

March 21, 2020

COVID-19 –Managing a Pandemic on site

Recommended process for Employers to follow

WorkSafeBC expects every employer to conduct a workplace specific risk assessment related to the COVID-19 situation. Here are steps to follow:

1. Identify a workplace specific pandemic coordinator or team. Understand that during this time the teams regular duties may need assistance by other employees. It is best to have more than one individual managing this in case someone falls ill.
2. Define the teams roles and responsibilities for preparedness and response planning. What measures need to be planned for that are different than the current emergency response plan or exposure control plan?
 - Identify who they need to work with i.e. the Joint Health and Safety Committee, Superintendents, regulatory bodies etc. Inform the worksite (management, supervisors, workers, JHSC) who the team members are and explain their role in a bulletin / email.
3. Identify essential employees and essential / critical tasks. Employers should seriously consider whether they can keep their workers out of the workplace.

If practicable, employers should:

- Curtail non-essential work at the workplace.
- Consider having workers work remotely (e.g., work at home). Learn more about [health and safety responsibilities when working from home](#).

Employers should ensure that the following workers do not come to work:

- Workers who are ill, whether or not the illness has been confirmed as COVID-19.
- Workers who have travelled internationally. In these cases, they must remain away from the workplace for at least 14 days.
- Workers who have an ill person in their home.
- Workers who share a residence with a person who has been exposed to COVID-19.
- Workers who have been exposed to anyone confirmed to have COVID-19, or to anyone with possible symptoms of COVID-19, should call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 for an assessment and to determine any necessary next steps.

4. Ensure that social distancing (2 meter distance between people) can be maintained at all times. Any work that does not meet this criteria must be postponed. If practicable, reconfigure the workplace to maintain appropriate distance between workers. Ensure that safe work procedures are compatible with social distancing.

5. Plan for impact on financials. Control scheduling and overlap / stagger shifts where possible to maintain the social distancing measures required. Each shift should have an assigned staff member to monitor disinfecting protocols.

6. Identify measures to control exposures that follow recommendations of the BC CDC and Public Health Ministries. Determine all high risk areas (common spaces, etc.) and prioritize locations for cleaning and additional monitoring for social distancing.

7. Post Educational posters and up to date bulletins can be found on their websites:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html>

Follow all these recommendations in order to reduce or eliminate the spread of the virus. Keep directions to employees simple, ensure workers are following the plan and have all available information. This is what supervisors are expected to do in their current roles already.

8. Plan for large absences (10% to 50%) - Forecast and plan for absences during this situation due to factors including personal illness, family illness, community containment measures, school and infrastructure closures, self isolation due to immuno-compromised family members, closure of public transportation.

9. Train and prepare ancillary workforce when possible. Having employees cross-trained is vital. Identify who could perform work if regular staff is unavailable or needs time away due to illness or overwork i.e. contractors, employees in other positions etc.

This is the best way to ensure due diligence when a pandemic occurs. WorkSafeBC would support this type of plan / response as it meets the requirements of WCA Part 3 Sec 115.