

BUSINESS CONTINUITY EMPLOYEE HEALTH & SAFETY PLAN COVID-19 RESPONSE

Developed By:

Shirley Galloway, R.N
CEO & Chief Occupational Health Advisor



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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS*

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Business Continuity Planning

Companies working in the oil and gas & mining industry put a high value on health and safety. In response to Health Canada guidelines, businesses are implementing Business Continuity Plans. This plan consists of the following elements:

1. Introduction
2. Screening& Testing
3. Communication/Education
4. Risk Assessment
5. Prevention Measures/Hazard Mitigation
6. Business Resumption

INTRODUCTION

This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The outbreak first started in China, but the virus continues to spread, and we are seeing an upward swing in Canada. To see the latest statistics on COVID-19, visit Health Canada's web site at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

The following interim guidance may help prevent workplace exposures to COVID-19. This guidance also provides planning considerations for community spread of COVID-19.

To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed coronavirus infection. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features of COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing.

Symptoms of COVID-19

Infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, can cause illness ranging from mild to severe and, in some cases, can be fatal. One out of every 6 people who become infected with COVID-19 become seriously ill. Symptoms typically include fever, dry cough, and shortness of breath. Some people infected with the virus have reported experiencing other non-respiratory symptoms such as muscle aches and headache. Other people, referred to as asymptomatic cases, have experienced no symptoms at all. According to the CDC, symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

How it is Spread

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, including:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or can be inhaled into the lungs. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has SARS-CoV-2 on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the primary way the virus spreads.

People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (i.e., experiencing fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath). Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this type of asymptomatic transmission with this new coronavirus, but this is also not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. The information is still evolving. Check Health Canada's website for up to date information.

Community spread in Canada appears to be on the rise. The virus appears to spread easily and sustainably in communities.

Vulnerable Populations

There is an increased risk of more severe outcomes for people:

- Aged 65 and over.
- With compromised immune systems.
- With underlying medical conditions.

SCREENING & TESTING

Screening

Screening for COVID -19 upon return to the work site is becoming common practice. As signs and symptoms vary from individual to individual, screening forms should be comprehensive and include a temperature recording, as most people who test positive have or experienced a fever. Fever is an elevated temperature over 37.8 degrees Celsius or over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Screening forms should put equal weight between the workers travel and their community exposure. Screening forms should be reviewed by a health professional.

Provinces also have a self assessment tool that people can access and answer questions to determine the likelihood that they may have the virus. In Saskatchewan, this can be found at:

[https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-self-assessment.](https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-self-assessment)

Alternately, persons can call Health Line @ 811.

Testing

Current testing for COVID 19 is performed by a deep nasal swab. The swab is then tested for the genetic material of the virus. Results typically are available within 2 days. Testing is only done by referral from a health care professional.

Rapid antibody screening tests are being developed. These tests would detect antibodies to COVID-19 and results would be available in 10-15 minutes. These testing devices are pending Health Canada approval.

COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION

Communications

All employers need to consider how best to decrease the spread of COVID-19 and lower the impact in their workplace. This may include activities in one or more of the following areas:

- Reduce transmission among employees.
- Maintain healthy business operations.
- Maintain a healthy work environment.

Regular communication with employees and realizing training opportunities are an important part of the plan to ensure the workforce remains healthy by having the most up to date information. This results in a healthy business operation and work environment. Ensure staff are aware of the infection prevention and control measures that are being implemented to minimize transmission in the workplace. Raise awareness among staff about what they should do if they become sick. Employees should not be working if they are ill.

Communication can include:

- Emails.
- Skype meetings.
- Virtual safety meetings.

Key contacts, a chain of communications and contact numbers for employees, and processes for tracking business and employee's status should be developed and shared with employees and key clients.

Develop a procedure to notify key contacts including both customers and suppliers in the event an outbreak has impacted the company's ability to perform services.

Develop a notification procedure to customers and suppliers when operations resume.

Companies should appoint a “Pandemic” supervisor to:

- Ensure new information is fanned out to all employees and staff. Monitor advisories from Health Canada and Saskatchewan Health and advise staff on a regular basis.
- Assist in developing training and information documents.
- Keep track of staff who are in isolation, are ill, are working from home, are working at offices, camps, warehouses or other facilities.
- Inform staff and clients regarding their measures to avoid and reduce the risk of infection through regular emails.

Regular weekly contact via telephone or email should occur.

- Ensure the pandemic disease plan is kept up to date as conditions change
- Contact local health departments and health care providers in advance to assist in developing and implementing protocols for response to ill individuals.

Companies should provide staff and clients with a copy of their plan.

Education

Training is a key component to assist with the health & safety of all workers. Employees should be trained on health issues of the pertinent disease to include prevention of illness, initial disease symptoms, preventing the spread of the disease, and when it is appropriate to return to work after illness. Disease containment plans and expectations should be shared with employees.

