

# Non-healthcare Workplace Guidance During COVID-19

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# COVID-19 guidance for business owners

## Important information for the protection of workers, volunteers and patrons

### Overview

This document has been developed to support businesses (excluding health care settings) still permitted to operate by [Order 07-2020](#) in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among workers, volunteers and patrons. Topics include:

1. Communication for staff, volunteers and patrons
2. Employers who have sick staff and volunteers
  - a. Guidance for employers who have a sick employee/volunteer not diagnosed with COVID-19
  - b. Guidance for employers who have an employee/volunteer diagnosed with COVID-19
3. Hygiene and cleaning practices
  - a. Hygiene for staff, volunteers and patrons
  - b. Cleaning guidance
4. Physical distancing
  - a. Staff, volunteers and patrons
  - b. Work events
5. Additional considerations for policies
  - a. Travel
6. Considerations for Home Delivery, Drive through, Take-out and Curbside Pick-up

As the COVID-19 outbreak is an evolving situation, this document and the guidance within is subject to change and will be updated as appropriate.

This information is not intended to exempt employers from existing occupational health and safety (OHS) requirements. OHS questions and concerns can be directed to the OHS Contact Centre by telephone at 1-866-415-8690 (in Alberta) or 780-415-8690 (in Edmonton) or online.

## 1. Communication for staff, volunteers and patrons

- Encourage staff and volunteers to remain up to date with developments related to [COVID-19](#).
- Emphasize that anyone who is sick with cold-like symptoms such as cough, fever, runny nose, sore throat or shortness of breath, **MUST NOT** be in the workplace (refer to Section 2).
  - ◊ Employers are encouraged to examine sick-leave policies to ensure they align with public health guidance.
  - Changes to the Employment Standards Code will allow full and part-time employees to take 14 days of job-protected leave if they are:
    - required to isolate
    - caring for a child or dependent adult who is required to isolate
    - Employees are not required to have a medical note.
- Remind employees about available health and social supports during this stressful time, and encourage them to use these resources.
- Notify employees and volunteers of the steps being taken to prevent the risk of transmission of infection, the importance of their roles in these measures, and post this information in areas where employees and volunteers can refer to them.
  - “Help prevent the spread” posters are [available](#)

## 2. Employers who have sick staff and volunteers

### **Guidance for employers who have a sick employee or volunteer NOT diagnosed with COVID-19**

- [Order 05-2020](#) requires individuals who have a cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat (that is not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition) to be in [isolation](#) for 10 days from the start of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever takes longer
  - These requirements must be followed regardless of whether or not the individual has been tested for COVID-19.
- If an employee or volunteer does come to work sick, the following guidance applies.

- Employees, volunteers or patrons who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to the workplace, or become sick while at the workplace, must be sent home immediately, and asked to maintain at least 2 meters of distance from other employees, volunteers and patrons while exiting the business.
- Sick individuals must follow hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, as necessary, as they are exiting the facility.
- Arrangements should be made for transport home where needed; public transportation like buses, taxis or ride sharing should be avoided.
- Once a sick individual has left the workplace, clean and disinfect all surfaces and areas that they may have come into contact with.

### **Guidance for employers who have an employee or volunteer diagnosed with COVID-19**

- [Order 05-2020](#) requires individuals to be in isolation for a minimum of 10 days if they have tested positive for COVID-19.
  - For clarity, the isolation period is 10 days from the start of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever takes longer.
- If an employee or volunteer is confirmed to have COVID-19, and it is deemed other employees may have been exposed, Alberta Health Services (AHS) may be in contact with the business to provide the necessary public health guidance.
  - Employers should work cooperatively with AHS to ensure those potentially exposed to the individual receive the correct guidance.

## **3. Hygiene and cleaning practices**

### **Hygiene for staff, volunteers and patrons**

- Employers must ensure that respiratory etiquette (e.g. Coughing or sneezing into a bent elbow, promptly disposing of used tissues in the trash) is followed.
- Employers must promote and facilitate frequent and proper hand hygiene for employees, volunteers and patrons.
- Businesses must have sufficient means for the workers, volunteers and patrons to perform frequent hand hygiene. This can be done using sinks supplied with soap and water, or with alcohol-based hand sanitizer (greater than 60% alcohol content).

