

COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) and Emergency Management Services

The 2019 novel coronavirus or SARS-CoV-2 is a new respiratory virus that has not been identified before; and thus people have no immunity to it. The virus causes diseases of varying severities ranging from mild (e.g. similar to common cold) to severe (e.g. pneumonia).

TRANSMISSION

- ▶ Person-to-person **contact** or touching contaminated surfaces
- ▶ Likely spread via respiratory **droplets** within a distance of one and a half meters (1.5m) through coughing and sneezing
- ▶ Estimated incubation period is between 2-14 days

Common sequence to acquire COVID – 19
 Source – You must be in direct contact with an infected individual or material
 Inoculation – There must be an inoculation process from the source to the recipient e.g. touching your face with contaminated hand.

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL SOURCES

Employers should:

- Have a workplace policy and procedure and ensure workers are familiar with it.
- The policy should include medical management procedures to address COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Communicate and make available a platform for workers to access the latest policy and relevant information around COVID-19.
- Identify exposure risks for different categories of workers and implement appropriate control measures.
- Determine if workers could be exposed to activities or materials where the virus may be encountered.
- Review HR policies around business travel, sick leave, and other related policies to account for COVID-19.

W-O-R-K-E-R-S RESPONSIBILITIES

- W**ash hands regularly using soap and water (~20 sec) or alcohol-based hand rub (~70%) or
- O**bey health and safety policies and procedures
- R**emember to cover nose & mouth with a flexed elbow/ tissue when coughing & sneezing
- K**ey is to avoid exposure and also refrain from exposing others to potential risks
- E**nsure you don, doff and dispose of personal protective equipment properly
- R**eport any situation likely to present a potential or serious danger to life or health
- S**elf-monitor for signs of illness and self-isolate or report illness to managers, if it occurs

Different workers have different risk exposures:
Based on job specific risk assessments, consider the following:

- Office based worker
 - Administration and clerical – where sharing of equipment is unlikely
 - Call centre and communal space sharing – where sharing of equipment is likely e.g. computers, desks, telephones, headsets etc.
- Field workers exposed to confirmed, suspected or potential source of infection.





COVID-19

COVID-19 Workplace Preparedness & Prevention
HEALTHY, SAFE & SUSTAINABLE WORKPLACES
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Office based workers should:

- ✍ Rearrange work stations to promote 1.5m spacing as far as reasonably practicable.
- ✍ Ensure adequate ventilation and sunlight into offices so that droplets can dry out quickly.
- ✍ Create awareness on good hand hygiene (hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and or the use of hand sanitizer with at least 70% alcohol).
- ✍ Promote good respiratory hygiene (elbow coughing and sneezing).
- ✍ Avoid touching your face, especially while working.
- ✍ Limiting personal contact, maintain a minimum 1m space where reasonably possible.
- ✍ Perform frequent cleaning and disinfection of touched surfaces (e.g. headsets, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, remote controls, desks, keyboards, etc.).

Vaccinations

There are currently no vaccines for COVID-19 however, it is advisable to take the flu vaccine to prevent influenza and unnecessary testing for COVID-19

What to do if you suspect you have been exposed to COVID-19

- ✍ Alert your supervisor and occupational health clinic immediately.
- ✍ If you are experiencing symptoms, inform your health care provider about any contacts and recent travel to areas affected by COVID-19.



Field workers should:

- ▶ Understand details of the incident you are responding to and the associated COVID-19 risk.
- ▶ Ensure adequate and appropriate PPE is available. As a guide consider the following based on a risk assessment:
 - A single pair of disposable patient examination gloves. Change gloves if they become torn or heavily contaminated,
 - Disposable isolation gown,
 - Respiratory protection (i.e., N-95 respirator), and
 - Eye protection (i.e., goggles or disposable face shield that fully covers the front and sides of the face).
- ▶ Drivers, if they provide direct patient care (e.g., moving patients onto stretchers), should wear all required PPE.
- ▶ If the transport vehicle does **not** have an isolated driver's compartment, the driver should remove PPE and perform hand hygiene. A respirator should continue to be used during transport.
- ▶ Avoid touching your face especially while working.
- ▶ After the patient is released, remove and discard PPE and perform hand hygiene.
- ▶ Used PPE should be considered contaminated and discarded in accordance with safe practice.
- ▶ Other required aspects of Standard Precautions (e.g., injection safety, hand hygiene) must continue.
- ▶ Special precautions may be required if an aerosol-generating procedure is performed e.g.:
 - bag valve mask (BVM) ventilation,
 - oropharyngeal suctioning,
 - endotracheal intubation,
 - nebulizer treatment,
 - continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP),
 - resuscitation involving emergency intubation or cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
- ▶ Consider ventilation in the vehicle when transporting a patient to limit exposure.
- ▶ The cleaning of a vehicle after transporting a COVID-19 patient should be managed with the appropriate means and controls.

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