



COVID-19 and returning to safe operation

Information from [WorkSafeBC.com](https://www.worksafebc.com)

WorkSafe BC has published the following to help employers ensure they minimize the risk of COVID-19 in their workplace.

Employers need a plan that addresses:

- How your workplace is organized and arranged
- How specific activities are carried out without risk
- Cleaning and sanitizing
- How you will communicate changes and precautions to people in your workplace

Your plan doesn't need approval from WorkSafeBC, but you will need to be prepared for inspections asking about steps have to protect workers.

Guide to reducing the risk of COVID-19



Assess the risk at your workplace

Employers must assess their workplaces in order to identify places where the risk of transmission is introduced. This process must involve frontline workers, supervisors, and joint health and safety committees and/or worker representatives. You should continue to assess the workplace after operations resume to ensure risks are identified and managed.

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads in several ways, including through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, or from touching a contaminated surface before touching the face. To understand the risk at your workplace, consider the following questions:

- Where do people congregate, such as break rooms, production lines, or meeting rooms?
 - What job tasks or processes require workers to come into close proximity with one another or members of the public?
 - What materials that are exchanged, such as money, credit cards, and paperwork?
 - What tools, machinery, and equipment do people come into contact with in the course of their work?
 - What surfaces are touched often, such as doorknobs, elevator buttons, light switches, equipment, and shared tools?
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Implement measures to reduce the risk

You must have measures in place to minimize the risk of transmission.

Cleaning and hygiene

- Provide adequate hand-washing facilities on site for all workers and ensure the location is visible and easily accessed. Develop policies around when workers must wash their hands, including upon arriving for work, before and after breaks, after handling cash or other materials, before and after handling common tools and equipment.
 - Implement a cleaning protocol for all common areas and surfaces, including washrooms, equipment, tools, common tables, desks, light switches, and door handles. Ensure those engaged in cleaning have adequate training and materials.
 - Remove any unnecessary tools or equipment that may elevate the risk of transmission, including items like coffee makers and shared utensils and plates.
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Maintaining physical distance

- Consider reducing the overall number of workers at the workplace at one time. This may be done by implementing work-from-home schedules or rescheduling some work tasks.
- Ensure that the appropriate number of people are in each area of a workplace to prevent workers from coming too close to one another or members of the public. This may be done by posting occupancy limits (e.g., on elevators, washrooms, and other small spaces), and limiting the number of workers at one time in break locations.
- Maintain a distance of two metres between workers and others wherever possible, by revising work schedules, organizing work tasks, and employing the use of dollies or other aids for work tasks that would typically be done by more than one person.
- Implement measures to ensure workers can maintain a distance of two metres when serving or working with or near members of the public.

Where physical distance cannot be maintained

- Where distance cannot be maintained, consider separating people with partitions or plexiglass barriers.
 - Where other measures are not sufficient, consider the use of masks or gloves, understanding that these have limitations.
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Develop policies

Develop the necessary policies to manage your workplace, including policies around who can be at the workplace, how to address illness that arises at the workplace, and how workers can be kept safe in adjusted working conditions.

- The provincial health officer and the BC CDC have issued the following guidance around self-isolation, which must be reflected in your policies:
 - anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 including fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat and painful swallowing, must self-isolate at home [for a minimum of 10 days](#)
 - anyone under the direction of the provincial health officer to self-isolate must follow those instructions
 - anyone who has arrived from outside of Canada, or who is a contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case, to [self-isolate for 14 days and monitor](#) for symptoms
 - Prohibit or limit visitors.
 - Have a plan around workers who may start to feel ill while at work, including who they should notify and how they will travel from the workplace to their home.
 - Will you have workers working alone to reduce the risk of transmission? If so, you need to have [procedures](#) for these workers to ensure they are safe.
 - If you will have employees working from home, you need to develop [work from home procedures](#) to ensure workers are working safely.
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Develop communication plans and training

You must ensure that everyone entering the workplace, including workers from other employers, knows how to keep themselves safe while at your workplace.

- Be sure everyone is trained on the measures you have put in place and the policies around staying home when sick.
 - Post signage, including occupancy limits and effective hygiene practices. Signage should also be posted at the main entrance indicating who is restricted from entering the premises (including visitors and workers with symptoms).
 - Ensure workers are adequately supervised to ensure they know what to do.
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Monitor your workplace and update your plans as needed

- Things may change as your business operates. If you identify a new area of concern, or if it seems like something isn't working, take steps to update your policies and procedures. Involve workers in this process.
 - Ensure that workers can raise safety concerns. This may be through a worker representative in workplaces of 9 to 20 employees, or through a joint health and safety committee for workplaces of more than 20 employees. Employers with fewer than 9 employees must also have a way for workers to raise health and safety concerns at the workplace. Work with these committees and workers to resolve any identified safety issues.
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Assess and address risks from resuming operations

If your workplace has not been operating, there may be risks arising from restarting your business that you need to manage. Consider the following:

- Have you had any staff turnover, or are workers being required to change or adapt job roles, or to use new equipment? Consider training or new employee orientation.
- Will workers need time or training to refresh their skills after having been out of the workplace?
- Have you changed anything about the way you operate, such as the equipment you use or the products you create?
- Are there any processes required for start-up that might introduce risks? Consider the impact of restarting machinery, tools and equipment, or clearing systems and lines of product that may have been left when your business was closed