Training can include:

- The policies and procedures of the company related to illness, cleaning and disinfecting, work meetings and travel.
- What to do if you are sick.
- When to inform your supervisor if you have a sick family member at home with COVID-19.
- What to do if someone in your house is sick.
- Hand washing techniques.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Workplaces and businesses can also contribute to the transmission of many respiratory pathogens, such as the virus that causes COVID-19. It is important for businesses to implement appropriate public health measures to prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19 amongst employees, contractors, and clients.

Workplaces/businesses can implement key measures to limit the spread of the virus in their settings. The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends employers and business owners conduct a risk assessment when determining the specific public health actions related to a workplace/business during the COVID-19 pandemic. This would involve considering the epidemiology of the disease, assessing characteristics of the workplace/business settings and its employees/clients, and assessing the weight (importance) of associated risks.

Decisions to respond to COVID-19 within the workplaces/businesses can be considered on a continuum from minimal changes needed (e.g., promoting public health messages), to enhancing communication for employees, contractors and clients, to implementing risk mitigation strategies, to closing the workplace.

Risk assessment framework

Companies should assess essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on their services or products.

Companies should assess all vulnerabilities on all projects and develop a report to move forward on hazard mitigation.

- Be prepared to change business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize existing customers, or temporarily suspend some operations if needed).
- Identify alternate supply chains for critical goods and services. Some goods and services may be in higher demand or unavailable.
- Communicate with companies that businesses with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.

Determine how the company will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from school.

- Plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace.
- Implement plans to continue essential business functions in case of higher than usual absenteeism.
- Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies.
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.

The risk assessment tool for workplaces and businesses in the Canadian context is based on advice contained in the World Health Organization's guidance and in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, and on public health assumptions that reflect the currently available scientific evidence and expert opinion.

Businesses can access the risk assessment tool at:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/risk-informed-decision-making-workplaces-businesses-covid-19-pandemic.html>

PREVENTION AND HAZARD MITIGATION

Reduce Transmission Among Employees

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:

- Employees who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Sick employees should follow Health Canada recommended steps. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and local health departments.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 must self isolate and not return to the work site for a minimum of 14 days.

Be aware that some employees may be at higher risk for serious illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions. Consider minimizing face-to-face contact between these employees or assign work tasks that allow them to maintain a distance of six feet from other workers, clients and visitors, or to telework if possible.

Reinforce to all employees to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Written practices should include guidance on:

- Covering the mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing or use the inside of the elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately, wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs. Dirty surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection.
- Disinfection practices: use products that meet Health Canada's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2^{external icon}, the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- Avoiding the use of other employees' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.

Consider establishing policies and practices for social distancing. Social distancing means avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible (e.g., breakrooms and cafeterias). Strategies that business could use include:

- Implementing flexible worksites (e.g., telework.)
- Implementing flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts).
- Increasing physical space between employees at the worksite.
- Increasing physical space between employees.
- Implementing flexible meeting and postpone non-essential meetings.
- Downsizing operations.
- Delivering services remotely (e.g. phone, video, or web).
- Receive delivered products through curbside pick-up or delivery.
- Advise staff to avoid handshakes and other physical greetings.
- Advise staff to avoid all activities that involve groups of 10 or more people.

Other considerations for employers:

- All non-essential travel should be banned, effective immediately.
- A written directive for staff who have travelled to self-isolate for 2 weeks.
- A written directive for staff that have attended gatherings of 10 or more, for self isolation for 2 weeks.
- A directive for staff that exhibit flu-like symptoms, will self isolate for 14 days. Depending on the type of work, the staff member may be able to work from home, pending management approval.
- Employers should encourage staff who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 to get tested.
- All training activities should be halted.
- Companies should ensure there are adequate supplies of disinfectants: hand sanitizer, soap, cleaning supplies, etc.
- All group meetings should be cancelled. Meetings should take place via Skype or teleconference.
- Individuals who can work from home should do so. Companies should assist in setting up the infrastructure to facilitate tele-working.
- Any clients and visitors should be limited to those who are essential to the site.
- Staff that are at the office should clean computer keyboards, desks, door handles and counters daily or more often as required.
- Employees should be encouraged to obtain vaccinations as they are available.

Camp Settings

Separate sick employees:

- Employees who appear to have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, clients, and visitors and isolated.
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required. Employees should then self-monitor for symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath).

All camp settings should develop infection control and isolation policies and practices.

Maintain Healthy Business Operations

Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices.

- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees may want to draft non-punitive “emergency sick leave” policies.
- Employers should not require a positive COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider’s note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing provincial and federal workplace laws.
- Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources (if available) and community resources as needed. Employees may need additional social, behavioral, and other services, for example, to cope with the serious illness or death of a loved one.

Employers with more than one business location are encouraged to provide local managers with the authority to take appropriate actions outlined in their COVID-19 response plan based on local conditions.

Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system. This may include some or all of the following activities:

- Increase ventilation rates.
- Increase the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system.

