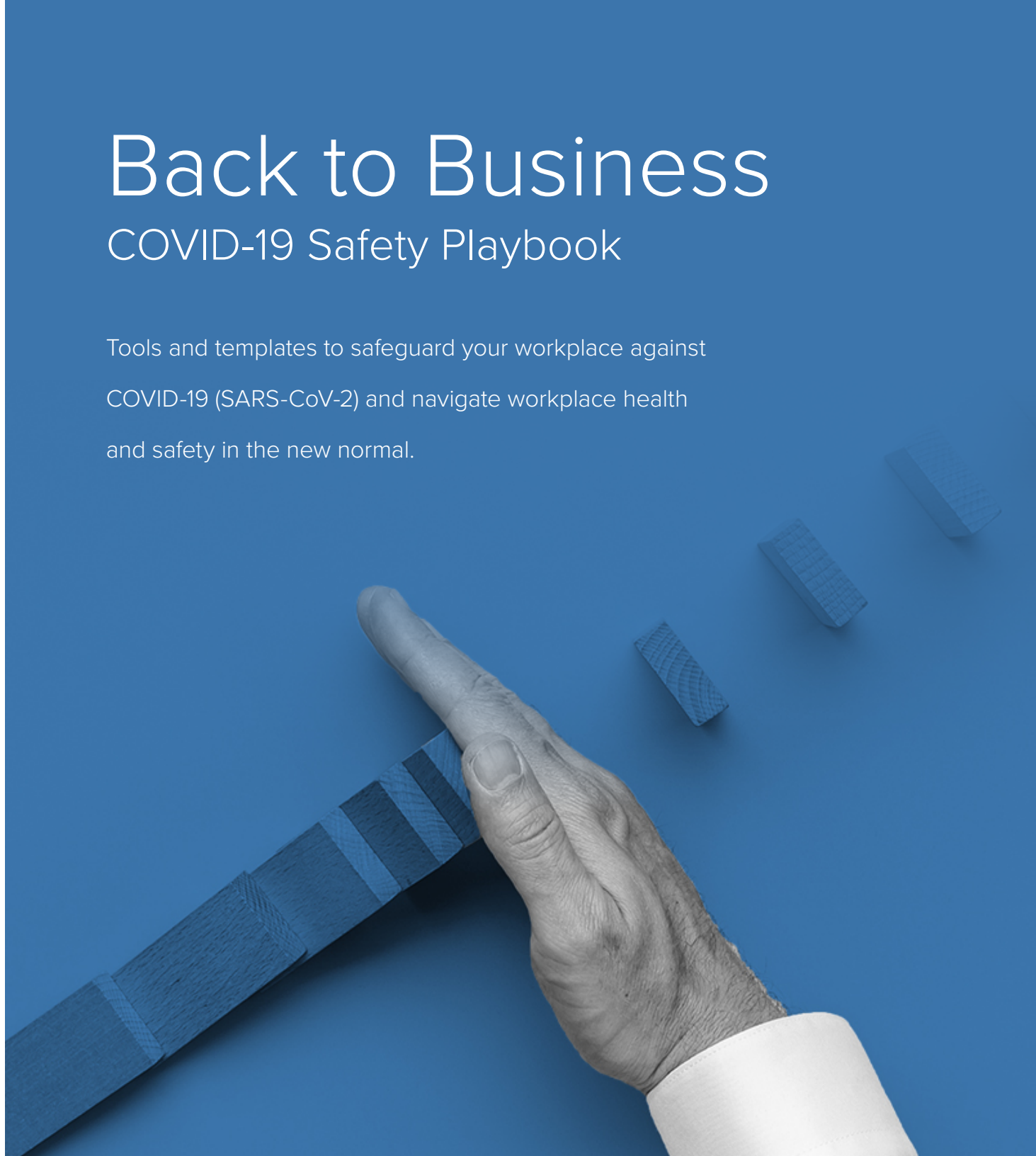# Back to Business

COVID-19 Safety Playbook

Tools and templates to safeguard your workplace against COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) and navigate workplace health and safety in the new normal.

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The new normal

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we work. As we learn to navigate this new normal, it is essential to recognize the critical importance of health and safety in the workplace.

The impact of the pandemic on businesses, communities, and the economy continues to be felt around the world, even as regions are reopening. While the world waits for a vaccine and treatment, the possibility of extended outbreaks and a second wave of the virus remains.

