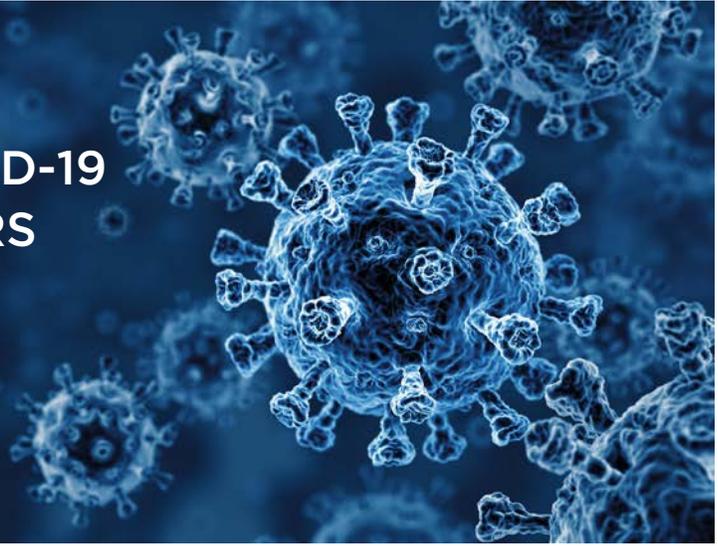




HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE DURING COVID-19 FOR TRANSIT EMPLOYERS



OVERVIEW

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

Employers have obligations to protect workers from hazards in the workplace as set out in the [Occupational Health and Safety Act \(OHSA\)](#) and its regulations as well as 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 daily, **the legislation and regulations used to govern Ontario's workplaces are not.**

Under Ontario law, employers have the duty to take every reasonable precaution to protect workers from hazards in the workplace. 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 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.



BEST PRACTICES TO KEEP YOUR WORKERS HEALTHY AND SAFE

The health and safety of workers is a top concern amid the global COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, all parties must place an increased focus on health and safety in order to protect the health and safety of workers and to keep transit operations running and safe.

All measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 should be done in compliance with requirements under the OHSA and its regulations and the applicable public health directives issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

In addition, below are a set of resources, tips and best practices to help employers prevent the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces.

PROTECTING YOURSELF AND CO-WORKERS

The virus typically spreads through coughing and sneezing, personal contact with an infected person, or touching an infected surface and then face – mouth, nose or eyes. Here are some [helpful tips](#) to help prevent the spread of germs:

- Maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more between persons, including co-workers.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with greater than 60% alcohol content).
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve.
- If you use a tissue, discard immediately and wash your hands afterward.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Minimize contact with people who are sick and ensure controls are in place for the protection of workers.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Avoid high-touch areas, where possible, or ensure you clean your hands after.
- Where possible, wear gloves when interacting with high-touch areas. Do not touch your face with gloved hands. Take care when removing gloves. Ensure you wash your hands after removing them.
- Wash your clothes as soon as you get home.
- If you have symptoms or you think you were exposed to COVID-19, notify your supervisor immediately, complete the [self-assessment](#) and follow the instructions you get.

REPORTING ILLNESS

The symptoms of COVID-19 are shared with many other illnesses including the cold and flu. At this time, it is recommended that anyone who begins to feel unwell (fever, new cough or difficulty breathing) should return home and [self-isolate](#) immediately.



People who are self-isolating should seek clinical assessment over the phone - either by calling their primary care provider's office or Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000. If you need additional assessment, your primary care provider or Telehealth Ontario will direct you to in-person care options.

Anyone who has travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days should self-isolate upon return from travel and should not go to work.

Workers who have travelled and are part of workplaces that are essential to daily living are able to return to work as long as they do not have symptoms. However, they should self-monitor for a period of 14 days and identify themselves to their employer so that a plan can be put into place to ensure the protection of those workplaces.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR, TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND WORKPLACE SAFETY & INSURANCE BOARD REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The OHSA requires an employer to provide a written notice within four days of being advised that a worker has an occupational illness (including COVID-19) from exposure in the workplace or if a claim has been made to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) by or on behalf of the worker with respect to an occupational illness, including an occupational infection, to the:

- Ministry of Labour;
- Joint health and safety committee (or health and safety representative); and
- Trade union, if any.

