

Infrastructure Health and Safety Association Guidance for in-vehicle driver safety during COVID-19

Overview

During the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, we all need to do our part to keep workers, customers and the public safe and healthy so we can stop the spread and prepare to reopen the province, when we are ready.

Below is a set of tips and best practices to help employers and workers prevent the spread of COVID-19 and work together to reopen the province.

Employers and workers in Ontario have certain duties and rights under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHS) and its regulations. Employers should also review and follow any applicable directives and guidance coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Ministry of Health.

Learn more about:

- [workers' rights](#)
- [employers' responsibilities](#)

You should also regularly check for requirements applicable to your region, such as:

- the provincial COVID-19 Response Framework
- municipal bylaws
- orders from your local public health unit

To help prevent outbreaks, you are encouraged to develop a COVID-19 workplace safety plan. All businesses operating in a region in lockdown are required to have on under provincial regulation.

[Report](#) COVID-19 case(s) in the workplace to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Best practices

Recognize hazards and assess risks: The first step to controlling risks in a workplace is to identify the risks. This applies to all workplace hazards, not just COVID-19. Identifying and controlling workplace hazards is required of all employers in Ontario under the [Occupational](#)

[Health and Safety Act](#) and its regulations. The key risk factors for COVID-19 transmission include:

- prolonged exposure – spending more time with potentially infected people
- close proximity – working close to others
- crowded places – having more people in a space
- closed spaces – indoor spaces with less fresh air exchange (working indoors is riskier than working outdoors)
- forceful exhalation – activities that cause people to breathe more deeply, such as exercise, speaking loudly and singing

It is possible for COVID-19 to be spread by people who do not have any symptoms. This makes effective control measures very important. We must act as if everyone is infected when setting up controls.

The risk of severe health outcomes is not the same for all workers. The risk increases with age and is higher for people with [certain medical conditions](#).

Controls:

Infection prevention and control measures prevent the spread of the virus by breaking the chain of transmission. For example, [public health guidance](#) includes staying at least 2 metres away from others which avoids close contact; washing hands removes the virus and prevents people from touching their faces with contaminated hands.

For COVID-19 in the workplace, it is recommended that employers and business owners conduct a risk assessment to determine the most appropriate controls and actions for a particular workplace/situation. Reference the [IHSA's guide](#) on the risk assessment process to help facilitate this and review [Sample 1](#) and [Sample 2](#) for examples.

Always start by considering the most effective controls first. It is best to begin by trying to eliminate the hazard – to remove it from the workplace altogether. Where that is not possible, use multiple engineering and administrative controls first to prevent the spread. Protective equipment (including personal protective equipment (PPE) and community protective equipment) should be relied on only where engineering and administrative controls do not sufficiently reduce the risk to workers.

In addition to the above recommendations, employers should determine whether PPE* needs to be part of their hazard control plan. The need for PPE should be based on a risk assessment taking into account environmental conditions and also take into consideration input from the local public health unit. Although proper use of PPE can help prevent some exposures, it should not take the place of other control measures. Note: If physical distance and separation cannot be maintained, workers should have PPE consisting of surgical/procedure mask and eye protection (goggles or face shield).

- Workers must use PPE as required by their employer.
- Workers should be trained on the proper use, care and limitations of any required

PPE.

*NOTE: Please be reminded that most face coverings (non-medical masks) have not been tested to a known standard and do not constitute PPE. In some circumstances, face coverings may be used as an effective means of source control, but should not be viewed as an appropriate substitute for physical distancing in the workplace.

General precautions that should be followed by all drivers:

All drivers are encouraged to continue following public health recommendations to help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. Ontario has released [additional sector specific safety guidance](#) to protect workers, customers, and the general public as we continue with the gradual reopening of the provincial economy.

Prior to starting any trip, commercial vehicle drivers must monitor their health. This is also required when providing or participating in any in-vehicle training. If a driver is experiencing symptoms such as cough, fever or sore throat – even if symptoms are mild – they must stay home, self-isolate, and advise their employer so steps can be taken to protect co-workers who may have been exposed. More details can be found in the [COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#) from the Ontario Ministry of Health.