Prepare your business now to weather the ongoing impacts of the pandemic with an effective COVID-19 safety plan and business continuity strategy.
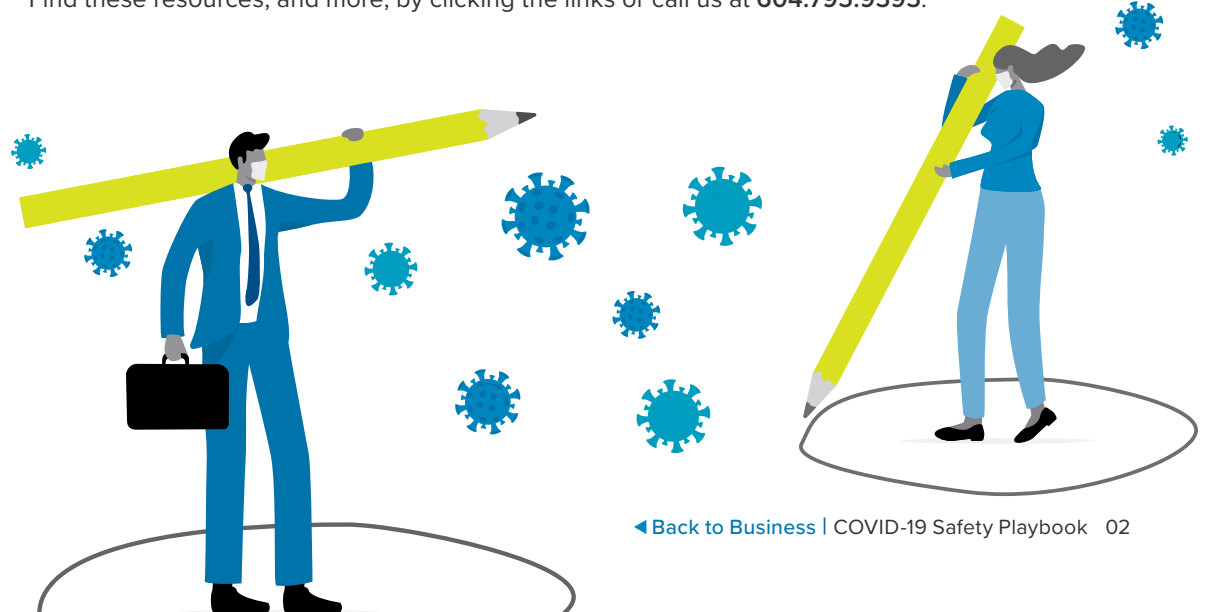
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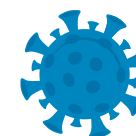
Roles and responsibilities

Employers, managers, supervisors, and employees all have a role to play in reducing the risks associated with COVID-19 in the workplace. The COVID-19 pandemic has required us to change the way we act, think, and behave with each other – both in and out of the workplace.

Employers have a responsibility to protect the health and safety of their workers per the occupational health and safety regulations.

As directed by WorkSafeBC and the BC Public Health Office, every employer is required to develop and post a COVID-19 safety plan that assesses the risk of exposure in their workplace and outlines actions to keep workers safe. The Manufacturing Safety Alliance of BC has created free resources to help with this task, including a safety plan template and related tools and resources available to assist companies in creating their own customized safety plan.

Find these resources, and more, by clicking the links or call us at **604.795.9595**.

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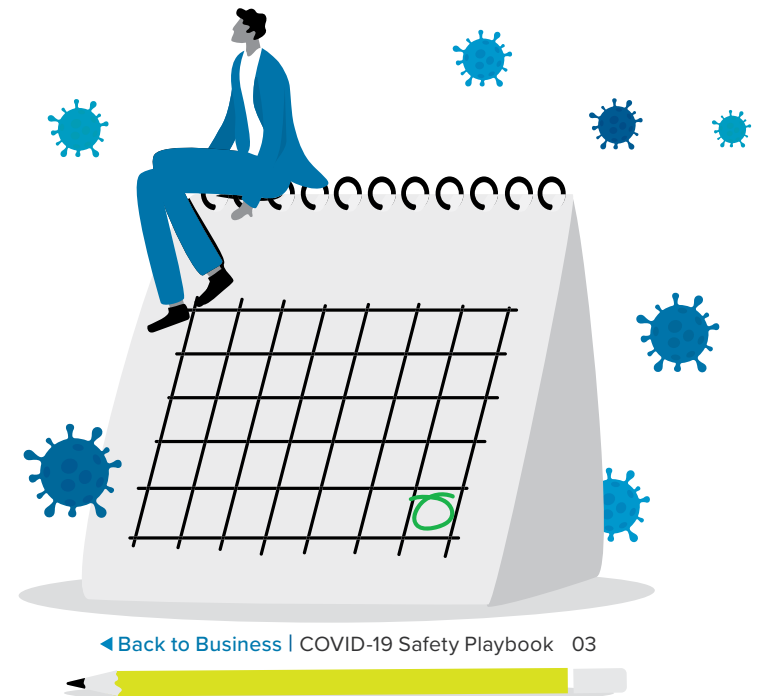
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Is it safe to reopen?