For more information:

- [Occupational Illness: Requirements to Report to the Ministry of Labour](#)

Any instances of occupationally-acquired illnesses shall be reported to [WSIB](#) within 72 hours of receiving notification of said illness.

ESTABLISH AN EFFECTIVE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AND INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL PLAN

Establish an infectious disease preparedness and response plan. The plan should follow recommendations in [guidance notes](#) from the [Ministry of Health](#) and directives from [Public Health Ontario](#). The plan should consider and address levels of risk associated with the workplace and job tasks within Transit operations such as Transit Operators, Transit Cleaning & Maintenance Works and any office staff. This includes how the transit organization will operate during the pandemic including sanitization of the workplace, equipment and resources, how employees report illness, how to ensure social distancing and how work will be scheduled.



To access the most recent Ministry of Health guidance notes please visit and scroll down to find your relevant sector information:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx

A list of activities and links to relevant resources to provide Transit employers support in this area are listed below:

- Based on work tasks being performed various measures should be put into place.
- Provide training to workers on COVID-19, how it spreads, risk of exposure, including those who may be at higher risk (i.e. have underlying health conditions) and procedures to follow including reporting process, proper hand washing practices and other routine infection control precautions.
- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home, ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance. Communicate these policies to employees.
- Place posters or other signage in high passenger traffic areas:
 - Asking sick passengers to stay home if they have symptoms (fever, cough or difficulty breathing) or to wear a non-medical mask if they have symptoms and taking transit is absolutely necessary
 - Reminding passengers that they should travel only when it is essential and to limit the frequency of such travel
 - Encouraging good respiratory hygiene, hand hygiene, and other healthy practices at the entrance to the workplace. Consider hand sanitizer stations at these locations where possible.
- To protect transit drivers, consider eliminating access close to the operator/driver by placing signs asking bus passengers to enter and exit the bus through rear entry doors. Consider exemptions such as transit passengers with impairment(s) who may need a ramp or other assistance requiring front door access. If so, establish procedures and controls to limit exposure to the operator.
- Institute measures to physically separate or impose physical distance of at least 2 metres between transit operators and passengers. This could be done by use of physical partitions, visual cues or signage to limit close contact to the transit operator.
- Take steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by encouraging transit workers to report to their supervisor any potential exposures or symptoms.
- Consider remote work for employees wherever and whenever possible.
- If workers are required to use general public washrooms, all surfaces should be assumed to be a source of contamination including the entry door, sink and tap. Workers should be instructed to always practice good hand hygiene, washing hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If using hand sanitizers, they must be alcohol based (greater than 70%) to be effective.
- For transit vehicle cleaning staff, establish routine cleaning and disinfection of all frequently touched surfaces by passengers and surfaces in the driver cockpit commonly touched by operator. Driver cockpit areas should be cleaned between shift changes and a full cleaning of the inside of the transit vehicle daily or more often if possible.



- If transit cleaners are required by their employer to use personal protective equipment (PPE), a PPE program should be in place to identify appropriate PPE and workers are to be trained on its use, care, limitations and fit testing must be completed if respirators are required.
- Based on risk of exposure, consider implementing a process for containing and laundering work clothing. Alternatively, advise workers to practice good laundry hygiene practices with their clothing as it could potentially be a source of contamination.
- Have a system for reporting probable and confirmed cases to the local [Public Health](#) unit. Communication about who will take responsibility, ensuring proper documentation, and implementing any advice given by the Public Health unit is critical for containing the spread of COVID-19.

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

While employers always have an obligation to maintain clean workplaces, that obligation is under sharper focus during the COVID-19 outbreak. Employers should focus on:

- Easy access to soap and water (ways to properly clean hands) or alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of washroom facilities.
- Sanitizing of commonly touched surfaces or areas (e.g. door handles, work surfaces, equipment)
- Posting signage on hygiene in English and majority languages in the workplace so everyone can understand how to do their part respecting hygiene practices.

SHARE INFORMATION

It is important that all parties in a workplace understand their roles and responsibilities. Employers need to ensure health and safety policies are updated and posted for all employees to see. Using industry resources, including this one and those produced by [Public Services Health and Safety Association](#) (PSHSA), the Ministry of Health, and Public Health Ontario will improve workplace understanding.

