COVID-19 POLICY AND WORKPLACE SAFETY PLAN

# POLICY STATEMENT

Insert company/organization name(the “Business”) is committed to the health, safety, and well-being of its employees and of all individuals who enter its workplace.

COVID-19 is a respiratory viral infection which has infected millions of individuals across the globe, including Canada.

The Business aims to dispel fears and misconceptions regarding COVID-19 through this COVID-19 Prevention and Control Policy (the “Policy”) by educating its employees on the symptoms, infection prevention and control, and compliance with hand hygiene guidelines. In addition, this Policy sets out the Business’ legal obligations under applicable legislation, as well as steps the Business will take to limit the risk of infection by COVID- 19 in the workplace.

# PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is 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 the requirements and procedures required to control the spread of the infection at the workplace, while also maintaining business operations. The policy is based on information available at the time of its development and is subject to change based on further information provided by the government, health authorities, and the latest evidence.

# DEFINITIONS

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| 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 interviews. Passive screening involves posting signage and messaging. |
| Alcohol-Based Hand Rub (ABHR) | Waterless hand hygiene product that is available as a rinse, gel or foam and consists of a minimum of 60% alcohol. The effectiveness of alcohol is inhibited by the presence of organic matter. |
| Close Contact | Someone that was less than two metres away from the person who has COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes, or multiple shorter lengths of time, while wearing mask/face covering or without personal protective equipment in the 48 hours before symptoms began or positive test result, whichever came first. |
| 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 indicators of COVID-19 resemble cold and flu symptoms. Common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, new or worsening cough, and shortness of breath. A list of symptoms will be provided in the following pages. |
| 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. |
| Fully Vaccinated or Fully Immunised | An individual is considered fully vaccinated if they have received:   * The full series of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized by Health Canada, or any combination of such vaccines, * One or two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada, followed by one dose of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine authorized by Health Canada, or * Three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada; and * They received their final dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at least 14 days ago. |
| Hand Hygiene | A general term referring to any action of hand cleaning. Hand hygiene relates to the removal of visible soil and removal or killing of transient microorganisms from the hands. Hand hygiene is best accomplished by washing hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. |
| Hand Hygiene Station | A dispensing location for waterless, ABHR product that is applied to reduce the number of microorganisms present on the hands. |
| Physical Distancing | Maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) between individuals. |
| PPE | Personal protective equipment such as gloves and face masks, which protect against the spread. |

# GENERAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**EMPLOYER**

COVID-19 presents a risk to the health and safety of employees, and as a result, employers have a legal obligation to take reasonable steps to address this risk. What is appropriate and reasonable may vary depending on the nature of the Business and its workforce. The Business is responsible for making sure that the workplace is safe, and that employees’ health and safety are not put at risk. The goal of the Business isto prevent and reduce transmission among employees, maintain a healthy business operation and work environment. While the following are subject to change, at present, reasonable steps to ensure the work environment is safe may include the following:

* Ensure a hazard assessment is conducted to evaluate the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace.
* Review this COVID-19 policy with all employees.
* Require employees to immediately inform their supervisors or managers if they or someone they have been in close contact with has tested positive for COVID-19 or has been directed to quarantine by public health authorities.
* Direct employees who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 to quarantine themselves.
* Implement a system for screening employees, contractors, visitors, and volunteers who may enter the work premises for COVID-19.
* Provide training to all workplace parties on the reporting procedures of COVID-19.
* Provide appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including, but not limited to face masks, gloves, face shields, and goggles to the employees who may have exposure to COVID-19.
* Advise employees to practice social distancing while at work.
* If possible, provide physical barriers between workstations (plexiglass or cubicles).
* Encourage good hygiene practices in the workplace.
* Ensure that appropriate steps are being taken to ensure the cleanliness of the workplace.

**SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS**

Supervisors will be held responsible for the health and safety of the employees under their supervision. Some specific duties of supervisors include:

* + - Ensure this COVID-19 policy is implemented and adhered to in the workplace.
    - Monitor the employees for possible signs of COVID-19 symptoms.
    - Request that any persons who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 leave the worksite and seek medical advice.
    - Ensure employees use appropriate PPE as required.
    - Advise employees of any existing or potential risks of exposure; and,
    - Protect the privacy of any employee who may have to leave the worksite due to COVID-19 related symptoms or diagnosis.

**EMPLOYEE**

Under the law, employees must protect their own health and safety by working in compliance with the law, any established health and safety policies and safe work practices and procedures. Some specific responsibilities include:

* + - Follow the requirements of this COVID-19 Policy.
    - Become familiar with the symptoms of COVID-19.
    - Inform supervisors and managers if diagnosed with COVID-19 or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.
    - Quarantine and stay away from work until completely free of COVID-19 symptoms.
    - Use appropriate PPE when required; and,
    - Practice good hygiene protocols.