The decision to reopen your workplace is complex. First, determine whether you can safely re-open based on BC's recommendations and guidelines for your specific sector. Information for returning to safe operations for individual sectors under BC's restart plan is available on the WorkSafeBC website. A workplace must also be able to legally reopen based on BC's Restart Plan.

To ensure a safe workplace for employees, customers, and visitors, you must conduct a risk assessment for COVID-19 transmission at your location(s). Work with your Joint Health and Safety Committee to identify areas, activities, or conditions that could contribute to the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and develop controls that are practical for your facility.

Want more information about Employer Responsibility? Visit our FAQ page

Key focus areas for business — in the new normal

The most important factor in preventing an outbreak is to keep the illness out of the workplace.

Dr. Bonnie Henry often references the Hierarchy of Controls —which continues to be a critical tool in choosing the most effective strategies to control risk. Beyond the risk of an employee getting sick, employers also need to sharpen their skills in communicating with staff and managing anxiety and change.

In the following pages, we share tools, resources and templates to help.

* **While viewing this document on your computer, click on the resources in the blue bar on the left to view or download.**

The hierarchy of controls

At the top of the effectiveness in the hierarchy of controls is elimination: steps to entirely eliminate contact and exposure in the workplace. Remote work and virtual meetings are examples of effective elimination controls.

These measures may be supported by engineering changes such as acrylic barriers, and administrative policies, such as staggered shifts to support physical distancing.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is the last line of defense.

MORE

EFFECTIVENESS

LESS

elimination

engineering controls

administrative controls

PPE

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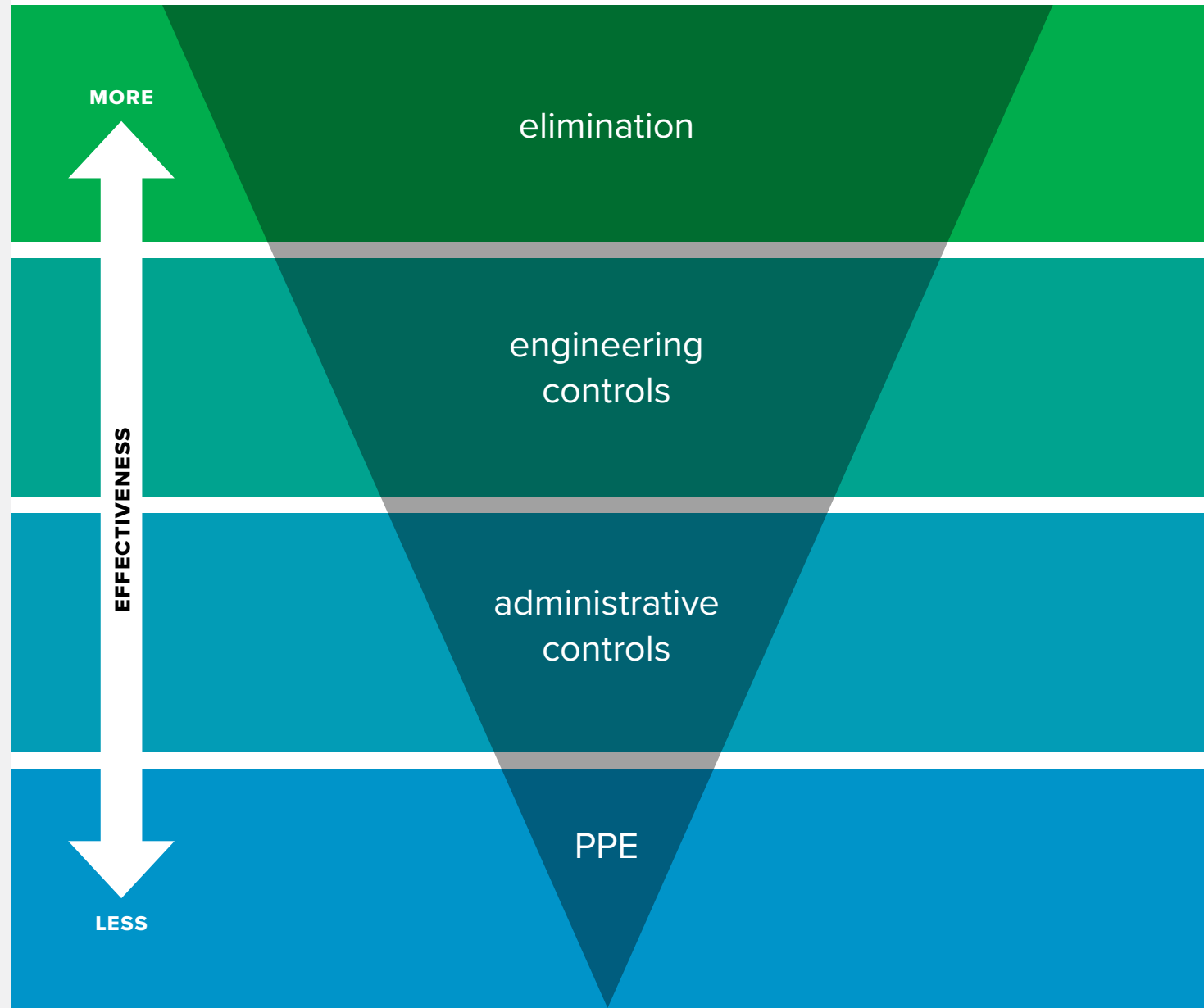
Exposure control measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace

Actively screen all visitors and contractors entering your workplace for symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath, and congestion). Educate your workers to not report for work if they are experiencing any symptoms and reinforce that no worker should be at work if they are ill.

