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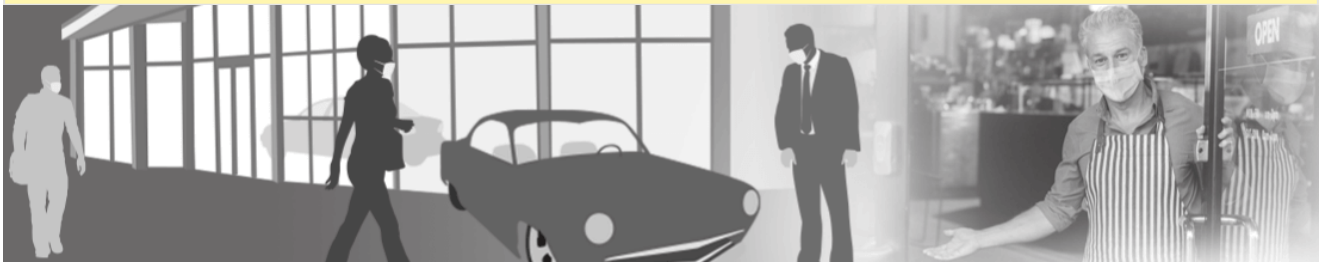
Archived information is provided for reference and research purposes. Please refer to **Respiratory Infectious Diseases: Health and Safety Resources** for the latest guidance.



Introduction

This tip sheet is for all types of business employers as an overview of potential hazards in the workplace due to COVID-19 and related control measures. It can also be useful for employees, patrons, contractors, vendors, visitors.

In all cases, guidance from local public health authorities must be followed and general COVID-19 transmission prevention practices should be implemented, as outlined in as outlined in Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19.

Each workplace is unique. It is important for employers to assess the risks of COVID-19 for their specific workplace and implement appropriate hazard controls. Use a layered approach to implement a combination of control measures using the hierarchy of controls (i.e., elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative controls, personal protective equipment (PPE) and non-medical masks). Consider implementing a workplace safety plan to identify and implement solutions for COVID-19 associated risks. The plan should focus on lowering or eliminating virus transmission.

Employer guidance

Provide COVID-19 specific training to your employees, at a minimum include the following:

- COVID-19 symptoms and what to do if they start having symptoms
- How to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- How to protect themselves
- Ways to stay informed (using reputable sources)
- Good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene
- Changes to policies/procedures resulting from safety plan findings
- About the benefits of COVID-19 vaccine

Implement a COVID-19 Response Plan

- When a person reports having COVID-19 symptoms, immediately have them wear a mask (preferably a respirator or medical mask, if not available a well-constructed and well fitting non-medical mask).
- Immediately isolate the symptomatic person from others in a designated area or room.
    - After the person leaves, clean and disinfect all surfaces/objects that the symptomatic person may have touched or been close to.
- Suggest to the symptomatic person that they should self-isolate at home as soon as possible, seek medical care if necessary, and follow instructions from their local public health authority (information is easily available on their websites).
- Instruct the symptomatic person to avoid using public transit, taxi and ridesharing, if possible.

- If an associate or visitor informs you of a positive COVID-19 test result. Report it to your local public health authority and cooperate with any contact tracing efforts. You may also be required to inform employees who may have been exposed, unless that is responsibility of your public health authority. Advise all who were exposed carefully monitor their health.
- If the infection is suspected to have occurred at the workplace then it should be reported to the agencies responsible for health and safety or compensation in your jurisdiction. Complete an incident report and begin an investigation.

Implement Screening and contact tracing

- Have employees self-screen before coming to work, consider providing them the ability to submit it using an online employee portal. Administer health screening to all others that enter the workplace. Questions should include current symptoms (if any), recent travel (not counting essential travel for work) and potential COVID-19 exposure (templates are available from your local public health authority or OHS organizations).
- Employees that pass the screening should be allowed into the workplace. People who do not pass should contact their supervisor. The supervisor should recommend that they stay home and monitor their health or symptoms. Suggest that they contact their health care provider or local public health authority if they develop symptoms or symptoms worsen.
- Each workplace should log employee, contractor and visitor access. This log will make it easier to inform them of potential COVID-19 exposures. If requested, provide the information to the local public health authority to assist their contact tracing efforts. Make sure that privacy is protected, and that the information is stored in a safe and secure manner. Contact information should be properly destroyed as required by local privacy laws.

