
May 20, 2020

BULLETIN

WORKSAFEBC DIRECTS ALL EMPLOYERS TO PREPARE A COVID-19 SAFETY PLAN

As BC makes its first tentative steps to reopen parts of the economy, and to establish the new normal in light of COVID-19, WorkSafeBC has directed every employer to develop a COVID-19 safety plan (a “Safety Plan”) to ensure that they meet their legislated obligations to provide safe workplaces.

On May 14, 2020, the Provincial Health Officer also ordered employers to post a copy of their Safety Plan on their websites, and at their workplaces so that the Plan will be readily available for review by workers, others persons who may attend the workplace to provide services, and to the public. Employers must also provide a copy of their Safety Plan to a health officer or a WorkSafeBC officer, on request.

WorkSafeBC has issued guidance documents to assist local governments to prepare their Safety Plans. A Safety Plan must assess the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at the workplace, and set out the measures the local government will take to keep its employees safe. Some best practices that WorkSafeBC recommends that local governments consider including in their Safety Plans include the following:

- Regulate Who Attends the Workplace
 - Implement a policy requiring anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, such as a sore throat, fever, sneezing, or coughing to self-isolate at home for 10 days from onset of symptoms, as well as anyone advised by public health to self-isolate.
 - Prioritize the work that needs to occur at the workplace for the employer to offer its services.
- Ensure Physical Distancing
 - Stagger start times for workers to prevent crowding at locations.
 - Eliminate in-person team meetings.
 - Modify work processes and practices to encourage physical distancing between workers, customers, and clients.

- Provide instructions to workers on methods of maintaining physical distance from other workers, customers, and clients, such as not shaking hands, or removing or modifying proof of delivery signature requirements and money collection requirements.
- Adopt a Cleaning and Hygiene Regimen
 - Ensure that workers are provided with appropriate supplies, such as soap and water, hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, nitrile gloves, garbage bags, and sufficient washing facilities.
 - Remind staff of effective personal hygiene practices. Add signage about such practices for customers who may interact with your workers.
 - Remove shared items where contamination is possible, such as shared tools, coffee and water stations.
 - Enhance cleaning and disinfecting practices in high contact areas like door and cabinet handles, keyboards, light switches, steering wheels, and communication devices.
 - Incorporate end-of-shift wipe downs for all shared spaces.
- Train Staff
 - Train staff on any changes to policies, practices, and procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic and keep records of that training.
 - Ensure that workers can raise safety concerns (potentially through the joint health and safety committee).
- Ensure Safe Transportation to Worksites
 - Whenever possible, workers should travel alone in their vehicles in order to practice physical distancing.
 - If the employer must transport more than one employee at a time, measures to ensure appropriate distance between workers include having workers sit one to a seat, and staggering workers to allow the maximum distance between them, adjusting the number of workers transported per trip, and increasing the number of trips needed to transport workers to a worksite.
 - If it is not possible to ensure 2 metres of distance between workers in a vehicle, the employer must consider other control measures, such as personal protective equipment where appropriate.

- Implement a process that allows for physical distancing when loading and unloading vehicles.
- Have hand washing facilities or sanitizing stations available to workers as they enter and exit the vehicle.
- Ensure that high contact surfaces within the vehicles are routinely cleaned, including seatbelts, headrests, door handles, steering wheels, and hand holds.
- **Resolve Concerns about Unsafe Work**
 - Workers have the right to refuse work if they believe it presents an “undue hazard”. In respect of COVID-19, an “undue hazard” is one where the worker’s job places them at increased risk of exposure and adequate controls are not in place to protect them from that exposure.
 - If an employer and a worker are unable to resolve the concern, the worker and the supervisor or employer must contact WorkSafeBC. A prevention officer will then consult with the parties to determine whether there is an undue hazard, and if so, issue orders as necessary.

Local governments should remain flexible and ready to modify their Safety Plans in response to developments in the reopening of the economy.

WorkSafeBC’s guidance documents can be accessed at the following link:
<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-industry-information/municipalities>

The Provincial Health Officer’s May 14, 2020 order can be accessed at the following link:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/class_order_employers_covid-19_safety_plans_covid-19_may_14_final.pdf

Michelle Blendell