

Infrastructure Health and Safety Association

Guidance on shipping and receiving 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](#).

As a shipper or receiver, you should be aware of the spread of viruses and the risk of exposure to them. You also need to be aware of the precautions for working with truck shipments, drivers and related personnel, as well as frequently shared material handling equipment, i.e., lift trucks, pallet pumps, etc.

Primary hazards and risk sources may originate from close contact with other co-workers and drivers, and the shipment contents, related paperwork, common use of pens and clipboards, and material handling equipment on which a virus may be deposited.

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

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

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. Maintain physical distancing. Physical distancing means maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more between persons. By practicing social distancing, you are less likely to be exposed to a respiratory virus:

- Do not report to work if you are exhibiting any of the COVID-19 symptoms.
- Practice physical distancing inside the warehouse at all times.
- Limit the amount of face-to-face contact with drivers and always avoid physical contact with people who have flu like symptoms.
- If possible, ask drivers to remain in the truck cab while the trailer is being loaded or unloaded, or request that drivers wait in a designated area to limit contact.
- Use technology for communication (such as text messaging and mobile phones rather than in-person conversations) as much as possible.
- Where possible, keep all loads on pallets to reduce exposure to loose cargo.
- Limit any casual interactions that may normally occur with others.
- Do not share pens. Request that the driver use their own pen or stylus when signing.
- Where possible use technology (such as scanning equipment) for proof of delivery.
- Provide drivers with disposable cups rather than allowing them to use refillable containers.
- Regularly disinfect any equipment used to receive or ship packages.
- Have sanitizer and soap present and visible for all staff to use and refill regularly.
- Continue to wear standard work gloves when handling and/or moving freight and wash hands frequently when gloves are removed.

2. Clean the facility and equipment frequently. Cleaning methods should be employed with special attention to key areas as specified below:

- Educate all staff about COVID-19 and share resources on how to keep the workplace clean.
- Encourage and remind staff to use good hygiene practices. This should include frequent handwashing.
- Reinforce education and hygiene with regular workplace communications and reminders.
- Regularly wipe down and disinfect common pieces of equipment such as lift trucks and pallet pumps using disinfectant wipes.
- Regularly clean door handles, breakrooms, meeting rooms and restrooms, and all high-traffic areas.
- Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when cleaning potentially contaminated surfaces.
- Dispose of cleaning gloves and soiled materials as soon as possible.
- Remove garbage from the facility regularly.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Once any cleaning is complete, remove cleaning gloves and ensure you wash your hands.

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.

Monitor supplies. As you increase cleaning and disinfecting, monitor your supply of disinfectant wipes, cleaning products, and cleaning gloves to ensure you have sufficient supplies.

Monitor the frequency of cleaning. This will ensure that all areas, including often overlooked areas, get sanitized on a regular basis.

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.