Other practices to consider

- Increase ventilation and fresh air return where possible, consult with a Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) expert for advice.
- Implement a work from home program, make participation mandatory for employees (determined on an individual or job role basis) that do not physically need to be in the office. They should work from home as often as possible.
- Do everything possible, under the circumstances, to protect the health and safety of workers and customers by providing adequate information, training, sanitation, and personal protective equipment.
- Have a phased-in approach when recalling workers, such as only recalling those workers that are needed for specific functions initially. If it is possible for some workers to continue working remotely, they should do so. Individuals living with immunocompromising health conditions (including chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart or lung issues, cancer, etc.) or who live with individuals who are immunocompromised may need to continue to work remotely.
- Install barriers (such as plexiglass, plastic sheeting, partitions, etc.) when workers cannot be spaced appropriately. Barriers should be appropriately sized and positioned to block respiratory droplets from being carried from person to person.
- Post signs to remind people to practice physical distancing, good respiratory etiquette, and hand hygiene.

Workers guidance

- Follow all new policies and practices implemented by your employer including physical distancing, mask wearing and sickness policies.
- Continue to follow all safe work procedures. If it is unsafe to work, they should talk to their supervisor, health and safety committee or representative, and/or union.
- Stay home if they are sick or might be sick. Follow the Public Health Agency of Canada's steps for self-assessment.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands for 20 seconds using water and soap or use hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) at the start of their shift, before eating or drinking, after touching shared items, after using the washroom, and before leaving work. Remove jewellery while washing. Visibly dirty hands must be washed with soap and water.
- Many protective measures may still be necessary. Continue to use guidance from CCOHS' other coronavirus (COVID-19) tip sheets for your workplace.

Sanitation guidance

Reopening for Business

- Make sure washrooms are cleaned frequently, have running water, and are stocked with soap, paper towels and a plastic lined waste container.
- Provide hand sanitizer at customer service areas, entrances and exits, checkouts, and help desks.
- Clean offices, lunchrooms, and workspaces at least once per day, and more often for high-traffic areas and contact surfaces. Focus on frequently touched and shared surfaces such as keys, doors, handles, carts, handrails, light switches, shelves, countertops, drawers, keyboards and mice, touchscreens, payment keypads, cash drawers, pens, tools, phones, radios, vending machines, tables, chairs, and kitchen equipment.
- Provide enough items for each worker such as phones, tablets, walkie-talkies, tools, etc. If items must be shared, clean with alcohol or disinfectant wipes between users.
- Continue to wash your hands often. Supply soap and water, or hand sanitizer.
- Provide workers with wipes or other ways to clean their workspace.
- Line waste containers with plastic bags to reduce exposure when emptying the container.
- Sanitize newly installed barriers daily.

When Using Cleaning Products

- Make sure workers understand the risks and safety precautions when using cleaning products.
- Provide workers with the personal protective equipment they need to safely use cleaning products and make sure they use them correctly.
- Dispose of used tissues, wipes, gloves, and other cleaning materials in a plastic lined waste container.
- Use disposable gloves when handling garbage.

