

# Workplace health and safety and COVID-19

Real Estate Association of BC

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# **Understanding COVID-19**

# COVID-19 symptoms and transmission

**Coronaviruses** are a large family of viruses that can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. **COVID-19** is the name of the disease caused by a newly identified coronavirus.

## Symptoms

- Include fever, chills, new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, new muscle aches or headaches, sore throat
- Can range from **mild to severe** and can appear up to **14 days after exposure**

## Transmission

The virus is transferred by **infected droplets** coming in contact with the **eye, nose, or mouth** through:

- Close contact with other people
- Touching contaminated surfaces or people

# COVID-19 transmission risk factors

**The following factors increase likelihood of transmission via person-to-person contact:**

- Challenges maintaining 2 metres of distance
- High frequency of unique persons at the workplace (e.g., customers or clients)
- Potential to work in enclosed areas
- Potential for sustained group interaction
- Probability of infected persons
- Inadequate self-isolation practices

**The following increases likelihood of transmission via surface contact:**

- Potential for regular contact with shared surfaces

# What to do if you, or your workers, experience flu-like symptoms

Anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms associated with COVID-19, should:

- Immediately inform their supervisor.
- Physically distance from colleagues and leave the workplace.
- Seek medical advice from a health care professional:
  - Call 911, if urgent.
  - Use the COVID-19 BC Support App and Self-Assessment Tool at <https://bc.thrive.health/>.
  - Call 811 for health advice.
- Consult with a health care provider before returning to work.

**COVID-19 and  
health and safety responsibilities**

**Employers, workers, owners or prime contractors, and other people at the workplace all have a responsibility to prevent exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace.**



# An employer is . . .

- An employer is a person or firm that hires workers or unregistered subcontractors and an employer can be a self-employed proprietor, partnership, corporation, society, or any other type of legal entity. Whether or not you need WorkSafeBC coverage depends on the type of business you choose to operate and whether or not you hire and pay workers.
- There are around 1,500 Real Estate Agencies registered as employers with WorkSafeBC with assessable payroll of around \$400 million.
- If you're not sure whether you need coverage, please contact our Employer Service Centre: [worksafebc.com/insurance](https://worksafebc.com/insurance)

**Phone:** 604.244.6181 (Lower Mainland) **Toll-free:** 1.888.922.2768 (Canada)

**Fax:** 604.244.6490 **Toll-free:** 1.888.992.6622

**Hours of operation:** Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

# **The employer is responsible for:**

- The health and safety of their workers, and all other workers at their workplace
- Completing and posting the COVID-19 Safety Plan
- Training and providing education on the contents of that plan
- Having a system in place to identify the hazards of COVID-19, control the risk, and monitor the effectiveness of the controls

# The worker is responsible for:

- Taking reasonable care to protect their own health and safety and the health and safety of other people at workplace.
  - Includes personal self-care, e.g., frequent hand washing and staying home when sick
- Reporting unsafe conditions to their employer
- Following the procedures put in place by the employer to control the risks associated with COVID-19

**Developing your COVID-19 Safety Plan  
to control the risk of exposure in the workplace**

# Requirements of the employer

Every employer is required to have a **COVID-19 Safety Plan** that assesses the risk of exposure at their workplace and implements measures to keep their workers safe. If a formal plan is not already in place prior to operation, you are expected to develop it while protecting the safety of your workers.

- WorkSafeBC will not review or approve the plans of individual employers in advance, but will review them during our inspections of your workplace.
- We will ask employers about the steps they have taken to protect their workers and to see the plan if it has been developed.
- By order of the Provincial Health Officer, your plan must be posted to your worksite.

# Orders, notices, and guidance

Follow the **orders, notices, and guidance** from the **provincial health officer** and the **BC Centre for Disease Control**.

## The basics

- Physical distancing (2 metres / 6 feet)
- Cleaning and disinfecting
- Personal hygiene:
  - Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use your elbow.
  - Wash your hands.
  - Avoid touching your face.
  - Do not share food, drinks, or items.