- Employers must instruct staff and volunteers to wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (greater than 60% alcohol content).
  - Hand washing with soap and water is required if the employee or volunteer has visibly dirty hands.
  - The AHS [Hand hygiene education webpage](#) has more information, posters and videos about hand hygiene.
  - Glove use alone is not a substitute to hand hygiene. Hands must be cleaned after removing gloves.
- The use of posters that remind staff, volunteers and patrons to practice respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene is strongly encouraged in work areas where they are easily seen (e.g. entrances, washrooms and staff rooms).
  - Posters are available [here](#).

## Cleaning guidance

- Cleaning refers to the removal of visible soil. Cleaning does not kill germs but is highly effective at removing them from a surface. Disinfecting refers to using a chemical to kill germs on a surface. Disinfecting is only effective after surfaces have been cleaned.
  - Use a “wipe-twice” method to clean and disinfect. Wipe surfaces with a cleaning agent to clean off soil and wipe again with a disinfectant.
- Regular household cleaning and disinfecting products are effective against COVID-19 when used according to the directions on the label.
  - Use a disinfectant that has a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and a virucidal claim (efficacy against viruses). Alternatively, use a bleach-water solution with 100 ml of bleach to 900 ml water.
  - Health Canada has approved several [hard-surface disinfectants](#) and [hand sanitizers](#) for use against COVID-19. Use these lists to look up the DIN number of the product you are using or to find an approved product. Make sure to follow instructions on the product label to disinfect effectively.
- Develop and implement procedures for increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of high traffic areas, common areas, public washrooms and showering facilities.
- Frequently clean and disinfect high-touch/shared surfaces such as:
  - Doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, faucets and taps, elevator buttons, railings.

- Phones, computers, remote controls, keyboards, desktops, conference room equipment, cash registers, surface counters, customer service counters, menus
- Equipment handles, hand tools, machinery control panels, seat belt buckles, joysticks, steering wheels and controls on powered mobile equipment
- Staff rooms, kitchens, washrooms
- Disposable towels and spray cleaners, or disposable wipes, should be available to staff, volunteers and (as necessary) patrons to regularly clean commonly used surfaces.
- Remove all communal items that cannot be easily cleaned, such as newspapers, magazines, and stuffed toys.

## **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

- Business owners must conduct hazard assessments to identify existing and potential hazards related to COVID-19. Where elimination of these hazards is not possible or reasonable, they must be controlled.
- When hazards related to COVID-19 cannot be completely eliminated, the following hierarchy of controls are required:
  - First choice: Engineering controls  
These control the hazard at the source. Examples include placing barriers or partitions between staff and the hazard, or ventilation.
  - Second choice: Administrative controls  
These controls change the way workers, volunteer and patrons interact. Examples include policies for physical distancing, limiting hours of operations and respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.
  - Third choice: PPE  
PPE is generally only necessary when hazards related to COVID-19 cannot be completely eliminated by administrative and engineering controls. PPE controls the hazard at the worker, volunteer or patron level. Examples of PPE include gloves, eye protection, face protections and masks

When a hazard cannot be controlled by a single control method, the business owner may insist that a combination of these controls take place to provide an acceptable level of safety.

- PPE must be chosen that is appropriate to the hazard. Examples of PPE include gloves, eye protection, face protections and masks.

- If it is determined that respiratory PPE is required for staff and volunteers, a [code of practice](#) is required. [Resources](#) are available to [assist](#) in developing this material. A code of practice sets out information on the selection, maintenance and use of respiratory protective equipment.
- PPE must be maintained in good condition so it can perform its intended function to protect staff and volunteers.
- If a hazard assessment determines that PPE is necessary, the business owner must ensure that the PPE fits the workers and volunteers effectively.
  - Respiratory PPE that depends on a facial seal must be fit tested to ensure its efficacy.
- PPE that cannot be cleaned and disinfected should be disposed of after use. Reusable PPE must be clearly labelled with its assigned user's name and be stored separately from other PPE.

## **Workplace showers available to workers and patrons**

- Maintain showers and any associated amenities in a clean and sanitary condition. The frequency of cleaning and disinfection will vary depending on usage.
  - Use a “wipe-twice” method to clean and disinfect high-touch shower surfaces such as faucets, door handles, soap and shampoo dispensers and towel bars. Wipe these kinds of surfaces with a cleaning agent to clean off soil and wipe again with a disinfectant.
- Consider physical distancing of users in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Distancing can include the use of partitioned stalls or staggering entry so that only one user is showering at a time.
  - As the virus spreads in large droplets, it will fall to the ground once the shower is complete, presenting minimal risk to the next user.
- Post signage in shower areas that informs users of how to mitigate risks of COVID-19 transmission (E.g., hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette).
- Where necessary, maintain an adequate supply of soap, paper towel, toilet paper, hand sanitizer and other supplies.