Staff Management

- Minimize person to person contact when reporting to work and simplify the process as much as possible.
- Avoid workplace gatherings such as meetings, training sessions or orientations. Conduct gatherings virtually. If that option is not possible, gather in small physically distanced groups, preferably outdoors or in large well-ventilated locations.
- Stagger meetings, breaks, and team talks to minimize the number of workers in one place.
- Teach employees to avoid unnecessary physical contact such as hugs, handshakes, and high fives, as well as after-work gatherings.
- Discourage the sharing of personal items such as cellphones or lighters by employees while at work.
- Consider having groups of employees that work the same shifts, and keep groups separate as much as possible.
- Make sure workers are trained to work safely, including when replacing the duties of others.
- Train workers on how to work with and care for personal protective equipment, and to understand its limitations.
- Submit all documents, such as reports and forms, electronically, or wash hands after handling papers.
- Remove communal coat and clothing storage areas as well as shared footwear. Allow employees to store their personal items separately or in sealed bins or bags if they do not have lockers.
- Provide laundry service for work uniforms or require employees wear freshly cleaned uniforms or clothes for each shift. Clothes should be bagged and washed after each shift.
- Communicate corporate information electronically.
- Consider providing support to employees who are off sick, encouraging them to stay home when they feel ill, even if symptoms are mild.

Physical Distancing

- Create and enforce a physical distance policy for your business. Communicate these requirements to all employees, and visitors.

Reopening for Business

- Remind staff to minimize non-essential in-person interactions with people from other households (to decrease potential COVID-19 exposures). Interactions should be kept brief and at the greatest distance possible (minimum 2 meters).
- During the task and to properly wear masks when they work within 2 metres of each other.
- Plan for how employees and visitors will maintain physical distance while evacuating the workplace in the event of an emergency.
- Prepare for exceptions to distancing guidance such as for anyone rescuing a distressed person, providing first aid, or performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation.
- Spread out workers to increase distancing. Use every other workstation, and/or use spare rooms or meeting spaces as work areas to help separate workers.
- Consider how people will use shared spaces such as the cafeteria, lunchroom and change rooms. Keep close contact between workers short and infrequent. Allow only one person at a time if spacing cannot be maintained, and post signs to indicate the space is being used and when it is free.
- Limit the simultaneous number of people allowed in washrooms. Configure the space to have alternating sinks, stalls, and urinals out of service if they are within 2 metres of each other.
- Manage pedestrian traffic flow by using markings, posters or barriers.
- Encourage private transportation were possible, including bicycles (and provide storage). Stagger or change working hours to avoid crowded public transit.
- Limit visitors. Reschedule or limit appointments with suppliers, vendors, service technicians and others where possible.

Mask Wearing

Proper mask wearing reduces the number of viruses released into the surrounding environment by infected individuals. As businesses re-open and people return to work, having physical distancing and mask wearing policies in place will be an effective way to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

- Create and enforce a mask wearing policy for your business. Communicate these requirements to all employees, and visitors.
- The policy should include when, where and what type of mask are required to be worn.
- Require masks to be properly worn, well-constructed and well-fitting.

Conducting Business

- Continue to use and/or offer low contact services, such as online ordering, online or phone check-ins/meetings, delivery, curbside pickup, or barriers.
- Limit how many customers can enter at one time.
- Mark standing distances and traffic flow using tape, posters, etc.
- Consider offering services by appointment only to limit the number of appointments per day.
- Provide supplies and time to clean commonly touched items, including cash registers, laundry carts, grocery carts, etc.
- Remove communal items such as glassware, utensils, and in-store or in-room tea or coffee machines.
- Do not resume offering services that involve close person-to-person proximity (e.g., garment fittings) or hold activities such as buffet- style food or drink events, valet services, face-to-face meetings, large gatherings, or conferences. These services should only be offered again when community transmission is at acceptable levels.
- Ask passengers of public transit to enter and exit using rear doors, away from the driver.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact your local hospital, call 911 immediately, or contact a Crisis Centre in your area.

It is important that mental health resources and support are provided to all workers, including access to an employee assistance program, if available.

For further information on COVID-19, refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada.
Note that this guidance is just some of the adjustments organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization's specific needs.
For further information on respiratory infectious diseases, including COVID-19, refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada .

Disclaimer: As public and occupational health and safety information may continue to change, local public health authorities should be consulted for specific, regional guidance. This information is not intended to replace medical advice or legislated health and safety obligations. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency, and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly from any use or reliance upon the information.