**JOINT HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE (JHSC)/HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE (HSR)**

The JHSC or HSR must work together with the employer to ensure the health and safety of all workplace parties. Some of the responsibilities of the JHSC/HSR include:

* + - Ensuring employees are aware of the symptoms of COVID-19.
    - Ensuring employees have been trained on the contents of this COVID-19 Policy.
    - Conducting workplace inspections and investigations; and,
    - Making recommendations for the improvement of the health and safety of employees.

# EDUCATION

**CORE COVID-19 SYMPTOMS**

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illnesses. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

* cough
* fever
* shortness of breath
* runny nose or stuffy nose
* sore throat
* loss of taste or smell
* Painful swallowing
* Chills
* Headache
* Muscle or joint aches
* Feeling unwell or fatigue
* Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or unexplained loss of appetite
* Conjunctivitis, also known as pink eye

Coughing may persist for several weeks following a COVID-19 diagnosis.

COVID-19 symptoms can range from mild to severe. Sometimes people with COVID-19 have mild illness, but their symptoms may suddenly worsen in a few days.

COVID-19 is mainly spread from person to person through close contact, such as in a household, workplace, hospital, or health care facility.

If an employee is experiencing any of the symptoms listed above, they should contact a primary care provider or 8-1-1 anytime to talk to a nurse at Alberta Health Services and get advice about what to do next. The employee also has the option of going to a COVID-19 assessment center for testing.

# HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

If feasible given the nature of the Business and the duties of certain employees, as well as the individual circumstances and needs of certain employees, the Business will consider, in its sole discretion, requiring or permitting certain employees to work from home.

The Business will conduct on-going risk assessments as needed and adjust its practices and procedures as required to adhere to public health official orders, OHS authority guidelines, and recommendations for best practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

**EMERGENCY AND PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS**

The Business will comply with all emergency orders made by the government or public health officials in respect of implementing physical distancing and other measures designed to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace, as well as in respect of any business closures ordered by the government or public health officials.

Employees who are subject to any emergency or public health order, including any order to quarantine or self-isolate because of recently returning from international or interprovincial travel, or having close contact with any individual(s) confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19, must comply with any such order, and must immediately inform the Business that they are subject to such order.

In these circumstances, the Business will consider whether it is possible and practical for the employee to work from home while subject to the order, and, if the Business determines in its sole discretion that it is not possible for the employee to work from home, the Business will place the employee on a leave of absence subject to the applicable employment standards legislation.

**MASK OR FACE COVERING REQUIREMENTS**

Wearing face masks or face coverings in indoor public spaces and workplaces has been made mandatory.

Employees must wear a mask in all indoor work setting except while working at desks or workstations and where physical distancing can be observed and/or where partitions have been installed.

**PERSONNAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

Where necessary to protect an employee from the risk of contracting COVID-19, the Business will provide the appropriate PPE, including rubber gloves, masks, or gowns, as needed.

When an employee has medical concerns regarding wearing certain PPE, the employer will request a medical note from a certified health care practitioner or provide alternative PPE or duties for the employee to comply with public health bylaws and protocols.

**PHYSICAL DISTANCING**

The requirement to remain 2m physically distanced is no longer legally mandatory.

As per this Policy, the Business will complete a hazard assessment to determine the level of risk associated with the transmission of the COVID-19 virus in their workplace. The business may continue to require all its workers to practice social distancing and consider implementing measures to increase the spacing between workers, patrons, and members of the public.

**SANITATION**

The Business will implement a workplace-specific plan for restricting the spread of COVID-19 and protecting employees in accordance with applicable OHS guidelines.

The Business will take reasonable efforts to ensure the sanitation of workplace surfaces that are commonly used or touched by employees, customers, or other individuals and which might transmit COVID-19, including but not limited to door handles, light switches, tabletops, microwaves, and telephone equipment.

**PERSONNAL HYGIENE PREVENTION PRACTICES**

To prevent and control the spread of COVID-19, health officials recommend that all individuals practice good hygiene and/or observe commonly advised precautionary measures.

To prevent exposure to a range of diseases, including COVID-19, employees are encouraged to perform the following in and outside the workplace:

* + - Wash hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
    - Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
    - Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
    - Stay home when ill.
    - Cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue, and then immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash hands.
    - If a tissue is not available, sneeze or cough into a sleeve or arm, not a hand; and,
    - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

The Business will ensure that there is an adequate supply of liquid soap in the bathroom and kitchen areas and post signage reminding employees to regularly wash their hands with warm water and soap for a minimum of 20 seconds. The Business will also ensure there is an adequate supply of hand sanitizer (if available) for employees to use as well as cleaning products to sanitize surfaces.

# RESPONDING TO COVID-19 CASE AT WORK

If an employee of the Business tests positive for COVID-19, the Business must immediately inform the local Public Health authorities and fully cooperate with any investigation that they deem necessary. The Public Health Unit may ask for the names of all the other employees of the Business that may have been exposed to COVID-19 to complete contact-tracing and test anyone else they suspect of being exposed to COVID-19.