Support respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene for employees, customers, and worksite visitors:

- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
- Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 70% alcohol. If hands are visibly dirty, soap and water should be chosen over hand sanitizer. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained.
- Place hand sanitizers in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.
- Place posters that encourage hand hygiene to help stop the spread at the entrance to the workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
- Discourage handshaking – encourage the use of other noncontact methods of greeting.

Perform routine environmental cleaning and disinfection:

- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.
 - If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
 - For disinfection, most common household disinfectants should be effective. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).
- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

To disinfect, a bleach solution of 1-part bleach to 10 parts water can be used. Leave on surfaces for a minimum of 1 minute.

- Increase cleaning regimes for common areas such as kitchens, conference rooms, tables, door handles, bathrooms, railings, sinks, etc. Door handles and shared counters should be cleaned twice daily.
- Select and use cleaners that contain proven virucides.

The following virucides are acceptable for general cleaning:

- Diluted household bleach (1:10 bleach to water)
- Detergents

Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility:

- If a sick employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, follow the Health Canada cleaning and disinfection recommendations.

Consider using videoconferencing or teleconferencing when possible for work-related meetings and gatherings.

- Consider canceling, adjusting, or postponing large work-related meetings or gatherings that can only occur in-person.
- When videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not possible, hold meetings in open, large, well-ventilated spaces.

BUSINESS RESUMPTION

- Inform staff and clients of business status on a continual basis. Management should ensure that all clients and suppliers are kept informed of our status, including full resumption of services.
- Ensure policies are in place to assist with employee return.
- Assist employees in obtaining any benefits that they may be entitled to.
- The plan and emergency communication strategies should be periodically reviewed and tested to ensure it is effective and workable.
- Following any pandemic event, management in conjunction with the occupational health & safety committee, should identify learning opportunities and take action to implement any corrective actions.

ADDENDUM

1. Respiratory Hygiene

Basic respiratory hygiene is of utmost importance in preventing transmission of viruses:

- Cover the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into the bend of the elbow.
- Dispose of tissues immediately after use in to trash receptacles.
- Wash hands for a minimum of 20 seconds after contact with respiratory secretions.
- Facemasks are only recommended for people with respiratory symptoms.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

2. Hand Hygiene

- Wash hands frequently, for a minimum of 20 seconds. Ensure that thumbs are washed as well.
- Soap and water are just as effective, if not more effective, than hand sanitizers.

How to clean and disinfect

Hard (Non-porous) Surfaces

- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Gloves should be discarded after each cleaning. If reusable gloves are used, those gloves should be dedicated for cleaning and disinfection of surfaces for COVID-19 and should not be used for other purposes. Consult the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and disinfection products used. Clean hands immediately after gloves are removed.
- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- For disinfection, most common household disinfectants should be effective.
 - Diluted household bleach solutions (at least 1000ppm sodium hypochlorite) can be used if appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer's instructions for application, ensuring a contact time of at least 1 minute, and allowing proper ventilation during and after application. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.

Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:

- 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or
- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

Soft (Porous) Surfaces

- For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. After cleaning:
 - Launder items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely.
 - Otherwise, use products and that are suitable for porous surfaces.

Electronics

- For electronics such as cell phones, tablets, touch screens, remote controls, and keyboards, remove visible contamination if present.
 - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.
 - Consider use of wipeable covers for electronics.
 - If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol to disinfect touch screens. Dry surfaces thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids.

Linens, clothing, and other items that go in the laundry

- Wear disposable gloves when handling dirty laundry from an ill person and then discard after each use. If using reusable gloves, those gloves should be dedicated for cleaning and disinfection of surfaces for COVID-19 and should not be used for other household purposes. Clean hands immediately after gloves are removed.
 - If no gloves are used when handling dirty laundry, be sure to wash hands afterwards.
 - If possible, do not shake dirty laundry. This will minimize the possibility of dispersing virus through the air.
 - Launder items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry from an ill person can be washed with other people's items.
 - Clean and disinfect clothes hampers according to guidance above for surfaces. If possible, consider placing a bag liner that is either disposable (can be thrown away) or can be laundered.

Hand hygiene and other preventive measures

- All staff should clean hands often, including immediately after removing gloves and after contact with an ill person, by washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 70% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.
- Household members should follow normal preventive actions while working at home, including recommended hand hygiene and avoiding touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Additional key times to clean hands include: After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After using the restroom
- Before eating or preparing food
- After contact with animals or pets
- Before and after providing routine care for another person who needs assistance (e.g. a child).

Important Cleaning Considerations:

- Chemical disinfection is only effective after physical removal of visible contaminants.
- Always follow manufacturers directions for mixing and dilution. Stronger is not always better.
- Some cleaners, such as bleach or citrus cleaners can be respiratory irritants. Ensure proper PPE is worn.
- Always wear gloves when cleaning.
- Solutions should remain on the surface that is being cleaned for at least 60 seconds before wiping or rinsing.

References

Health Canada Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19): Outbreak Update

Center for Disease Control COVID-19 Guidelines