POST YOUR POLICIES

All employers need to post and communicate COVID-19 policies to employees. These policies should cover how the workplace will operate, including but not limited to:

- The sanitization of workplaces
- How workers and contractors report illnesses
- How to ensure physical distancing
- How work will be scheduled

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

As advised by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, public health officials, and outlined throughout government communications, physical distancing is required to control the spread of COVID-19. Physical distancing generally means maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more between persons.



By maintaining physical distancing, people are less likely to be exposed to a respiratory virus like COVID-19.

In order to ensure physical distancing in the workplace, Transit employers should consider:

- Eliminating access close to the operator/driver by placing signs asking bus passengers to enter and exit the bus through rear entry doors. Consider exemptions such as transit passengers with impairment(s) who may need a ramp or other assistance requiring front door access. If so, establish procedures and controls to limit exposure to the operator.
- Institute measures to physically separate or impose physical distance of at least 2 metres between bus transit operators and passengers. This could be done by use of physical partitions, visual cues or signage to limit close contact to the transit operator.
- Total number of people at the workplace and where they are assigned to work
- Consider implementing a system for virtual and/or telephone consultations when and where possible
- Non-essential face-to-face appointments should be postponed or converted to virtual appointments
- Have staff work from home whenever possible (i.e. administrative staff)
- Staggered start times, breaks and lunches
- Restricting visitors and limiting workplace entry to only essential personnel
- Suspending all group activities and gatherings
- Alter the workplace layout of the floor by moving furniture or using visual cues such as tape on the floor to enhance physical distancing.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (MLTSD) REQUIREMENTS

The MLTSD is focused on providing enhanced protections for workers. Announced on March 16th, these protections include [expanded protected leaves](#) and improving access to EI benefits.

TRACK AND MONITOR YOUR WORKFORCE

Due to the latency period of COVID-19, it is important to track where workers have worked, where possible. If a worker tests positive for COVID-19, the local public health unit will ask employers to provide information on where the worker worked as well as the contact information of any other worker who may have been exposed.

COVID-19 RESOURCES OF INTEREST TO TRANSIT EMPLOYERS

COVID-19 GOVERNMENT UPDATES

Stay updated with daily updates:



- <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus> (Ontario COVID-19 webpage)
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html> (Canada COVID-19 webpage)
- <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/> (Public Health Ontario)
- http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx (Ontario Ministry of Health – COVID-19 sector resources and guidance)

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/>

This above link provides updates on Ontario's response to COVID-19. This includes:

- status of cases in Ontario;
- current affected areas;
- symptoms and treatments;
- how to protect yourself and self-isolate; and
- updated Ontario news on the virus.

PUBLIC HEALTH ONTARIO

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus>

Public Health Ontario is providing up-to-date resources on COVID-19, including:

- links to evolving public health guidelines, position statements, and situational updates;
- a synopsis of key articles updating on the latest findings related to the virus;
- recommendations for use of personal protective equipment;
- testing information; and,
- other public resources.

OTHER COVID-19 RESOURCES

PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

This link outlines the actions being taken by the Government of Canada to limit spread of COVID-19, as well as what is happening in provinces and communities across the country. It also maintains a live update of the number of cases by province.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

WHO provides the latest guidance and information related to the global outbreak and spread beyond Canadian borders.



It also provides the most up-to-date information on:

- current research and development around the virus
- a COVID-19 situation “dashboard”
- emergency preparedness measures; and,
- live media updates on the spread of the virus.

OTHER RESOURCES

There are a host of additional resources available to help address the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak that are aimed at the Social and Community Services workplaces. Resources include:

- Public Health Unit websites:
<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx>
- Government of Canada, COVID-19 Taking Care of Your Mental Health:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/taking-care-mental-health.html>
Disability Considerations During the COVID-19 Outbreak: <https://www.who.int/who-documents-detail/disability-considerations-during-the-covid-19-outbreakv>

PUBLIC SERVICES HEALTH AND SAFETY ASSOCIATION RESOURCES

- Occupational Illness: Infectious Disease Reporting Form:
<https://www.pshsa.ca/resources/occupational-illness-infectious-disease-reporting-form>
- COVID-19 Resources: <https://www.pshsa.ca/covid-19>