Infrastructure Health and Safety Association Guidance on in-person classroom training 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.

As the constructor of a project, you have responsibilities for the health and safety of not only your direct employees but to all workers on the project. As such, an absence of clear and concise protocols regarding COVID-19 leaves you and your project at significant risk of infection and total shut down.

Your risk associated with COVID-19 as the constructor extends through your various employers, sub-contractors, sole-proprietors, suppliers and inspectors, whether they are directly working, delivering materials, or visiting the project.

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.

Training providers and participants may be at risk of getting COVID-19 in training sessions where equipment is shared or where training happens in smaller indoor spaces, especially spaces that do not allow for physical distancing.

This document was developed to help training providers understand the measures required for classroom training during COVID-19. Where possible, training should be delivered through remote (distance) or virtual training platforms.

Where remote or virtual training cannot be accommodated, the in-person classroom training provider should:

- Use a space that allows for physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet)
- Have a plan in place for regular cleaning and sanitization
- Ensure personal hygiene can be maintained through access to running water and soap, or alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60-90% alcohol, approved by Public Health Ontario and Ministry of Health.

If these precautions cannot be met or adhered to during the entire training program, training should not occur at this time.

Training provider requirements:

Training should be conducted following the below protocols:

1. **Class size and planning**
   - Class sizes must be limited to the maximum number of persons allowed to gather as stipulated by the province of Ontario. Building capacity must also be considered.
   - If there is more than one training program being offered in the building on the same day, the following protocols should be observed:
     - Stagger of start and stop times so that participants in different programs are not arriving or leaving at the same time.
     - Stagger breaks and lunches for the different programs.
     - Have procedures in place to avoid crowding in washrooms.

2. **Elevator use**
   - Limit the use of elevators where possible.
   - Have procedures in place for regular cleaning of commonly-touched surfaces, such as elevator buttons.
   - Provide instruction on cleaning procedures and capacity limits for elevators.

3. **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.

4. **Personal hygiene and sanitization**
   - Ensure access to soap and water, or alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60-90% alcohol, approved by Public Health Ontario and Ministry of Health.
   - Ensure access to appropriate cleaning products.
   - Ensure instructors and participants are able to wash or sanitize their hands frequently, especially when they arrive, before and after touching commonly-touched surfaces, and before leaving.
   - Verify with the facility that the training room has been cleaned and sanitized.

- Ensure all surfaces in the training room (tables, chairs, countertops, doorknobs, light switches etc.) are disinfected before and after the training using appropriate cleaning products.
- Ensure any training equipment, tools or props are cleaned and sanitized before and after use.

5. **Physical distancing and PPE**
   - Ensure participants are positioned a minimum of 2 metres (6 feet) from one another and remain at a safe distance at all times. This may require organizations to change the layout of existing training rooms and/or reduce the number of participants per course. Below is a diagram of a suitable training room arrangement.
   - Implement all measures to ensure physical distance and separation between people. If physical distance cannot be maintained, workers will need PPE consisting of a surgical/procedure mask and eye protection (goggles or face shield).
     - Workers must be trained on the proper use, care and limitations of any required PPE.
   - **Masks**: Learn more about using masks in the workplace including how to select, care for and use them to protect workers from COVID-19.

   Example of suitable training room arrangement
   (Example shows 8 participants plus instructor)
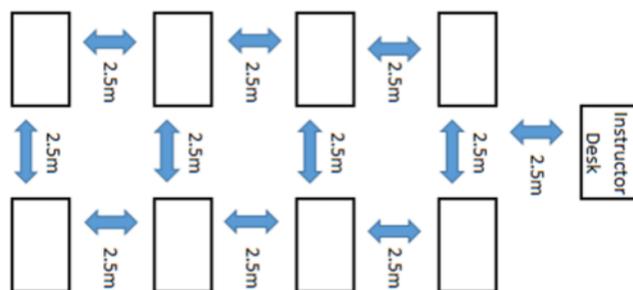
6. **Communication and signage**
   - Ensure policies and procedures related to COVID-19 are posted, available and communicated to all participants.
   - Put up COVID-19 posters in the facility and classroom to communicate key messages such as physical distancing of 2 metres, hand hygiene, and how to screen for symptoms.
   - Use signage and markings to direct foot traffic and encourage physical distancing.

7. **Sharing equipment and materials**
   - For programs where participants must demonstrate skills or perform physical tasks and use supplied equipment, tools or props, individuals should be encouraged to:
     - wash or sanitize hands prior to task

- o maintain physical distance during task, and
- o wash or sanitize hands when task is complete.
- The use of digital technology is strongly encouraged as an alternative to paper handouts in training.
- The sharing of pens and normal office supplies is strongly discouraged. Participants are encouraged to bring their own personal pens/pencils.

8. **Participant requirements:**
   - Participants are expected to be in good health and not showing any of the following respiratory, cold or flu-like symptoms including:
     - New onset or worsening of existing cough
     - Fever (> 38 degrees Celsius or >100.4 degrees Fahrenheit)
     - Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
     - Chest pain
     - Vomiting
     - Severe fatigue
     - Runny nose
     - Sore throat

   - Participants who demonstrate any of these symptoms over the course of the program should be asked to leave and the course should be suspended immediately.
   - Some people with COVID-19 do not show any symptoms, so everyone should practice physical distancing by maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from others and during any interaction.
   - Participants should be instructed on proper cough/sneeze etiquette, and to wash their hands frequently for at least 20 seconds, before and after eating and before touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.
   - Participants should be instructed to sanitize hands and disinfect any equipment, tools or props being brought into the training facility and at regular intervals throughout the course.

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.

Alternative evaluation methods
Due to the new COVID-19 protocols, training providers may need to adjust current evaluation methods or consider alternative evaluation methods. Training providers should consider the effects of COVID-19 safety measures on the accommodations needed.

Self-monitor for symptoms for 14 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

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.