If an employee begins to experience symptoms at work, they should report to first aid, and then follow instructions described in the company first aid protocol.

Workers experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 at home should complete the online self-assessment or call HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1.

A worker not attending work due to isolation requirements must notify their employer.

If an employee has tested positive for COVID-19, your local health authority will contact you to discuss next steps.

Plan for the scenarios you may experience in your workplace

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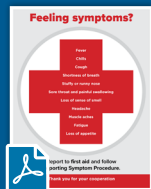| Example	Action
Worker has traveled outside of Canada but is NOT experiencing symptoms of COVID-19	The returning employee must: • Comply with the Quarantine Act and submit a BC self-isolation plan • Follow company policy regarding isolation after travel • Notify their supervisor of their return and keep in regular contact • If no symptoms appear during the self-isolation period, arrangements to return to work may begin
Worker is living with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19	The worker will be asked to self-isolate at home by their local health authority. The employee will notify employer and maintain contact until they can complete isolation and testing protocols and ensure they are fit to return to work.
Worker has tested positive for COVID-19	If a worker has COVID-19, the health authority will investigate, trace contacts and guide the employer through the essential steps to minimize the risk of exposure and spread of the virus to others at the worksite. • Isolate the worker • Contain the exposure • Disinfect common tools and surfaces that were exposed to the infected worker • Communicate clearly with employees that may have had contact with the employee, and report as required • Enhance the measures you already have in place to prevent the spread of infection If additional measures need to be taken in your workplace, public health will inform you.
Worker tested positive for COVID-19 but has been cleared by health authorities to return to work	Two negative tests are required before a worker can be considered recovered. COVID-19 may cause other complications that may make it unsafe for the employee's own health to return to work, even after they are cleared. The health authority and the worker's health care provider may provide additional protocols for a safe return to work.

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CUSTOMIZE A TEMPLATE

Policy for returning travelers

Reporting symptoms in the workplace

CUSTOMIZE AND PRINT SIGNS

Feeling symptoms?

Fever
Chills
Cough
Shortness of breath
Stuffy or runny nose
Sore throat and painful swallowing
Loss of sense of smell
Headache
Muscle aches
Fatigue
Loss of appetite

...report to first aid and follow
...porting Symptom Procedure.

...Thank you for your cooperation

Symptoms

Download the complete set (7) of Safety Signs

WATCH A VIDEO

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Your Exposure Control Plan

What's your plan to control exposure to a biological
contaminant or infectious disease such as COVID-19?

Exposure Control Plan Webinar

GET ANSWERS

**Exposure Control**

Employees who have tested positive

Screening health checks

Consider doing daily health check screenings with employees. Ensure sufficient physical distancing between the screener and the employee. To prevent stigma, conduct employee health checks in a way that provides privacy and keep employee health information confidential.

Sick leave policies and workplace flexibility

To reduce the potential spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, develop and communicate effective sick leave policies and support workplace flexibility.

- Encourage all employees to stay home when they are feeling unwell

- Review your sick leave policies to ensure they are flexible and support public health guidance around sick time

- Communicate your screening requirements with partners, contractors, and suppliers and emphasize the importance of staying away from your workplace when ill

- Employees may need to stay home to care for sick family members OR may be required to self-isolate after returning from travel or exposure to COVID-19

- Recognize that employees may have anxiety related to sick time and staying home when feeling ill

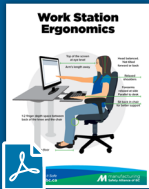- Communicate often and provide adequate training to support workers

