

Company Name:

**CATEGORY: Human Resource**

**POLICY NO.:**

**SUBJECT: Occupational Health and Safety  
COVID-19 – Prevention and Response Policy**

**PAGES:**

---

**APPROVED BY:**

**DATE:**

is committed to the health and safety of the workers and compliance with the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and other relevant legislation such as

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is for to develop a prevention and response policy for COVID-19 as part of an emergency preparedness and response plan at the workplace. The aim is to clearly identify requirements and procedures required to control the spread of infection at the workplace while also maintaining business. The policy is based on information available at the time of its development, and is subject to change based on further information provided by government, health authorities, and the latest evidence.

### DEFINITIONS

#### ***Emergency Preparedness Plan***

Emergency preparedness is a cyclic approach that includes prevention activities, preparing a plan for emergencies, testing out the plan or the response, and establishing procedures and activities to bring the organization back to a routine or acceptable level of operation following an emergency.

#### ***Pandemic***

An epidemic of disease that has spread across a large region, for example across multiple countries or international borders, and affecting a large number of people.

#### ***Infection Prevention and Control***

A discipline concerned with preventing infections and its management. Practices of infection prevention and control address factors related to the spread of infections and preventive measures such as hand washing, cleaning, disinfecting, sterilizing, and vaccinating. Other aspects include surveillance, monitoring, investigation and management.

## **COVID-19**

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. The virus is causing an outbreak of respiratory (lung) disease. The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020.

### **COVID-19 Symptoms**

Many symptoms of COVID-19 resemble cold and flu symptoms. Common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, new or worsening cough, and shortness of breath. Given the ongoing emergence of new information, the Ministry of Health's [reference document for symptoms](#) will be used for an updated list of commonly associated symptoms.

### **Confirmed vs Probable Cases**

Case definitions are for surveillance purposes of infectious disease. A probable case is generally one that meets a set of criteria related to a particular disease of interest. A confirmed case is generally one that meets a set of criteria related to a particular disease of interest and is validated with laboratory confirmation of that disease. For the most current case definition, refer to the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 [case definition](#).

### **Active Screening vs Passive Screening**

Screening is a process for surveilling and identifying probable cases to help guide response actions. Active screening involves tests, examinations, and interviewing. Passive screening involves posting signage and messaging. For further detail, the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 [patient screening guidance](#) document will be referenced.

## **GENERAL ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Employer**

Employers must take every reasonable precaution necessary to protect the health and safety of workers in the circumstance. Duties of the employer are stated in Section 25 of the Ontario Health and Safety Act (OHSA). What is appropriate and reasonable depends on the nature of the organization and the workforce, including:

- Implementing a system for screening and notifying the appropriate workplace parties and public health authorities in case of a positive diagnosis;
- Providing education and training to all workplace parties regarding specific safety protocols and measures;
- Providing the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and training;
- Administering policies and responding to crisis in a non-discriminatory manner;
- Implementing controls to allow for appropriate physical distancing requirements;
- Encouraging good hygiene, like hand washing and enhancing environmental cleaning and disinfection;
- Having a business continuity plan.

### **Supervisor**

Supervisors will be held accountable for the health and safety of workers under their

supervision. Duties of the supervisor are stated in Section 27 of the OHSA. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that all infection prevention and control protocols are being followed and workers are complying with and following established safe work procedures. Some responsibilities include:

- Ensuring workers are adhering to measures and procedures as required;
- Ensuring workers use equipment and protective devices and clothing as required;
- Advise a worker of any existing or potential risks of exposure.

**Worker**

Every worker will protect his or her own health and safety by working in compliance with the law and with safe work practices and procedures established by  
Duties of the worker are stated in Section 28 of the OHSA. Some responsibilities include:

- Familiarizing themselves with the symptoms of COVID-19 and self-monitoring;
- Informing their supervisor and Occupational Health if they develop symptoms and do not go to work;
- Following safe working procedures and properly using appropriate PPE;
- Practicing good hygiene protocols including frequent hand washing, using appropriate respiratory etiquette, not touching the face with unwashed hands and avoiding close contact with people who are sick.

**Joint Health and Safety Committee**

The JHSC will run as per the requirements stated in Section 9 of the OHSA. Effort will be made to ensure that the JHSC will work in conjunction with all appropriate workplace parties to carry out their duties including conducting workplace inspections and investigations, making recommendations for the improvement of the health and safety of workers, and being consulted on regarding implementation of programs and procedures.

**OCCUPATIONAL ILLNESS REPORTING PROCEDURES**

Workers experiencing symptoms while at work should immediately inform their manager/supervisor and be sent home and, advised to self-isolate and call their primary care provider or Telehealth for further guidance. The Occupational Health Department should be notified as soon as possible. The employer has a duty to report confirmed cases to:

- the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development in writing within four days;
- JHSC/Health and Safety Representative;
- Trade Union, if applicable.

will also report occupationally-acquired infections to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) within 72 hours of receiving notice of the illness. The employer should consult with the Occupational Health Department and local public health for when a worker is safe to return to work. Clear instructions should be provided to all workplace parties about the reporting procedure.

## INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL PROCEDURES

An effective infection prevention and control program should include the following to reduce workplace exposures to COVID-19 (infectious agent), such as:

- Screening procedures;
- Training and communication;
- Control measures (including environmental and source control);
- Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Best practice documents published by [Public Health Ontario](#) as well as guidelines and directives from the [Ministry of Health](#) will be referenced. [Sector specific job guidelines](#) regarding procedures for occupational health and safety will be used for further guidance. Continuous monitoring of the effectiveness of the controls is necessary to ensure the ongoing protection of workers health and safety.

## BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND RECOVERY

will establish business continuity plans during the pandemic and make plans for resuming business following the pandemic. Instruction and delineation of roles and responsibilities must be clear. A system for communicating these plans must be made to inform all appropriate workplace parties. Employers must work in accordance with governing bodies and public health authorities regarding business operations during and following a pandemic. The need for preparedness and coordination is fundamental. A phased-in and methodical approach is required for a safe return to the workplace.

## EVALUATION

will review this policy in consultation with the JHSC/HSR as needed and required. Reviewing this policy at least annually is considered best practice.

## RESOURCES

- [\*Ontario Incident Management System\*](#)
- [\*Government of Ontario\*](#)
- [\*Public Health Ontario\*](#)
- [\*Ministry of Health\*](#)
- [\*Health Canada\*](#)
- [\*PSHSA Occupational Illness: Infectious Disease Reporting Form\*](#)

Assessment of the policy can also be performed using best practices, relevant Standards, Directives, Regulations and the relevant Acts such as:

- *Canadian Standards Association - CSA Z731-03 (R2014) Emergency Preparedness and Response*
- *Canadian Standards Association - CSA Z1600-14 Emergency and Continuity Management Program*

It is in the best interest of all parties to consider infection prevention and control in every activity. Commitment to health and safety must form an integral part of this organization, from Executive Director to the workers.

**Executive Director Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Print Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\*Note: This sample policy should be used as a general reference. Workplaces may need to alter the policy to best suit the specific needs and requirements of their workplace and practices.