

Infrastructure Health and Safety Association

Guidance on construction site trailers 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](#)

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.

Some important COVID-19 risk information includes how it is spread and what can increase the risk of a worker becoming infected. COVID-19 can be spread at the workplace in two main ways:

1. person to person – by people who are in close contact
2. by surfaces or objects – when people touch their face with contaminated hands

The level of risk in an activity will be related to the number of opportunities for transmission of the virus. This includes how close people come to each other, how many different interactions there are between people, how often people touch surfaces or objects and how long people stay in a space.

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](#).

Office trailers on construction sites are typically places with high traffic volumes and gatherings, with many visitors entering and exiting throughout a shift. As such, surfaces in these office trailers can become potential sources of infection.

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](#), [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 personal protective equipment (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.

- Workers must use personal protective equipment 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. Keep touch surfaces clean.

- Identify and make a list of surfaces that are commonly touched by more than one

person, such as tabletops, handrails, light switches, radios, etc. These surfaces will require regular cleaning and disinfecting. Be sure to identify surfaces that may require higher frequency cleaning, such as door handles and faucets

- Conduct daily cleaning of hard, non-porous surfaces. Frequently disinfect commonly touched items like door handles, chairs, tables, stair handrails, etc. Clean all touched surfaces as often as required throughout the day.
- Post the list of commonly touched surfaces (with their cleaning frequency identified) near the entrance to the trailer. The posting will raise awareness of potentially contaminated surfaces and it will serve as a cleaning guide for the trailer.

2. Control entry into the trailer. Consider creating a clean zone for your trailer's workspace with the following example measures:

- Keep the door locked to prevent access.
- Put an upper limit on the number of personnel in the trailer to maintain physical distancing.
- Open windows if practical to create air exchange.
- Hold discussions outside the trailer, as practical.

3. Control contact inside the trailer.

- Have hand washing and disinfecting means just outside (preferable), or just inside the entry to the trailer to limit the transfer of germs by touch inside the trailer.
- If possible, create a change zone at one end of the trailer for removal of overcoats, hard hats, gloves, etc. in this area, before proceeding further into the trailer.
- Do not share keyboards, mouse, pens, or similar items.
- Limit the sharing of documents.
- Turn your head away from others when coughing or sneezing, and cover your mouth and nose with a sleeve or tissue.
- Visitors in an office or trailer should not touch anything. Request they keep their hands in their pockets to help inadvertent touching. Disinfect anything touched by the visitor.

4. If the office trailer is also the lunchroom:

- Control eating times to maintain physical distancing. Stagger who and how many use the trailer at one time.
- Individuals should follow hygiene practices and cleaning protocols created for the lunchroom. Post this in the lunchroom area. Co-workers should monitor each other and help ensure protocols are followed completely.
- Ensure there is running water and cleaning material available in the eating area.
- When cleaning the lunch table, choose products that both clean and disinfect (e.g., premixed store-bought disinfectant cleaning solutions and/or wipes).

5. Practice good hygiene. Health Canada recommends following these basic hygiene practices:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- If using hand sanitizers, they must be alcohol based (with greater than 60% alcohol) to be effective.

- Sneeze or cough into a tissue and discard it, or sleeve or shirt.

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.

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

- Safety glasses
- Access to soap and water or hand sanitizer
- Disinfectant wipes
- Paper towels

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

For more information, visit: ihsa.ca/COVID-19

- 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.