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CUSTOMIZE A TEMPLATE

Working alone procedures
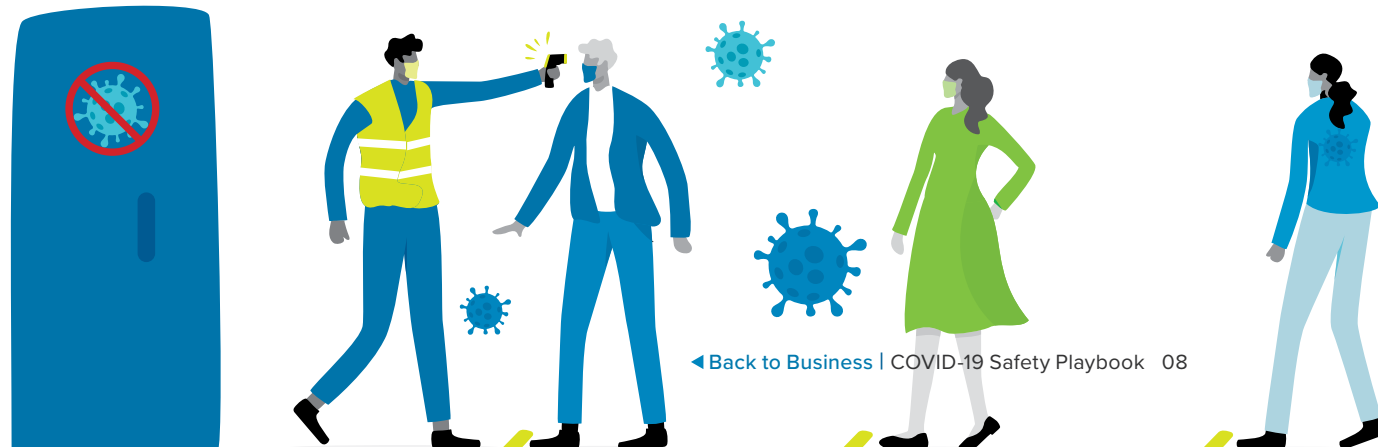
PRINT POSTERS

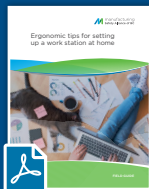**Work Station Ergonomics**

Ergonomic Wellness Breaks

Download the Office Ergonomics Bundle

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES

Ergonomic Self-Assessment

Working from Home Field Guide

Working from home
— flexible options can reduce risk

Working from home can be an effective way for employers to support and maintain workplace safety now, and in the future, as we adapt to the new normal. While working from home may not be practical in every situation, where appropriate, it can be an effective way to eliminate physical contact between employees.

Set up your remote workplace for successful at-home work

Many teams can be productive when working remotely, but it is important to provide a structure that enables them to perform at their best. Some key things to consider:

- Provide training on remote work tools and processes

- Set expectations and provide regular feedback

- Work with your IT support team to provide video conferencing and collaboration software that works effectively for everyone on the team

- Schedule one-on-one video meetings with team members to regularly check in

- Create virtual social opportunities for workers to connect

- Ensure workers have a suitable home workspace that supports their productivity – including an ergonomically safe workstation

Working from home may be a new experience for many, and each employee's situation will be unique. Some workers will be sharing their office space with a spouse or children. Others may be struggling with social isolation. Connect with employees and support them to connect with each other.

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DOWNLOAD RESOURCES

Hierarchy of Controls: Preventing the Spread of COVID-19

CUSTOMIZE AND PRINT SIGNS

COVID-19 Protocols

Physical Distancing

Download the complete set (7) of Safety Signs

**Occupancy Limits**

No Visitors

GET ANSWERS

Physical Distancing

Engineering and administrative controls — physical distancing and beyond

Physical distancing is essential to control the spread of COVID-19. Where employees cannot maintain two metres of distance from each other, physical barriers provide the best protection.

- Install acrylic barriers between work stations
- Improve ventilation and use high-efficiency air filters
- Add floor markers, barriers, and arrows to manage the flow of traffic and visually mark out the 2-metre distance between workers
- Stagger start times, shifts and breaks
- Restrict occupancy numbers in areas where people regularly congregate (lunch and break rooms, locker rooms, etc.)
- Reduce volume of traffic in common areas by posting traffic patterns and maximum occupancy numbers
- Limit the number of people working in one space at a time, where practical
- Hold meetings outside or via video or teleconferencing options
- Limit visitors to your business when possible and minimize visitor contact with employees
- Conduct daily health checks

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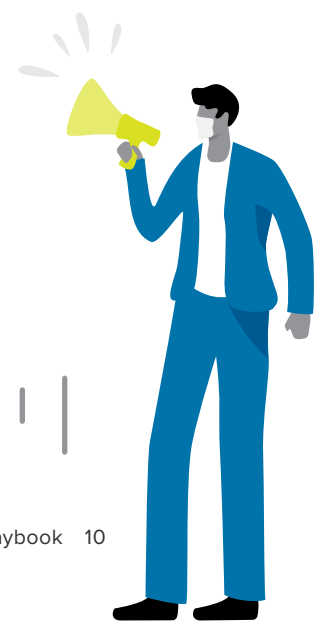
CUSTOMIZE THIS TEMPLATE

Cleaning
Protocol
for
Common
Areas

PRINT POSTERS AND SIGNS

Hand Washing Station Poster

ABCs of Hand Washing

**Sanitizing Station Poster**

GET ANSWERS

Cleaning and
Sanitizing

Workplace cleaning and sanitizing

COVID-19 and other corona viruses are spread person-to-person through close contact — including while at work. The pandemic has increased the need to maintain cleanliness and hand hygiene to reduce the spread of this disease.