# COVID-19 Safety Plan steps

**Follow these steps to create your COVID-19 Safety Plan:**

1. Assess the risk at your workplace
2. Implement measures to reduce the risk
3. Develop policies to manage your workplace
4. Develop communication plans and training
5. Monitor your workplace and update your plans as needed
6. Assess and address risks from resuming operations

# Step 1: Assess the risk at your workplace

- Assess workplace to identify where risk of transmission is introduced.
- Involve frontline workers, supervisors, JHSC/worker representatives
- Consider questions like:
  - Where do people congregate?
  - What job tasks or processes require workers to come into close proximity with one another or members of the public?
  - What tools, machinery, and equipment do people come into contact with?
  - What surfaces are touched often?



# Involve your workers

## Joint health and safety committees

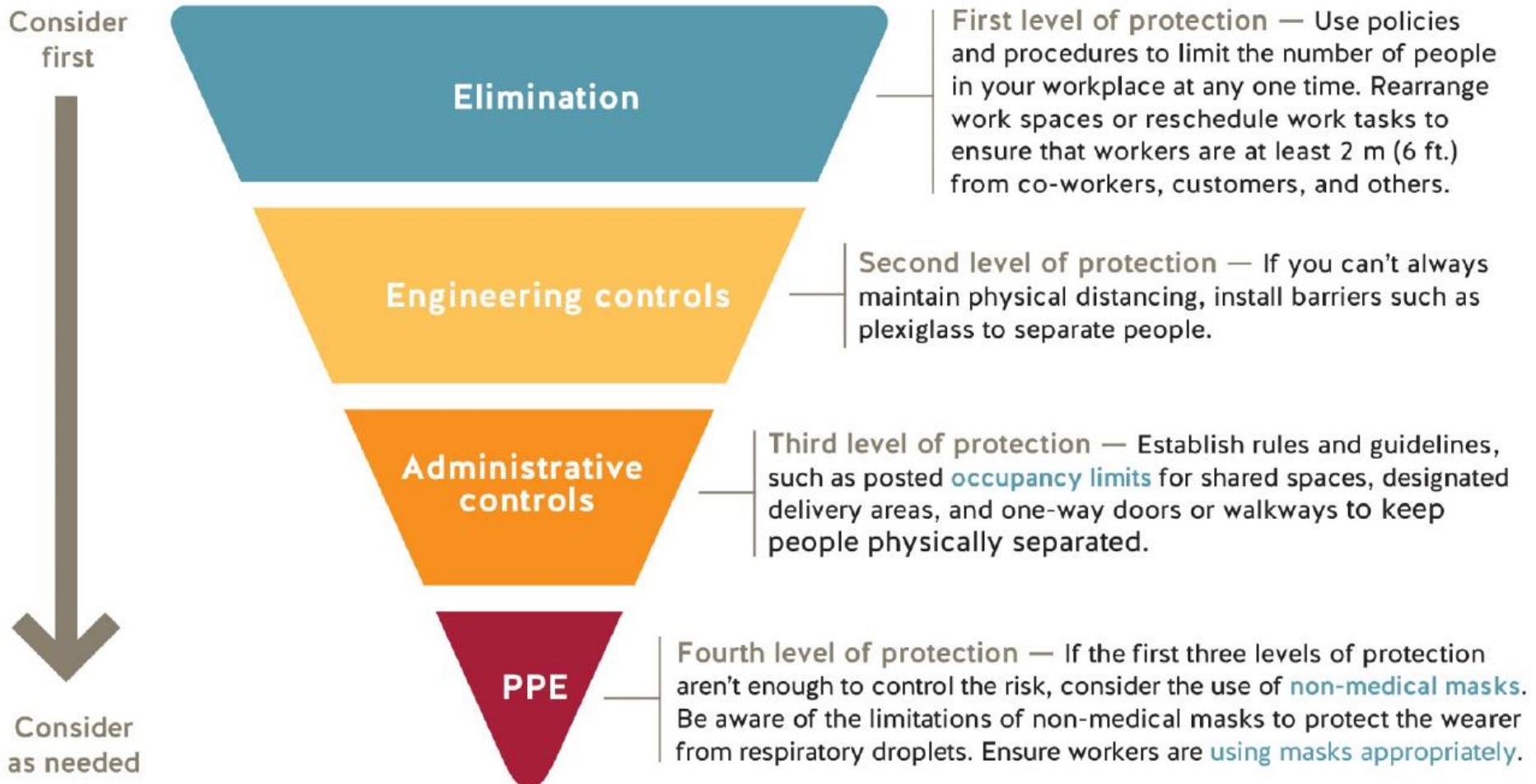
- Work with joint occupational health and safety committee (JOHSC) members or worker representatives to:
  - Identify and find solutions to workplace health and safety issues.
  - Includes concerns about exposure to COVID-19.
  - Joint committees must continue to meet regularly as required under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.



