants on safely treating patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides additional precautions to first aid...

Publication Date: Apr 2020 | [PDF](#) | [Information Sheet](#)

| [Download \(/en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/ofaa-protocols-covid-19-pandemic?lang=en&direct\)](/en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/ofaa-protocols-covid-19-pandemic?lang=en&direct)

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[More resources \(/en/forms-resources#tags=Covid-19|a96b6c96607345c481bb8621425ea03f&sort=%40fcomputeditemdatefield343%20descending&f:larfacet=\[English\]\)](/en/forms-resources#tags=Covid-19|a96b6c96607345c481bb8621425ea03f&sort=%40fcomputeditemdatefield343%20descending&f:larfacet=[English])

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