

Bill 23[Menu](#)[Find more about
COVID-19](#)

Industry-specific information

WorkSafeBC has developed protocols to address health and safety considerations in specific industries. Industry protocols are listed in the left-side of this page. The information and resources below are for all employers to assist them in ensuring the risk of exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19 is minimized at their workplace.

COVID-19 safety plans

Responsibilities

Resolving concerns about unsafe work

If you have a question or concern

More information

COVID-19 safety plans

Employers are required to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan (</en/resources/health-safety/checklist/covid-19-safety-plan?lang=en>) that outlines the policies, guidelines, and procedures they have put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Employers must involve frontline workers, joint health and safety committees, and supervisors in identifying protocols for their workplace.

Employers are not required to submit plans to WorkSafeBC for approval, but in accordance with the order of the provincial health officer, this plan must be posted at the worksite and posted to the website, if there is one. During a WorkSafeBC inspection, we will ask employers about the steps they have taken to protect their workers and to see their plan. To learn more, read [Inspections during the COVID-19 pandemic \(/en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/inspections-during-covid-19-pandemic-faq-employers?lang=en\)](/en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/inspections-during-covid-19-pandemic-faq-employers?lang=en).

Safety plans are based on the six steps outlined below.

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 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.

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 2 metres (6 feet) 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.
- Consider creating pods of workers who work together exclusively to minimize the risk of broad transmission throughout the workplace.
- 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 ([/en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/covid-19-health-safety-designing-effective-barriers?lang=en](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/covid-19-health-safety-designing-effective-barriers?lang=en)).
- Where other measures are not sufficient, consider the use of masks, understanding that these have limitations.

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.

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. Communicate these policies clearly to workers through training, signage, and reminders as required.

- You must develop and communicate policies prohibiting the following workers and others from entering the workplace:
 - Anyone who has had symptoms of COVID-19
 - Anyone who has travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days
 - Anyone who has been identified by Public Health as a close contact of someone with COVID-19
 - Anyone who has been told to isolate by Public Health
- 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 (</en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-occupancy-limit?lang=en>) and effective handwashing practices (</en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-hand-washing?lang=en>). Signage should also be posted at the main entrance indicating

who is restricted from entering the premises (including visitors (</en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-entry-check-visitors?lang=en>) and workers (</en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-entry-check-workers?lang=en>) with symptoms).

- Ensure supervisors have been trained on monitoring workers and workplace to ensure policies and procedures are being followed.

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 health and safety representative or a joint health and safety committee. 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.

Responsibilities

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

Employers are responsible for the health and safety of their workers, and all other workers at their workplace. They are responsible for completing and posting the COVID-19 Safety Plan and to train and educate everyone at the workplace of the contents of that plan. Employers are also responsible for having a system in place to identify the hazards of COVID-19, control the risk, and monitor the effectiveness of the controls.

Workers are responsible for taking reasonable care to protect their own health and safety and the health and safety of other people at workplace. In the context of COVID-19, this means workers are responsible for their own personal self-care, which includes frequent hand washing and staying home when sick.

Workers are also responsible for reporting unsafe conditions to their employer, and following the procedures put in place by the employer to control the risks associated with COVID-19.

The **owner** or the **prime contractor** is responsible for coordinating health and safety at a workplace where workers of two or more employers are working at the same time. This includes doing everything that can reasonably be done to establish and maintain a system or process to ensure compliance with WorkSafeBC laws and regulations generally, including ensuring an effective system to control the risks associated with COVID-19. In order to ensure that the risk of transmission of COVID-19 at a multiple-employer workplace is minimized, the prime contractor is expected to review and assess the COVID-19 safety plans of each employer at the workplace, and to develop and implement an overall plan to coordinate workplace safety and ensure compliance. A prime contractor who is an employer must also develop their own COVID-19 safety plan.

What about **contractors**? A person you contract with might be a worker, employer or independent operator, depending on the contract between you, and how that person has set up their business. If you are not sure whether a person you contract with is your worker or is required to be registered as an employer, visit [Who does and doesn't need coverage \(/en/insurance/need-coverage/who-needs-coverage\)](#).

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.

More information

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.

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