
Overview
This is not a legal document and employers are advised to seek legal advice.

Employers and constructors have obligations to protect workers from hazards in the workplace as set out in the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations and the directives coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Workers should raise any concerns to their:
- Supervisor
- Joint health and safety committee
- Health and safety representative

This will help ensure the employer has taken all reasonable precautions.

Ontario is currently in the midst of a global pandemic. While the COVID-19 situation is changing rapidly, the legislation and regulations used to govern Ontario’s workplaces are not.

Under Ontario law, employers have the duty to keep workers and work sites safe and free of hazards. Workers have the right to refuse unsafe work. If health and safety concerns are not resolved internally, a worker can seek enforcement by filing a complaint with the ministry’s Health and Safety Contact Centre at 1-877-202-0008. Failure of the employer or constructor to comply with the OHSA and its regulations could result in a stop-work order upon inspection by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Recognize hazards and assess risks
The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) typically spreads through coughing and sneezing, personal contact with an infected person, or touching an infected surface and then the mouth, nose, or eyes.

Each person touching a tool is a potential carrier. They may have picked up the virus from somewhere else, or may have early onset of the virus themselves and are not aware.

“Surfaces frequently touched with hands are most likely to be contaminated. These include doorknobs, handrails, elevator buttons, light switches, cabinet handles, faucet handles, tables, countertops, and electronics. It is not yet known how long the virus causing COVID-19 lives on surfaces, however, early evidence suggests it can live on objects and surfaces from a few hours to days.” — Public Health Agency of Canada

For more information visit ihsa.ca/COVID-19
Guidance on Tool Sharing (Hand Tools) Constructor/Employer Procedure during COVID-19 con’t

**Controls**

Proper hand washing helps prevent the transfer of the COVID-19 virus from surface to surface, and from the infected surface or material to the hands and then to other parts of the body—particularly the eyes, nose, and mouth. Hands that are visibly soiled or dirty should be washed with soap and water first. Sanitizing is less effective on soiled or dirty hands. Always cleanse your hands before touching your face or eating, or getting into your vehicle to go home, regardless of other precautions taken.

Cleansing the hand tools that workers will be touching will add another layer of protection. This is particularly important when tools are shared. The site’s constructor should consider taking the lead and work with contractors to encourage consistent hygiene practices. The following are options to consider for minimizing exposure from using shared hand tools.

- Communicate worksite protocols for proper hygiene expected to be practiced to ensure all contractors and workers are aware of expectations.
- Plan for enough tools to be on site (as is practical) so each worker does not need to share.
- Identify commonly shared tools in some fashion, and store these in a separate toolbox.
- Provide a label with cleansing instructions at the toolboxes where hand tools are stored, and have washing supplies available for that toolbox.
- Recommend daily cleansing of unshared tools and regular cleansing of shared tools immediately after use throughout the day, and at the start of the day before use.
- Recommend use of gloves as practical.
- Personal clothing worn at work should also be treated as a potential source of exposure. Place work clothes into a bag before taking home to launder. Ideally, wash suspected clothing separately.

Regular tool cleansing when there is no suspected case of COVID-19 can be accomplished using a soap and water solution, or a commercially available disinfecting hand towel wipe, or by a disinfecting wash. Refer to the below recommendations on how to clean and disinfect tools and equipment. Read the manufacturer’s instructions to prevent possible damage to the equipment and any required personal protective equipment (PPE) for the worker. Consider escalating the cleansing protocol in both the frequency and the disinfecting method when more people are expected to touch the tool.

When a worker has been discovered to have symptoms of COVID-19, the tools and equipment that the worker recently used should be isolated from further use, cleaned, and disinfected.

**Isolate tools and equipment**
- Identify tools and equipment that the worker was recently using.
- Isolate these tools and equipment for cleansing and disinfecting.
- Use PPE such as gloves and coveralls to move the tools and equipment, and wash or dispose of the PPE after use.

**Cleansing and disinfecting**
- The employer and constructor’s protocols should identify who will clean and disinfect tools and equipment.
- As more is learned about the COVID-19 virus, new disinfection guidelines may become available that can specify how long the virus can live on surfaces, and if it is appropriate to set equipment aside for a period as a disinfectant procedure.

For more information visit ihsa.ca/COVID-19
Guidance on construction facility hygiene during COVID-19 con’t

How to clean and disinfect tools and equipment
1. Protect from the possible transfer of germs to yourself by wearing PPE. Wear PPE such as waterproof gloves for your hands and face shield and mask to protect your eyes, face, and mouth. Wear coveralls to protect your clothing.
2. Make sure all power is off and disconnected on power tools and equipment. Read the manufacturer’s directions for cleaning to avoid possible damage from liquids and chemicals.
3. Clean surface with soap and water to remove all visible debris and stains, and some of the germs.
4. Follow labeled instructions and safety data sheets on all containers of cleansing products you use.
5. Many disinfecting products are available to buy; however, they may be difficult to obtain under extreme demand. You can make your own by mixing a water and bleach solution. Check the bleach manufacturer’s recommendation for mixing ratios. To disinfect, typical recommendation is to allow surface to remain wet for 5-10 minutes. Rinse thoroughly, and air dry.
6. Remove disposable PPE and discard. Remove coveralls and place in a bag for washing in a bleach wash as per the bleach manufacturer’s guidance.
7. Wash your hands after removing all PPE.

In addition to isolating and cleansing tools and equipment, inform new contractors and new workers of the protocols, and which tools and equipment are in isolation. Store enough cleaning and disinfesting solutions on site to deal with expected demand. Also, identify a number of workers that are competent to perform disinfecting protocols. If a worker unexpectedly does not show up for work, contact the worker to learn if they are self-isolating, and if so, enact your control measures to isolate and cleanse areas that may be affected.

Evaluate

• Verify that the controls are being followed consistently and as planned. Monitor behaviour and practices.
• Continuously monitor the necessary supplies and equipment needed to meet your control measures. Ensure sufficient supplies are readily available, adequate, and accessible.
• Review your process and identify any opportunities for improvements. Make revisions if new information becomes available that requires a change in process.
• Monitor your health for symptoms such as cough, fever, or difficulty breathing.

Resources
Stay updated with daily government updates on COVID-19:
Government of Ontario
Government of Canada
Public Health Ontario

Anyone who is concerned they may have been exposed to, or is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, should start by visiting the Ministry of Health website and take their self-assessment. They should contact their primary care provider or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000. Do not call 911 unless it is an emergency.