



HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE DURING COVID-19 FOR POLICE SERVICE WORKERS

OVERVIEW

During the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, we all need to do our part to keep workers, customers and the public safe and healthy so we can stop the spread and prepare to reopen the province, when we are ready.

Below is a set of resources, tips and best practices to help employers and employees prevent the spread of COVID-19 and work together to reopen the province.

Employers and workers in Ontario have certain duties and rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations. Employers should also review and follow any applicable directives and guidance coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Ministry of Health.

LEARN MORE ABOUT:

- [workers' rights](#)
- [employers' responsibilities](#)

PROTECTING YOURSELF AND CO-WORKERS

Coronaviruses are spread primarily from person-to-person through close contact, including at work. Here are some [helpful tips](#) to help prevent the spread of germs:

- 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.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are sick.



- Avoid high-touch areas, where possible, or ensure you clean your hands after.
- Wash your hands and clothes as soon as you get home.
- If you are ill notify your supervisor immediately, complete the [self-assessment](#) and follow the instructions you receive.

BEST PRACTICES TO STAY HEALTHY AND SAFE

RECOGNIZE AND ASSESS

According to Health Canada, symptoms can appear in as little as a few days or as long as 14 days after being exposed to someone with the disease. [COVID-19](#) can cause a range of symptoms including fever, cough, sore throat and shortness of breath.

For some people, the symptoms are like having a cold; for others they are quite severe or even life-threatening. It is important to check with your healthcare provider, Telehealth, or local Public Health Unit and follow instructions about [staying home](#) Or away from public spaces to prevent the spread of the virus. The virus typically spreads through coughing and sneezing, personal contact with an infected person, or touching an infected surface and then the face - mouth, nose, or eyes.

[Asymptomatic workers](#) who have travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days and/or have had unprotected exposure to a person with COVID-19 and have been identified as critical to continued [operations](#), may go to work but need to self-isolate when they are not at work.

Close physical contact with the public during investigations, arresting activities or other routine activities are a source of potential exposure. Exposures may also occur when touching possibly contaminated personal items (such as mobile devices, documents, personal clothing, etc.) when bringing individuals into police custody or during investigations.

CONTROL

1. Follow the requirements set out in the Occupational Health and Safety Act as well as policies and procedures, including infectious disease preparedness and response plans established by your organization.

All workplace parties have roles and responsibilities to protect workers from hazards in the workplace as set out in the [Occupational Health and Safety Act \(OHSA\)](#) and its regulations, and the directives coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Workers should raise any concerns to their

- Supervisor
- Joint Health and safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative
- Union if applicable



Under [Section 28\(1\)](#) of the OHSA, workers have a duty to:

- Comply with the provisions of the Act and regulations
- Use or wear the equipment, protective devices or clothing that the worker's employer requires to be used to worn
- Report to his or her employer or supervisor the absence of or defect in any equipment or protective device of which the worker is aware and
- Report to his or her employer or supervisor any contravention of the Act or Regulations or the existence of any hazard of which he or she knows

Under Ontario law, workers have the [right to refuse unsafe work](#). Note that members of Police Services have a limited right to refuse work (OHSA s43(1)(2)). If a circumstance described in the grounds for refusing work (OHSA s43(3)) are inherent in the work, or a normal condition of employment, and for which training and equipment have been provided, the worker may not refuse.

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.

In addition to your organizations Infection Prevention and Control Program, follow the infectious disease preparedness and response plans established by the organization. The plan considers and addresses levels of risk associated with the workplace and job tasks. This includes how the site will [operate](#) during the pandemic including but not limited to health and safety considerations such as sanitization of sites, how employees [report illnesses](#), how to ensure physical distancing, and how work will be scheduled.

2. **Maintain physical distancing.** [Physical distancing](#) generally means maintaining a distance of at least 2 meters (6 feet) or more between persons. By maintaining physical distancing you are less likely to be exposed to a respiratory virus. Physical distancing may not be possible when performing certain tasks and PPE may be required.
3. **Follow specific guidance for health and safety and infection prevention and control practices.**
 - Refer to [Public Health Ontario Evidence Brief for First Responders](#) for COVID-19 Guidance as well as your organizational policies. General resources and guidelines are available from the Ontario [Ministry of Health](#) and [Public Health Ontario](#).
 - [Wash hands](#) frequently with soap and water
 - Proper [donning](#) and [doffing](#) of PPE and hand hygiene should be performed.
4. **Return to Work after travel or after illness.** Stay home if you are feeling ill or meet the requirement for [self-isolation](#) due to travel or exposure. If you detect symptoms, you should immediately distance yourself from others and go home. If possible, avoid using public transit. Ensure you notify your supervisor so that they are aware of the situation and can also notify others who may have been exposed.

