

# COVID-19 Guidance

## Public Health Guidance for Businesses and Employers (COVID-19)

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of the COVID-19 disease. The Ministry of Health and Social Development, Environmental Health Division will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available. This document is intended to be territory-wide guidance to help businesses and employers with making informed decisions and to reduce opportunities for transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19 in the workplace.

### Background:

COVID-19 is an emerging respiratory disease caused by a novel coronavirus that has spread worldwide. COVID-19 is primarily transmitted via respiratory droplets through coughing, sneezing and talking; and touching contaminated surfaces. The signs and symptoms of COVID-19 are very similar to that of other respiratory illness. They include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, and shortness of breath; in severe cases it may cause pneumonia, severe respiratory syndrome, organ failure and even death. As the COVID-19 outbreaks evolve, the Environmental Health Division encourages businesses and employers to prepare for possible impact of COVID-19 and take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, as well as other infectious diseases, including influenza and gastroenteritis. Creating an emergency plan can help protect you and the health of the individuals at your workplace. This guidance, which is organized into four categories, provides recommended actions and strategies for preventing the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces.

### Recommendations for Management:

When there is no community transmission: The most important thing to do at this point is to plan and prepare. Management should reinforce healthy practices among their staff. Businesses need to be ready if COVID-19 appears in their community. Here are some strategies:

Review, update, and implement an emergency operation plan (EOP). This should be done in collaboration with local health officials. The plan should include preventative actions for staff

of how to reduce the spread of infectious disease (e.g. COVID-19). This includes strategies for social distancing, emphasis on respiratory etiquette and handwashing and reduced shifts and/or dismissal. The plan should also include strategies for continuing work in the event of dismissal.



Teach and reinforce healthy hygiene practices. Train staff on healthy hygiene practices. Ensure handwashing practices include washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the bathroom, before eating and after blowing nose, coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Apply sanitizer to palm of hand, rub vigorously for

20 seconds, and allow to air dry (Do Not Wipe). Additionally, maintain adequate supplies (e.g. soap, paper towel, hand sanitizer, tissue) to support healthy hygiene practices.

Intensify cleaning and disinfecting efforts. Conduct training for staff and cleaners on how to effectively clean and disinfect. Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched (doorknobs, light switches, sink handles, countertops, desk, etc.). Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label. A list of EPA-approved products for use against COVID-19 is available at <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus>.

The Environmental Health Division recommends the use of regular household bleach for disinfecting of surfaces. Prepare bleach solution by mixing 1/4 cups of bleach to 1 gallon of water is effective for disinfection. Provide staff with disinfecting wipes to clean commonly touches surfaces (keyboards, controls, mouse, etc.) before use. Additionally, maintain adequate supplies to support cleaning and disinfecting practices.

Monitor and plan for absenteeism. Review attendance and sick leave policy. Encourage staff to stay at home when sick, even without documentation from doctors. Use flexibility, when possible, to allow staff to stay home to care for sick family members. Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff.

Consider postponing non-critical gathering and events. Give special consideration to events that might put staff and families in close proximity (meetings, workshops, etc.)

Require sick staff to stay home. Establish procedures for staff that are sick at work.

Establish procedures to ensure staff that becomes sick at work are sent home as soon as possible. Identify an area where sick individuals can be isolated until they can leave work.

Display visual guidance i.e flyers, posters, brochures, etc. on preventative measures throughout the workplace. Keep staff informed.



When there is minimal to moderate community transmission: If local health officials report that there are multiple cases of COVID-19 in the community, businesses may need to implement additional strategies in response to preventing the spread in the workplace, but they should continue using the strategies implemented when there was no community transmission.

Coordinate with local health officials. Health officials can help a business determine which set of strategies might be most appropriate for their specific situation.

Implement multiple social distancing strategies. Management is encouraged to think creatively about all opportunities to increase physical space between employees.

Management should consider modifying workplaces where employees are likely to be in very close contact; increase the space between desk, and limiting nonessential visitors.

When there is substantial community transmission: Additional strategies, in addition to those implemented when there is no, minimal, or moderate transmission, must be considered when there is substantial transmission in the local community.

Continue to coordinate with local health officials.

Consider extended school dismissal. Implement extended school dismissal to slow transmission rate of COVID-19 in the community. Remember to implement strategies to ensure the continuity of education (e.g. distance learning) for students.

When a confirmed case has entered the workplace: When a confirmed case has entered the workplace, regardless of community transmission, short-term closure procedures will need to be implemented. If this happens, the Environmental Health Division recommends the following procedures:

Coordinate with local health officials. Once you learn of a COVID-19 case in the workplace, immediately notify local health officials.

Dismiss employees for 1 week. During this dismissal, intensify cleaning and disinfection of the surfaces around the office spaces.

Communicate with employees. Keep employees informed while maintaining confidentiality.



Clean and disinfect thoroughly. Close off areas used by the individual(s) with COVID-19 and wait as long as practical recommended 72 hours, before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. Clean and disinfect all areas of the workplace, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.

Make decision about extending dismissal. Management should seek guidance from local health officials to determine when employees should return to work and what additional steps are needed for the workplace.

Implement strategies to continue work. Implement remote working options that are feasible and appropriate.

*Adapted from Public Health England Guidance sheets*