General hygiene best practices:

- Practice physical distancing by maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from others during any interaction.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth to prevent the spread of germs.
- When coughing or sneezing, use a tissue, your sleeve or your elbow to reduce the risk of spreading the virus and immediately wash hands for 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer, with 60-90% alcohol, approved by Public Health Ontario and Ministry of Health.
- Common or shared touch surfaces must be disinfected between use and whenever first used.
- Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds, before and after eating and before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- You may want to discuss with your supervisor if you have underlying health conditions that may place you at greater risk.
- Contact your supervisor if you are experiencing any of the [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and complete the online [COVID-19 Self-Assessment](#).
- Report to your supervisor if you are returning from international destinations (outside Canada) for non-essential work-related travel.
 - Refer to the [Guidance on truck drivers experiencing COVID-19 symptoms in other jurisdictions](#).
- Immediately report to your supervisor if you or a member of your household has tested positive for COVID-19 and remove yourself from the workplace.

Guidance for in-vehicle driver training, instruction or mentorship

Screen for COVID-19:

[Screening for COVID-19: guidance for employers | Ontario.ca](#)

This document provides employers with an overview of workplace screening for COVID-19 and information to help them make decisions about the use of rapid antigen screening.

Screening helps keep infected workers and others from entering the workplace thereby reducing possible workplace transmission.

- Question-based screening uses information about symptoms and exposures to identify people who may be infectious.
- Rapid antigen screening is used to help identify people who are infectious before they develop symptoms.

To further protect workers and help reduce transmission, workers who have passed screening must continue to follow all public health and workplace control measures including masking and maintaining physical distance.

Alternative training tools: While virtual training cannot be used for all aspects of the training process, there are tools that can be used effectively for some aspects of a company training program. Alternative training tools include:

- **Virtual classroom training:** Portions of the training program that are typically conducted in company meeting rooms can be conducted remotely, either at the office or at home. Tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Join-Me, GoToMeeting, Skype, Google Hangouts, Adobe Connect, WebEX etc. allow companies to carry out training and share slides/materials, while allowing for two-way dialogue between the participants. Many of these interactive systems also offer knowledge verification (testing) features, to ensure that key training objectives are understood.
- **Review of in-vehicle camera video footage:** For companies that have dash cameras in their company vehicles, recording and reviewing actual driving footage can provide significant training opportunities. This footage highlights the challenges faced by drivers on the road and can be used in constructive coaching sessions in a confidential and non-confrontational setting, using any of the online meeting platforms listed above to facilitate the coaching.
- **CB radios, hands-free cell phones, and vehicle tablets:** Some companies may have the ability to conduct remote in-vehicle driver training through company devices. By using audio communication devices approved under the Highway Traffic Act, it may be possible for a trainer/mentor to be outside the vehicle while still communicating with the driver in a safe learning environment.
- **Observation:** For fully licensed drivers, an instructor/mentor can follow in a separate vehicle at a safe distance and provide feedback/coaching after the trip is completed.

In-person classroom training: Where remote/virtual training is not possible, in-person training must be conducted following physical distancing protocols:

- Organizations must ensure the layout of training rooms can accommodate physical distancing during training, including making changes if necessary.
 - Participants must be able to maintain a distance of at least two (2) metres (6 feet) from one another.
 - If physical distance and separation cannot be maintained at all times, workers should have PPE consisting of surgical/procedure mask and eye protection (goggles or face shield).
 - Workers must use PPE as required by their employer. Employers must train workers on the proper use, care and limitations of any required PPE.
- All surfaces in the training room (tables, chairs, countertops, etc.) should be disinfected before and after the training using appropriate cleaning products.
 - Note: Increased cleaning frequency should be implemented on commonly shared office items (i.e. keyboards, chairs, tables etc.) using appropriate cleaning product as required.
- The use of digital technology is strongly encouraged as an alternative to paper handouts.
- The sharing of pens and other office supplies is strongly discouraged. Drivers should be asked to bring their own pens/pencils.

General vehicle preparation:

- Begin and end each shift by cleaning the inside of your vehicle with a disinfectant. Clean and disinfect the steering wheel, frequently used levers, buttons and radio controls, seats, and anything generally touched with your hands. [See IHSA's instructional video on Cleaning and Sanitizing Commercial Motor Vehicles.](#)
- When cleaning the vehicle, ensure adequate ventilation by keeping the doors open and when possible allow time for the vehicle to air out before driving (10 minutes).
- Ensure that containers for disposal of used PPE or cleaning supplies are available in the vehicle.
- Ensure each vehicle is always equipped with hand sanitizer (with 60-90% alcohol, and approved by Public Health Ontario and Ministry of Health) and/or disinfectant spray and any other PPE that is required by your company-specific health & safety plan.
- When driving, consider keeping the windows open to provide ventilation, particularly when more than one person is in the vehicle.

