

Guidance on handling and receiving packages (all persons at work or at home) during COVID-19

Overview

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

Employers and constructors have obligations 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
- 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 rapidly, the legislation and regulations used to govern Ontario's workplaces are not.

Under Ontario law, employers have the duty to keep workers and work sites safe and free of hazards. 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 or constructor 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.

Recognize hazards and assess risks

How does the coronavirus spread? The virus typically spreads through coughing and sneezing, personal contact with an infected person, or touching an infected surface and then the mouth, nose, or eyes.

Potential exposures to coronavirus while handling and receiving packages from couriers include:

- Receiving a physical package and being in close contact with the delivery person.
- Handling delivered packages and the cardboard or plastic packaging without personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Exchanging paperwork during delivery, as well as clipboards and pens.
- Sharing the scanning equipment keypad and stylus pen.

Controls

1. **Maintain physical distancing.** Physical distancing means maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more between persons. By practicing physical distancing, you are less likely to be exposed to a respiratory virus.
2. **Request a contactless delivery.** Contactless deliveries involve the delivery driver leaving the package on your doorstep.

- When placing the delivery, select the contactless delivery option (if available) or include the request in the notes section of your order. This will indicate/request that no signing or proof of receipt is required.
 - Request the driver place the package down rather than handing the item directly to you to maintain physical distancing.
3. **Avoid the use of shared materials.** Canada Post and many other delivery services have implemented policies where they no longer request signatures. However, there may be instances where proof of receipt (signature) is still needed. In these cases:
 - Use your own pen when signing for the delivery and avoid the use of shared pens.
 - If you are required to use a stylus or your finger to sign for receipt of the delivery, wipe down the keypad before use.
 - Wash your hands immediately after receipt of the package.
 4. **Open the package outside.** Studies have shown that the COVID-19 virus can live on cardboard, however, it does disintegrate quickly. To limit any potential contamination from the package:
 - Open the package outside of the delivery location.
 - Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves when handling or opening the package.
 - Upon opening the delivery immediately dispose of the packaging and the used gloves.
 - Wash your hands immediately after cleaning and sanitizing the potentially exposed areas.
 5. **Clean and sanitize exposed areas.** If the package was brought into your home or place of employment:
 - Clean and sanitize any areas the package came into contact with such as table tops, counters, or floor area (where it was placed), etc.
 - Wear personal protective equipment such as gloves when cleaning and dispose of gloves afterward.
 - Wash your hands immediately after cleaning and sanitizing the potentially exposed areas.
 6. **Practise Good Hygiene.** Health Canada recommends following basic hygiene practices:
 - Wash your hands frequently 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.
 - Sneeze or cough into a tissue and discard it or your elbow or sleeve.

Evaluate

Follow-up and evaluation are essential to ensure the effectiveness of controls and solutions implemented. Review your process and identify any opportunities for improvement.

Determine the following:

- Has the hazard been eliminated or the risk minimized appropriately?
- Is there a better way to control the risk?
- Is the control being used consistently and as planned (monitor behavior and practices)?
- Can improvements be made to your control procedures and changes implemented as required?

Continuously engage your workers, communicate recommendations and adjustments with supervisors. Also, continuously monitor the necessary tools, supplies, and equipment needed to meet your control measures, ensure sufficient supplies are readily available, adequate and accessible.

Stay home if you are feeling ill. 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.

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. Visit the Ontario Ministry of Health’s website and taking their [self-assessment](#).

Resources

Stay updated with daily government updates on COVID-19:

[Government of Ontario](#)

[Government of Canada](#)

[Public Health Ontario](#)