

COVID-19 Mitigation Response Plan

Newest Updates:

April 08th, 2020:

- Paper masks have become very limited in supply, and therefore a non-disposable reusable method is recommended.
- Effective Monday April 13th, 2020 all personnel will begin to use half mask respirators for reducing their work-related hazards. Careful consideration will be taken in determining which types of work require the use of facial masks or respirators.
- All personnel are free to use whichever surgical masks at their own discretion for their own methods of prevention of the COVID-19 epidemic situation.
- If any personnel are experiencing any possible symptoms, they must contact their supervisor and arrangements may be required to have them stay at home.
- beginning April 13th, the safety officer will begin to assess the personnel with their type of work to determine air hazard control methods. Fit testing will be provided for personnel required to wear respirators for their type of work. Careful storage, cleaning, and maintenance of the respirators will be required.

Listen to and follow the directions of your Provincial, Federal, and local authorities.

Objective: Provide a framework for risk-informed decision making about public health actions for workplaces/businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Workplaces and businesses can contribute to the transmission of respiratory pathogens, such as the virus that causes COVID-19. It is important for these settings 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. Workplaces/businesses are heterogeneous; therefore, the Public Health Agency of Canada recommends employers, business owners, and PHA conducting a risk assessment when determining the specific public health actions related to a workplace/business during the COVID-19 pandemic. This involves 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.

Epidemiology of COVID-19

Epidemiologic evidence suggests this virus transmits readily by respiratory droplets and contact. This suggests that transmission in a workplace/business setting is likely either directly via close contact or indirectly via contaminated surfaces and/or objects (fomits). This risk could be greater if employees/clients share workstations (e.g., communal computers, electronic devices).

It is possible that cases transmit the virus in the early phase of their illness, when their symptoms are non-specific or mild.

Epidemiologic evidence suggests that COVID-19 manifests as a non-severe disease in most cases (~80 %), with a smaller proportion of cases developing severe pneumonia, and some dying. People at higher risk of complications and severe disease include the elderly, and people with underlying chronic or immunocompromising medical conditions.

The estimated incubation period is 5-6 days on average, ranging from 1 to 14 days. People who have been exposed in the community or while traveling could become ill and contagious at the workplace/business settings.

Risk mitigation (including personal protective equipment)

Risk of infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 can be mitigated using multiple strategies in combination. The first strategy is to avoid situations and people that pose a risk, by having people stay home when ill and maintaining a 2-metre distance from others. When it's not possible to avoid contact with others, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette are very important to reduce spread. Personal protective equipment (PPE), such as face masks and gloves, can be used in certain situations to protect people from infectious diseases. PPE is used on the advice of an organization's occupational health and safety office and is based on a risk assessment that considers both the risk associated with a specific task/activity as well as the characteristics of the source of the infection (e.g. a sick person or a contaminated environment). **The use of respirators (e.g. N-95 respirators) are not recommended**, except in healthcare settings when particular high-risk procedures are being performed or in other industries when respirators are routinely used. Workers who are exposed to people who are ill with respiratory symptoms, such as coughing and sneezing, may use face masks and eye protection **if the nature of their work warrants it**. Gloves are only recommended when workers will be in direct contact with an ill person, or a contaminated object or environment. PPE must be used correctly to prevent contamination when taking it on and off; hand washing remains critical even when using PPE. Training on the use of PPE should be provided.

Practicing frequent and thorough hand hygiene (washing hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer), as well as not touching one's face, are the best ways to prevent infection. Those who are ill should stay home from work, and should always practice respiratory etiquette, by coughing into their arm or a tissue.

All Metro Testing & Engineering personnel are required:

- to complete their daily online “health Screening” questionnaire,
- Report to their supervisors:
 - any conditions or symptoms,
 - Any personal travel that has involved international airports, or travel outside of the country,
 - Any positive cases that they have been exposed to,
- To sign in with each field site and perform any additional orientations, forms, questionnaires, or other screening type that is specific to each field site
- To remain calm
- Continue to treat everyone with respect, dignity, and uphold their privacy.

6 Questions for all personnel prior to performing work:

1. Are you currently experiencing and cold or flu-like symptoms?
2. Have you had any close or direct contact with anyone with these mentioned symptoms?
3. Have you been asked to self-isolate by a healthcare professional or have anyone in your household tested positive for COVID-19?
4. Have you or anyone in your household traveled anywhere outside of Canada in the last 14 days?

If you have answered "yes" to any of these questions, please inform your supervisor, manager, or safety officer for further direction.

Prevention Methods to reduce and control: Practice good hygiene:

- Stop handshaking – use other noncontact methods of greeting
- Clean hands at the door and schedule regular hand washing reminders by email
- Create habits and reminders to avoid touching their faces and cover coughs and sneezes
- Disinfect surfaces like doorknobs, tables, desks, and handrails regularly
- Increase ventilation by opening windows or adjusting air conditioning

Be careful with meetings and travel:

- Use videoconferencing for meetings when possible
- When not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces
- Consider adjusting or postponing large meetings or gatherings
- Assess the risks of business travel

Handle food carefully:

- Limit food sharing
- Limit the number of people gathered in lunchrooms
- Practice strict hygiene in lunchrooms or other areas where you may be eating

Stay home if...

- You are feeling sick
- You have a sick family member in their home