## **Step 2: Implement protocols to reduce the risk**

- You must select and put protocols in place to minimize the risk of transmission, with an emphasis on:
  - Maintaining physical distance
  - Other measures where physical distance cannot be maintained
  - Cleaning and hygiene

# Selecting protocols for your workplace



# Protocols for cleaning and hygiene

- Enhance cleaning and hygiene measures:
  - Provide adequate handwashing facilities.
  - Put up reminders for personal hygiene practices.
  - Provide supplies.
  - Disinfect high-contact areas and items.
  - Remove shared items.
- Train, supervise, and document.



## Step 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
  - How workers can be kept safe in adjusted working conditions

# Step 4: Communication plans and training

- Ensure that everyone entering the workplace, including workers from other employers, knows how to keep themselves safe while at your workplace.
  - Train everyone on the measures and policies you have put in place.
  - Post signage.
  - Ensure supervisors have been trained on monitoring workers and workplace to ensure policies and procedures are being followed.

## **Step 5: Monitor workplace and update plans**

- Update policies and procedures as needed, involving workers in this process.
- Ensure workers can raise safety concerns.

# Step 6: Assess and address risks from resuming operations

- 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.



# COVID-19 Safety Plan Template

- Fillable PDF you can download and save with the details of the plan for your workplace.
- This tool will guide you through a six-step process to help you create your plan.
- Visit [www.worksafebc.com](http://www.worksafebc.com) to access.

**WORK SAFE BC** COVID-19 Safety Plan

Employers must develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan. To develop your plan, follow the six-step process described at [COVID-19 and returning to safe operation](#).

This planning tool will guide you through the six-step process. Each step has checklists with items you need to address before resuming operations. You may use this document, or another document that meets your needs, to document your COVID-19 Safety Plan.

WorkSafeBC will not be reviewing or approving the plans of individual employers, but in accordance with the order of the Provincial Health Officer, this plan must be posted at the worksite.

**Step 1: Assess the risks at your workplace**

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads in several ways. It can spread in droplets when a person coughs or sneezes. It can also spread if you touch a contaminated surface and then touch your face.

The risk of person-to-person transmission increases the closer you come to other people, the more time you spend near them, and the more people you come near.

The risk of surface transmission increases when many people contact the same surface and when those contacts happen over short periods of time.

**Involve workers when assessing your workplace**

Identify areas where there may be risks, either through close physical proximity or through contaminated surfaces. The closer together workers are and the longer they are close to each other, the greater the risk.

- We have involved frontline workers, supervisors, and the joint health and safety committee (or worker health and safety representative, if applicable).
- We have identified areas where people gather, such as break rooms, production lines, and meeting rooms.
- We have identified job tasks and processes where workers are close to one another or members of the public. This can occur in your workplace, in worker vehicles, or at other work locations (if your workers travel offsite as part of their jobs).
- We have identified the tools, machinery, and equipment that workers share while working.
- We have identified surfaces that people touch often, such as doorknobs, elevator buttons, and light switches.