## 4. Physical distancing & gatherings in the business

### Staff, volunteers and patrons

- Order [07-2020](#) prohibits gatherings of more than 15 people, however this does not prohibit businesses from having more than 15 workers in a workplace.
- All businesses must:
  - Prevent the risk of transmission of infection amongst workers, volunteers or (as applicable) patrons; and
  - Provide for rapid response if a worker, volunteer or member of the public develops symptoms of illness while at the place of business; and
  - Maintain high levels of hygiene.
- Examples of how to prevent the risk of transmission amongst workers, volunteers and patrons include:
  - Maintaining a two-meter separation wherever possible between individuals (e.g., workers, volunteers, patrons) in a business at any one time.
  - Restricting the number of patrons in a business at any one time.
  - Installing a physical barrier, such as a cubicle, partition or window, to separate workers, volunteers and patrons.
  - Increasing separation between desks and workstations.
  - Eliminating or re-structuring of non-essential gatherings (e.g. meetings, training classes) of staff, patrons and volunteers. Typically, this involves moving in-person meetings to virtual media platforms like teleconference or video conference.
  - Limiting the number of people in shared spaces (such as lunchrooms) or staggering break periods.
  - Limiting hours of operation or setting specific hours for at-risk patrons.
  - Implementing contact-free modes of patron interaction such as home-delivery of goods or curbside pickup of items.
  - Placement of reference markers (e.g., markings on the floor in grocery line-ups) that set out two-meter distances.

## 5. Additional considerations

- Prepare for increases in absenteeism due to illness among staff, volunteers and their families.
- Conduct hazard assessments on all tasks performed in the business. Consider business closure or suspension of specific tasks where the risk of transmission of infection to staff, volunteers and patrons cannot be mitigated.
- Order 05-2020 requires individuals who have returned from travel outside of Canada to be in isolation for a minimum of 14 days.
  - If an individual becomes sick during the 14-day isolation period, they must remain in isolation for an additional ten days from the start of symptoms, or until the symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.
- All non-essential travel outside Canada should be cancelled, as per the Government of Canada's travel advisory.

## 6. Considerations for Home Delivery, Drive through, Take-out and Curbside Pick-up

- Any business still permitted to operate are allowed to sell their goods via delivery, drive-thru, take-out and curbside pick-up.
- Interactions between workers, volunteers and patrons that occur via delivery, drive-thru, take-out and curbside pick-up are intended to be completed as immediately as possible and with minimal to no interaction at a distance of less than 2 meters.
- For the purposes of conducting important duties (e.g., filling orders, counting inventory), staff and volunteers may continue to work within a business that has been otherwise ordered to restrict public access.
- Owners of businesses that offer delivery or onsite pick-up of goods to patrons must conduct a hazard assessment and mitigate any new risks including those related to traffic and the transmission of infection to workers, volunteers and patrons.
  - At this time it is understood that the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to patrons who pick-up goods, or have them delivered, is minimal so long as workers and volunteers are mitigating risks in the workplace (e.g., performing hand hygiene, not letting sick workers be in the workplace, conducting surface cleaning and disinfection) and during delivery.

- Owners are expected to ensure that workers and volunteers follow requirements for hand hygiene when handling or delivering goods.
- It is strongly recommended that businesses offering delivery and curbside pick up remind patrons to observe physical distancing while collecting goods and to perform hand hygiene after handling goods.

## Resources

**Government of Alberta (Alberta Health) – [COVID-19 Information for Albertans](#)**

**Alberta Health Services – [COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#)**

**Government of Canada – [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)**

### **Information Privacy**

FOIP-PIPA Help Desk:

780-427-5848

Toll free: 310-0000 before the phone number (in Alberta)

Email: [sa.accessandprivacy@gov.ab.ca](mailto:sa.accessandprivacy@gov.ab.ca)

*Health Information Act (HIA) Help Desk:*

780-427-8089

Toll free: 310-0000 before the phone number (in Alberta)

[hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca](mailto:hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca)

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner: [Privacy in a Pandemic](#)

## References

1. [Community-based measures to mitigate the spread of coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) in Canada](#), Government of Canada.
2. [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Transmission](#), Government of Canada.
3. [Clean & Disinfect](#), US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
4. [Preventing the Spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 in Homes and Residential Communities](#), US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
5. [Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19](#), World Health Organization.

6. [Interim Guidance for Business and Employers](#), US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.