

# Infrastructure Health and Safety Association

## Guidance on construction facility hygiene 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 resources, tips and best practices to help employers and employees 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* (OHSA) 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 one 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](#).

**Potential exposures for construction workers:** On construction sites, workers could be exposed to infectious diseases through the following activities.

- Working in close proximity to others.
- Close contact with others during delivery of material and equipment.
- Exposure to contaminated areas in the cab when using a shared vehicle or piece of operating equipment.
- Touching possibly contaminated items during the course of the work, for example:
  - Tools and equipment
  - Construction materials and supplies
  - Pens when signing for pickups or deliveries
  - Electronic screens on devices like cell phones
  - Common surfaces such as handles on the entry door at facilities

### 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

For more information, visit: [ihsa.ca/COVID-19](https://ihsa.ca/COVID-19)

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 personal protective equipment (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.

## **1. 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.

**2. Regular hand washing.** Hand washing helps remove viruses and toxic materials from the skin. This prevents workers from spreading infectious diseases, developing skin reactions and

*For more information, visit: [ihsa.ca/COVID-19](https://ihsa.ca/COVID-19)*

ingesting hazardous chemicals.

- Workers must wash their hands after using the toilet; before eating, drinking, handling food or smoking; after coughing or blowing their nose; and after contact with chemical agents.
- If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, with 60-90% alcohol, approved by Public Health Ontario and Ministry of Health. Remove visible soiling with paper towel, then reapply alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

**3. Clean-up facilities.** A well-maintained hand-washing facility helps eliminate infectious diseases and keeps workers safe from some of the toxic dusts and chemicals often found on construction sites. The constructor must provide the following:

- Clean-up facilities equipped with no fewer wash basins than half the number of toilets.
- Hot and cold running water where reasonably possible.
- Either paper towels and waste receptacles or a hand dryer.
- Soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60-90% alcohol, approved by Public Health Ontario and Ministry of Health) that can be used without water and paper towels.
- Follow the material safety data sheet for hand cleaning instructions, which may require using water, soap and individual towels when workers handle or use corrosive, poisonous, or other substances.

**Note:** Although this is a fact-specific determination to be made by an inspector at a workplace, it is the position of the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development that clean-up facilities complete with hot and cold water (or warm water) are, as a general matter, reasonable to provide by Constructors in almost all construction projects. Where it is not reasonably possible to have a wash basin with running water at a clean-up facility, the workplace parties, namely the constructor and employer must provide the rationale as to why “it is not reasonably possible”. Constructors can arrange to have facilities located up to 3km away in accordance with Section 29(6).

**4. Toilets.** An essential requirement to preventing the spread of germs on construction projects is access to toilets and clean-up facilities.

- Provide (or arrange for) water-flush toilets that are connected to a sanitary sewer, or chemical-flush toilets that are not connected to a sanitary sewer.
- Ensure that minimum numbers of toilets, as prescribed per number of workers regularly employed at the project, are provided. Also, ensure that separate facilities for female workers are provided, unless the facilities are intended to be used by only one worker at a time. (See Tables 1 and 2 for the number of toilets.)
- Ensure that facilities are serviced as often as required.

**Table 1: Determining the number of water-flush or non-recirculating chemical-flush toilets.**

Number of workers regularly employed at the project	Minimum number of toilets
1-15	1
16-30	2
31-45	3
46-60	4
61 or more	4, plus 1 additional toilet for each additional group of 15 or fewer workers

**Table 2: Determining the number of toilets that are not water-flush or non-recirculating chemical-flush toilets.**

Number of workers regularly employed at the project	Minimum number of toilets
1-10	1
11-20	2
21-30	3
31-40	4
41 or more	4, plus 1 additional toilet for each additional group of 15 or fewer workers

Resource: [Section 28 – 30 of Ontario Regulation 213/91](#) prescribes the requirements for hygiene on construction projects.

**5. Maintain physical distancing.** Everyone in Ontario should be practicing physical distancing to reduce their exposure to other people. They should do their best to avoid close contact with people outside of their immediate families. Close contact includes being within two (2) meters (6 feet) of another person.

**6. Stay home if you are feeling ill.** If you detect symptoms, you should immediately distance yourself from others and go home. If possible, avoid using public transit. Ensure you notify your supervisor so that they are aware of the situation and can also notify others who may have been exposed.

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

**8. 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.

### **Evaluate:**

Changes to work procedures or practices related to COVID-19 may affect the way you have routinely managed other risks in the workplace. Thus, it is recommended that you consider the various preventative measures on an ongoing basis, and review and adjust accordingly if they are not working as intended or have created new risks or challenges.

Follow-up and evaluation are essential to ensure the effectiveness of controls and solutions implemented. Review your process and identify any opportunities for improvement.

You should determine the following:

- Has the hazard been eliminated or the risk minimized appropriately?
- Is there a better way to control the risk?
- Is the control being used consistently and as planned? Monitor behavior and practices, and your improvement over time.
- Continuously engage your workers, and communicate recommendations and adjustments with supervisors.

Continuously monitor the necessary tools, supplies, and equipment needed to meet your control measures. Also ensure sufficient supplies are readily available, adequate, and accessible.

For Ontario residents, anyone who suspects that they have contracted COVID-should call Direct toll-free: 1-866-797-0000 or TTY: 1-866-797-0007. Visit the Ontario Ministry of Health's website and take their [self-assessment](#).

**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

For more information, visit: [ihsa.ca/COVID-19](https://ihsa.ca/COVID-19)

- 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.