Considerations:

- Provide adequate hand washing stations – either soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Post hand washing signs in washrooms, lunchrooms, and at entrances and exits
- Provide additional resources and tools such as no-touch trash cans, propped-open doors, disinfectants, and disposable towels for workers to clean workstations
- Ensure that all workers wash their hands thoroughly when entering the workplace, before and after breaks, at shift changes, and after touching a surface which others may have touched
- Monitor sanitation and cleaning at your workplace for effectiveness
- Provide individual equipment for each worker OR sanitize any shared equipment when sharing of equipment cannot be avoided
- Post hygiene instructions for employees – preferably in all the languages spoken in your workplace
- Increase fresh air where possible and avoid air recirculation
- Ensure your ventilation system is operating properly and filters are changed on schedule

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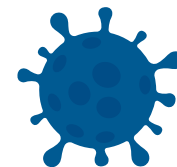
Respiratory protection and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Engineering and administrative controls are more effective means to minimize exposure, but PPE may also play a role in protecting workers from communicable diseases when workers are not able to maintain physical distance.

Respiratory protection in the workplace

N95 masks and other respirators are used in many businesses across B.C. Due to worldwide shortages, you may need to find new sources for protective equipment or use alternative types of PPE.

Respirators are rated to protect against a specific concentration of particulates. The N95 gives the minimum acceptable protection for an infectious contaminant such as COVID-19 but should be reserved for health care at this time and are not practical for all-day wear.

Fit testing is required for any tight-fitting respirator, including the N95 and any half face/full face alternative respirator. Certain exceptions may apply.

Non-medical mask use

COVID-19 transmission occurs when a sick person transmits the disease to another person. Most transmission is caused by people who are symptomatic for COVID-19 (cough, fever, runny nose), but there is evidence some people infected with COVID-19 never develop symptoms but are still able to pass the virus on. Some people may also be pre-symptomatic but still able to infect others.

✳ Tools and resources

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DOWNLOAD RESOURCES

Respirator inspection checklist

Particulate filter types guide

Download the Respiratory Resource Bundle

PRINT POSTERS

Seal checks -Disposable-

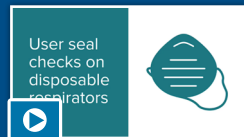**Seal checks -Cartridge-**

Seal checks -Filter-

WATCH A VIDEO

Donning & doffing reusable half-face respirators
Donning and doffing reusable respirators

User seal checks on reusable half-face respirators
Seal checks on reusable respirators

Donning & doffing disposable respirators
Donning and doffing disposable respirators

User seal checks on disposable respirators
Seal checks on disposable respirators

GET ANSWERS

PPE FAQs

Respiratory Protection Basics Webinar

Wearing a non-medical mask — even when no symptoms are present — is an additional measure that employees may take to protect others around them. A non-medical mask does not prevent the wearer from getting sick and does not replace a respirator such as an N95. It will not protect workers from other workplace respiratory hazards and should not be used in place of appropriate personal protective equipment selected for respiratory hazard protection.

A surgical, cloth, or homemade mask does not replace public health recommendations. Cloth and surgical masks have limitations, and these should be communicated to your employees.

Other PPE

Other types of PPE in the workplace may include disposable gloves, face shields, and coveralls when appropriate and applicable to your work environment. Select PPE in consultation with the Joint Health and Safety Committee based on the specific hazards workers may be exposed to (as detailed in your risk assessment).

The best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are to:

stay home from work when ill
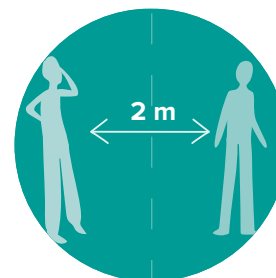
maintain physical distancing

wash hands often with soap and water

cough/sneeze into a tissue, sleeve or elbow

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Employee wellbeing — supporting your employees

Your employees' health and wellbeing will be a critical factor in your ongoing success. There are many ways to support them through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Communicate regularly about the work you are doing to manage the risks of COVID-19 in the workplace. Encourage two-way dialogue to address concerns and questions as they come up and don't wait for the rumor mill to reach you.