**Step 2: Implement protocols to reduce the risks**

Select and implement protocols to minimize the risks of transmission. Look to the following for information, input, and guidance:

- Review industry-specific protocols on [worksafebc.com](http://worksafebc.com) to determine whether any are relevant to your industry. Guidance for additional sectors will be posted as they become available. If protocols are developed specific to your sector, implement these to the extent that they are applicable to the risks at your workplace. You may need to identify and implement additional protocols if the posted protocols don't address all the risks to your workers.
- Frontline workers, supervisors, and the joint health and safety committee (or worker representative).
- Orders, guidance, and notices issued by the provincial health officer and relevant to your industry.
- Your health and safety association or other professional and industry associations.

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# What workers should do

- Know when not to come to work.
- Follow preventative measures while at work:
  - Comply with the employer's instructions around minimizing exposure.
  - Practice physical distancing, cleaning and disinfecting, and personal hygiene.
- Report hazards and refuse unsafe work.
- Take steps to minimize exposure to COVID-19 while away from work.



**Industry-specific protocols**

# Industry-specific protocols

## Phase 1

- Agriculture
- Construction
- Forestry
- Health care
- Hospitality
- Manufacturing
- Municipalities
- Retail
- Small business
- Transportation

## Phase 2

- Arts and cultural facilities
- Child care
- Education (K-12)
- Gyms and fitness centres
- Health professionals
- In-person counselling
- Offices
- Parks
- Personal services
- Real estate
- Restaurants, cafes, and pubs
- Retail

# Creation of the protocols

- The following process was followed to create the protocols:
  - Protocols were developed by Industry Specialists with the advice of an Occupational Hygiene Officer.
  - Protocols in other jurisdictions were scanned. If a protocol was appropriate for a particular sector, these were adapted for BC to be consistent with the orders and guidelines of the Provincial Health Officer.
  - Existing industry protocols in BC were integrated and we consulted with relevant industry and labour groups.
  - Protocols were reviewed and amended by an internal committee before being reviewed and amended by the Office of the Provincial Health Officer.

# Real Estate

- Visit for <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation/real-estate> guidance on subjects including:
  - General considerations, in-person viewings, home inspection
- The following associations may have additional information, guidance, or resources that may assist you in the development of your plan.
  - [Home Inspectors Association BC](#)
  - [Real Estate Council of British Columbia](#)
  - [BC Real Estate Association – guidance on COVID-19](#)

# Real estate

- Key aspects of the guidance include:
  - Offer virtual viewings or virtual open houses where possible.
  - Provide potential buyers with online access to property documents including strata documents, market research, community development documents, etc.
  - Refrain from showing multiple properties in a single day to help minimize cross-contamination.
  - Schedule a tour of building amenities (such as on-site gym, pool, etc.) with the strata management company to prevent physical contact with residents.
  - Request that the occupants are not present during viewings disinfect frequently touched surfaces prior to any viewings.
  - Ask sellers or occupants to prepare for viewings by turning on all lights and opening doors to prevent touching of surfaces by potential buyers.

**FAQs**



# Masks

- **Do workers need to wear masks to protect themselves from the virus that causes COVID-19?**
- With the exception of health care workplaces, the use of masks is not a requirement for most workplaces to prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.
- In general, masks and other personal protective equipment should not be used as the only control measure. Protocols that offer the highest level of protection should be used first.
- If work activities mean that physical distancing cannot be maintained at all times, employers may consider the use of masks as an additional measure. Refer to WorkSafeBC's guidance on the [selection and use of masks](#).

# Gloves

- **Do workers need to wear gloves to protect themselves from the virus that causes COVID-19?**
- Medical experts say that it's not necessary for you to wear gloves to prevent the spread of the virus. Other measures, such as physical distancing and good hygiene practices, are more effective in preventing the risk of transmission.
- Employers may choose to incorporate the use of gloves in combination with other measures to further reduce the risk of exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19. Gloves may be considered as additional protective measures in circumstances where workers are touching items in common areas, particularly materials with which other workers have or will come into contact.