In-vehicle driver training:

These in-vehicle safety procedures are designed to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by reducing the risk of respiratory droplets being transferred from one person to another when physical distancing measures are not possible.

When two people must be in the vehicle, the general vehicle preparation practices outlined above should be followed, particularly the disinfecting of the vehicle both before and immediately following any in-vehicle training.

In addition, the following is recommended:

- Confirm that both employees have successfully passed the company medical screening and are showing no signs of illness before or during the training.

- Use PPE including a surgical/procedure mask and eye protection (goggles or face shield), as required by the employer.
 - Employers must train workers on the proper use, care and limitations of any required PPE.
- Windows should be opened for ventilation (equal amounts to equalize pressure).
- If, in order to demonstrate driving techniques, the instructor must touch anything that the driver may have touched or may come into contact with, those surfaces or objects should be disinfected immediately and the instructor should use hand sanitizer.
- All cleaning materials must be properly secured following the disinfecting process.
- If physical barriers or vehicle modifications are being considered they should be compliant with all applicable federal and provincial legislation and not interfere with or affect the safe operation of the vehicle.

Masks:

Learn more about [using masks in the workplace](#) including how to select, care for and use them to protect workers from COVID-19.

Vaccines:

[COVID-19 vaccines and workplace health and safety | Ontario.ca](#)

This guidance document explains how vaccines work to protect you when you are vaccinated, why COVID-19 workplace control measures need to be maintained even after workers are vaccinated, and some considerations for employers about workplace policies and supporting their workers to get vaccinated.

Workplace controls are measures that employers use to help prevent workers from being exposed to hazards like those posed by COVID-19. Vaccines are a good complement to workplace controls, but cannot replace them. They have different purposes:

- Workplace controls help prevent workers from being exposed to COVID-19.
- Vaccines help protect workers from getting sick if they are exposed.

To protect workers and help reduce the chance of COVID-19 transmission at the workplace, it is important to maintain workplace control measures even after vaccination.

Self-monitor for [symptoms](#) for 10 days after exposure.

Resources

Stay updated with daily government updates:

- [Government of Ontario](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)

Ontario government and agency-issued resources about COVID-19

Develop your COVID-19 workplace safety plan: Learn how you can create a plan to help protect your workers and others from novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19).

[Workplace Safety Plan](#)

The [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) is providing consistent updates on the provincial government's response to the outbreak, including:

- status of cases in Ontario
- current affected areas
- symptoms and treatments
- how to protect yourself and self-isolate
- updated Ontario news on the virus

[Public Health Ontario](#) is providing up-to-date resources on COVID-19, including:

- links to evolving public health guidelines, position statements and situational updates
- synopsis of key articles updating on the latest findings related to the virus
- recommendations for use of personal protective equipment
- information on infection prevention and control
- testing information
- other public resources

Other COVID-19 resources

[Health Canada](#) outlines the actions being taken by the Government of Canada to limit spread of the virus, as well as what is happening in provinces and communities across the country. It also maintains a live update of the number of cases by province.

The [World Health Organization](#) is updating the latest guidance and information related to the global outbreak and spread beyond Canadian borders.

It also provides the most up-to-date information on:

- current research and development around the virus
- a COVID-19 situation “dashboard”
- emergency preparedness measures
- live media updates on the spread of the virus

This resource does not replace the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its regulations, and should not be used as or considered legal advice. Health and safety inspectors apply the law based on the facts in the workplace.

Additional transportation industry useful links and resources:

Transport Canada: tc.gc.ca/eng/motorvehiclesafety/federal-safety-guidance-protect-drivers-limit-spread-covid-19-commercial-vehicle-operations.html

Ontario Trucking Association (OTA) and Canadian Trucking Alliance (CTA) COVID-19 Updates and Resources: cantruck.ca/category/covid-19/

Trucking Human Resources Canada: truckinghr.com/covid-19-resource-guide/

Government of Canada Self-Assessment Tool and App: ca.thrive.health/

Government of Ontario: ontario.ca/coronavirus