- Post your policies and safety plan and make them available to all workers. These should include:

  - _Sanitation policies_
  - _Reporting illness in the workplace_
  - _Physical distancing information_

- Provide education for workers on health and safety measures for COVID-19

- Work with your Joint Health and Safety Committee or Worker Representative to review and revise your safety plans for COVID-19

- Encourage good hygiene practices for all employees

- Monitor cleaning activity and adjust frequency as required

- Have an effective, compassionate sick leave policy that is well communicated to your workers

- Encourage employees to avoid travel when it is not essential

- Implement physical distancing and modify the frequency of face-to-face encounters

- Implement digital communication when possible

- Encourage working from home when possible

- Share your business continuity plan with employees

- Review your first aid program and update as needed

✳ Tools and resources

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The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) helps Canadians stay mentally fit and healthy with
proven information and tools.

Below are three CMHA resources to support mental wellness in the workplace during COVID-19

VIRTUAL COUNSELING

CMHA virtual counseling services

ONLINE COURSE

Living Life to the Fullest peer support and course

MENTAL HEALTH CHECK-IN

Mental health check-in free, anonymous self-assessment tool

Supporting workplace mental wellness

Life during the pandemic is affecting employees' mental health as well. Loss of control and uncertainty may contribute to anxiety, fear, stress, worry, sadness, or even anger for some workers. Practice empathy with your teams and encourage empathy between co-workers.

Work with your employees to determine which tasks and activities need to be prioritized and set aside less essential work so they do not feel overwhelmed. Set clear manageable goals with regular milestones to ensure that delays are dealt with promptly.

Workers may:

- Feel socially isolated when working remotely or physically distanced from co-workers

- Be concerned about their children's education and social isolation from friends and extended family

- Be afraid of getting ill or making other people sick

- Worry about losing their job or facing financial uncertainty

- Have concerns about extended family they are unable to visit

Support workers by scheduling regular mental health check-ins and encouraging self-care:

- Good sleep hygiene

- Healthy eating

- Regular exercise

- Making time for hobbies and relaxation

- Sharing information on access to mental health and support services (such as EFAP)

- Supporting separation of work and home life – especially for employees working from home

◀ Back to Business | COVID-19 Safety Playbook   15

Business continuity —weathering the storm

COVID-19 may cause extensive outbreaks. While we wait to see if an effective vaccine program will be developed, we must remain vigilant for the possibility of continued outbreaks and a second wave of virus activity.

What could this mean for your workplace?

Increased absenteeism due to:

- Personal illness
- Caring for sick loved ones
- Self-isolation due to travel or exposure to COVID-19
- Caring for children who may no longer be attending school or daycare

Changes in consumer demand

- Increased demand for items used in the pandemic (PPE, pantry staples, and cleaning supplies)
- More at-home meals and entertainment
- New demand for online shopping options
- Changes in shopping patterns (off-peak hours, curbside pickup, delivery options)

Interrupted supply chains or disruption to delivery schedules

- Raw materials and supplies from regions impacted by COVID-19 may be significantly delayed
- Worldwide shipping times have increased
- New consumer demand for online shopping has created increased demand on postal and courier services

Key actions to take

Employers have a duty to protect all employees from exposure to COVID-19. Develop an exposure control plan to support your business through COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. An exposure control plan provides employees with information on the precautions to take where they may be exposed.

Ensure that basic infection control measures are always in place at your worksite:

- Educate employees to practice respiratory etiquette by coughing or sneezing into their elbow or a tissue

- Establish telecommuting or flexible work options when possible

- Encouraging workers to stay home when they are sick

- Discourage sharing of desks and equipment between employees and define sanitation processes where sharing is necessary