# Gloves (cont'd)

- Gloves are required for some activities, such as when cleaning and disinfecting common areas, or those performing first aid.
- Employers who opt to incorporate the use of gloves into their control measures must ensure that workers are using them in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and good hygiene practices. This includes:
  - Choosing the proper gloves for the chemicals or other materials you are handling.
  - Proper donning and doffing gloves to minimize contamination. If you are wearing a mask, put your gloves on last, and take them off first when you are finished. Wash your hands before and after wearing gloves.
  - Changing gloves after there is a tear, damage, or puncture.
  - Not using hand sanitizer on gloves.

# Temperature Checking

- **Should I consider health monitoring, such as temperature checking, for my workers?**
- The Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulation and the Workers Compensation Act do not require employers to implement health monitoring for COVID-19, such as checking temperatures or recording symptoms.
- Some employers may still consider incorporating temperature checking into their COVID-19 policies, but they need to be aware of the privacy concerns of gathering medical information
- As a control measure, alone, temperature checks may not provide enough information to determine whether or not a worker is ill

# What to expect in an officer

- An officer will ask you about the process you used to develop your plan and will work with you to assess how effectively the plan controls COVID-19 risk.
- The officer will send you an inspection report with details about the inspection.
- The officer will issue orders if they identify health and safety violations that require correction, and the steps you must take to correct them.
- The officer will follow up with you as needed.
- Orders are meant to be instructive and corrective in nature and will not impact your insurance premiums.

Further information can be found [here](#).

**WorkSafeBC's support**

# WorkSafeBC's prevention efforts

Prevention field officers and occupational health and safety consultants are still performing **inspections, education, and consultations.**

## Online resources:

- [General health and safety information for all workers and employers](#)
- [Preventing exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace: A guide for employers](#)
- Posters and other resources
- 50 COVID-19 resources available in Chinese simplified, Chinese traditional, French, Punjabi, and Spanish.

## Prevention Information Line:

- Workers and employers can speak to a prevention officer to get answers to questions.
- If required, a prevention officer will be assigned to assess the health and safety risk at your workplace.
- Call **604.276.3100** in the Lower Mainland or **1.888.621.SAFE** toll-free within B.C.

**Additional resources**



# Mental Health: Helping your workers cope

Psychological health is of equal importance to physical health.

## Here's how you can help:

- Support the mental well-being of workers by helping them manage stress, anxiety and uncertainty created by the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Leverage existing resources
  - [Managing COVID-19 Stress, Anxiety and Depression](#) (Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions)
  - [Mental Health and Psychosocial Considerations During COVID-19 Outbreak](#) (World Health Organization)
  - [Coronavirus: Managing Stress and Anxiety](#) (Canadian Mental Health Association)
  - [Mental Health and COVID-19](#) (Conference Board of Canada)
  - [Taking Care of Your Mental Health \(COVID-19\)](#) (Public Health Agency of Canada)

# Public health agency websites

For more information, please see the COVID-19 pages on the following websites:

- [BC Centre for Disease Control](#)
- [Office of the provincial health officer](#)
- [HealthLinkBC](#)
- [COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool \(BC Ministry of Health\)](#)

## Call

- **1.888.COVID19 (1.888.268.4319):** For non-medical information about COVID-19. Available 7:30 a.m.–8 p.m., 7 days a week.
- **811** (HealthLink BC): To talk to a nurse if you need advice about how you are feeling and what to do next.

# Resources for employers and businesses

- **BC Centre for Disease Control:** COVID-19 information for employers and businesses
- **The Government of BC:** Business Continuity Planning Checklist
- **Small Business BC:** COVID-19 Support Service for BC Businesses
- **Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS):** Online products and resources



BC Centre for Disease Control



**Thank you!**

Questions?

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