Where employees have travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days and are seeking to return to work, it is important to balance the protection of the health system and the continued operation of these settings. Workers who have [travelled outside of Canada](#) within the last 14 days should self-



isolate for a period of 14 days starting from their arrival in Ontario. Workers should not attend work if they are sick.

If returning to work after illness, workers should consult their [local public health unit](#) and their manager/occupational health and safety department to plan their safe return to work.

5. Demonstrate the following precautionary measures while working:

- If physical distance and separation cannot be maintained, workers should have personal protective equipment (PPE) consisting of surgical/procedure mask and eye protection (goggles or face shield). Workers must use personal protective equipment (PPE) as required by their employer. Workers should be trained/employers must train workers on the proper use, care and limitations of any required PPE.
- If PPE is in the way of the required equipment, ensure timely disinfection of all equipment or discuss with your supervisor the possibility of using a different type of PPE.
- Conduct [active screening](#) before transporting individuals and where appropriate at the beginning of an interaction when an officer is required to be closer than 2 metres (6 feet).
- Practice physical distancing during parade/briefing by limiting group size or using a larger room if possible. Maintain 2m (6 feet) between individuals.
- Limit non-essential face-to-face interactions during investigations or other activities.
- Disinfect personal issue equipment (e.g. handcuffs) and shared equipment (e.g. radio, keyboard, phone, shared workstation) as needed and regularly. Disinfect your workspace (desk or cruiser) at the start and end of your shift, and as often as necessary throughout.
- Avoid touching personal items of individuals without appropriate PPE such as gloves. Consider the gloves and anything touched with the gloves to be contaminated.
- Do not report to work if you are exhibiting any of the symptoms or are under self-isolation or quarantine.
- Avoid physical contact with people who have flu like symptoms.
- To the extent possible, limit the amount of face-to-face contact during planned work activities, investigations, search and arrest activities.
- Bag and clean uniforms at the end of each shift. Do not store your street clothes and uniform in the same space unless both are clean.
- Use technology for communication (text messaging and mobile phones) rather than in-person conversations
- Limit any casual interactions that normally occur at work
- Work with your manager to establish flexible work hours or alternative hours where possible

Additionally, the COVID-19 outbreak is a unique and unprecedented scenario for many workers. Ensure you are taking care of both your mental health and psychological well-being, as well as your physical health, during the time. Find out [helpful tips and coping strategies](#).

6. Practice stringent hand hygiene. Public Health Ontario recommends following basic hygiene practices:

- [Wash hands](#) frequently and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds



- If using [hand sanitizers](#), they must be alcohol-based (with greater than 60% alcohol) to be effective
- Avoid touching your face
- Sneeze or cough into your sleeve or a tissue and discard it
- Use a clean tissue or your knuckle/elbow to touch light switches, doors, buttons, etc.

ASK AND EVALUATE:

- Were the proper hygiene facilities (on scene and at the detachment) available to you?
- Were you able to practice physical distancing?
- Did you have the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) you require to protect you while you do your job?
- Have you been provided training on the proper use of PPE?
- Do you know what to do if you have symptoms?
- Are you aware of emergency risks in your region and how to be prepared as the situation evolves?
- Do you know who your [Designated Officer](#) is and do you have access to a Designated Officer 24/7?

For Ontario residents, anyone who suspects that they have contracted COVID-19 should call 811 (NOT 911) instead of going to the hospital or a family doctor. Direct toll-free phone numbers for Ontario residents are: 1-866-797-0000 or TTY: 1-866-797-0007

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL:

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/#q0>

RESOURCES

Stay updated with daily government updates:

- [Government of Ontario](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)

ONTARIO GOVERNMENT AND AGENCY-ISSUED RESOURCES ABOUT COVID-19

The [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) is providing consistent updates on the provincial government's response to the outbreak, including:

- status of cases in Ontario
- current affected areas
- symptoms and treatments



- how to protect yourself and self-isolate
- updated Ontario news on the virus

[Public Health Ontario](#) is providing up-to-date resources on COVID-19, including:

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

OTHER COVID-19 RESOURCES

[Health Canada](#) outlines the actions being taken by the Government of Canada to limit spread of the virus, 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.

The [World Health Organization](#) is updating 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
- live media updates on the spread of the virus

PUBLIC SERVICES HEALTH AND SAFETY ASSOCIATION

Access resources and information about COVID-19 at <https://www.pshsa.ca/covid-19>

This resource does not replace the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHS Act) and its regulations, and should not be used as or considered legal advice. Health and safety inspectors apply the law based on the facts in the workplace.