- Promote frequent hand-washing and ensuring adequate hand washing stations/facilities are in place at your worksite
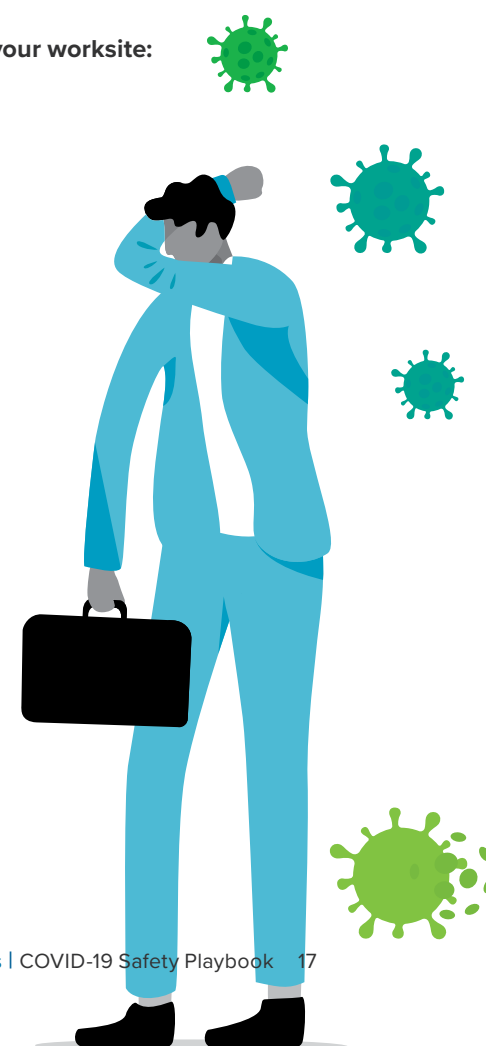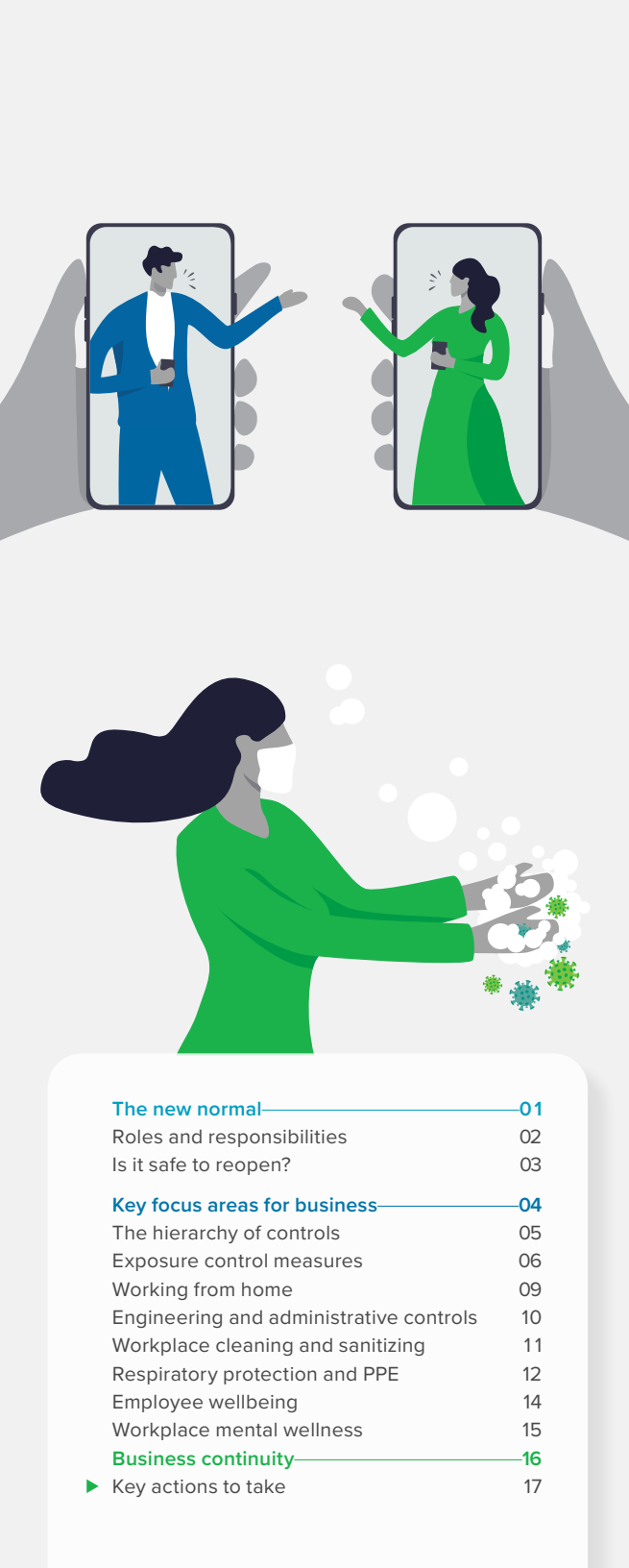
Prepare your business to operate effectively under your COVID-19 safety plan.

Ensure all employees understand how to work effectively and protect each other in the new normal.

- Include a strategy to prevent complacency and maintain health and safety vigilance against COVID-19 in the workplace
- Incorporate inspection processes than include observations of behaviors
- Design communications that include engagement opportunities for your workers (two-way dialogue and feedback processes)

Review your plans and consider options to strengthen controls before the flu season (fall and winter)

- Include your COVID-19 safety plan and related information as a standing item on the Joint Health and Safety Committee agenda
- Review local, national, and international patterns and trends to determine if more effective controls are needed

Build and communicate contingency plans.

This preparation is critical to a speedy and decisive response in the case of an outbreak— knowing their employer has a plan in place helps employees come to work feeling secure.

- Develop a plan to manage a potential outbreak at your business before an outbreak occurs
- Determine how your business would be prepared to respond to an outbreak
- Look at how you can continue operations with a reduced workforce if necessary
- Consider your internal and external communications
- Review your plans with your Joint Health and Safety Committee
- Understand and define what is within your control, and may not be in an outbreak scenario

We are in this together

Safe and healthy workplaces support BC companies to get back to business in the new normal. Together, we're working with BC businesses to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to protect our workers, families and communities.

For additional information, resources and support, visit safetyalliancebc.ca/covid19