Other employees who are identified as a close contact of the worker who tested positive while they were infectious should be informed. When communicating about the positive COVID-19 case, the name of the sick employee must not be shared with others to protect the individual’s privacy.

Additional measures to take include:

* + - Clean all surfaces that may have been touched by the sick employee with soap and water before disinfecting them; and,
    - Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in areas where the sick employee may have been.

**REPORTING PROCEDURES**

If an employee is experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19 while at work, they should immediately inform a manager/supervisor. The supervisor and manager will take down relevant information (time, date, employee name and contact information) and advise the employee to self-isolate and call a primary care provider or the local COVID-19 Public Health for further guidance.

If the employee is tested for COVID-19 and the test result is positive, the employee must immediately inform the employer. The employer has a duty to report any confirmed cases to the following:

* Call 8-1-1 to make a report to Alberta Health Services.
* Any confirmed cases of COVID-19 that could reasonably be assumed to be work-related should be reported to the Workers’ Compensation Board of Alberta (WCB) within 72 hours of receiving notice of the illness. The employee compensation case manager will decide on whether the employee’s COVID-19 case is work-related or not.
* Joint Health and Safety Committee/Health and Safety Representative.
* Union Representative if applicable.

**SYMPTOMATIC OR EXPOSED EMPLOYEES**

Employees who develop symptoms of COVID-19, or who have been in close contact (including living in the same residence) with individuals who are confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19, who have recently returned from international or interprovincial travel, or who are at a high risk of exposure (e.g., due to being a healthcare provider at a healthcare location with confirmed cases of COVID-19) must inform the Business of these facts immediately.

The Business has an obligation to protect its employees from the risk of COVID-19 infection, including by prohibiting employees who may be at high risk of spreading COVID-19 from entering the workplace. Accordingly, all employees must report if they are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 to the Business immediately. Any employee who fails to disclose facts relevant to an assessment of their risk as outlined above may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

Workers identified as close contacts, either in their household or at work, should self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms for 14 days. If the workers develop symptoms, they should self-isolate and get tested right away. **Not fully immunized workers are also strongly recommended to self-isolate.**

Workers who exhibit symptoms must immediately self-isolate and make arrangement to get tested, either with a PCR Test or Rapid antigen testing kit. Only people at high risk of severe outcomes or work in high-risk settings need to book a follow up PCR test if they get a positive result on a rapid antigen test.

**ISOLATION REQUIREMENTS**

Workers who [have symptoms](https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-testing-in-alberta.aspx) or test positive must stay home and avoiding others. Albertans are legally required to isolate as outlined below:

* Fully vaccinated workers: isolate for 5 days from the start of symptoms or until they resolve, whichever is longer, if symptoms are not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition. For 5 days following isolation, wear a mask at all times when around others outside of home.
* Not fully vaccinated workers: isolate for 10 days from the start of symptoms or until they resolve, whichever is longer, if symptoms are not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition.
* If you test negative and have symptoms, you should still stay home and away from others until symptoms resolve.

Any employee who tests positive for COVID-19 is required to speak with his or her supervisor following their successful self-isolation and prior to returning to work.

**SICK EMPLOYEES TO STAY HOME**

Employees who appear to have symptoms upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors, and sent home.

Employees who have symptoms should notify their supervisor and stay home. Employees should not return to work until they have either tested negative for COVID-19 and are symptom-free or they have quarantined as per this policy.

# LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The Business will provide employees with an unpaid leave of absence for reasons relating to COVID-19, including leaves of absence due to mandatory quarantine, illness, caring for dependent family members due to their illness, and due to the closure of schools and daycares, as required by the applicable employment standards legislation.

The Business will not require a medical certificate for COVID-19 related leaves of absence; however, the Business reserves the right to require other reasonably sufficient proof of the stated reason for taking the COVID-19 related leave of absence.

Please consult the applicable employment standards legislation for more information on COVID-19 related leaves of absence.

# COMMUNICATION PLAN

Management of the Business will ensure regular communication with employees to keep them informed of hazards and appropriate hazard-control measures. Management of the business will communicate as often as necessary and every time there is a change regarding the hazards or hazard-control measures.

**COMMUNICATION CHANNELS**

Management of the Business will decide which communication channel is the most effective, including but not limited to:

* Letters to staff
* Company emails
* Small group toolbox talks meetings
* Post communication materials at worksites
* Worksite television monitors
* Social media
* Company text messaging programs

# POSITIVE CASE

Should a confirmed COVID-19 case be deemed to be infectious while in the workplace or work-related, other employees should be informed.

When communicating about the positive COVID-19 case, the name of the sick employee must not be shared with others to protect the individual’s privacy. Any additional hazard-control measures implemented by the employer to mitigate the risk associated with the positive COVID-19 case should also be communicated to employees.

# WORKERS

All workers are required to attend and participate to safety toolbox talk meetings. Workers are also required to read and understand all safety communications and documentation communicated by the management of the business.

Any questions or concerns workers may have must be raised to their immediate supervisor.

# DOCUMENTATION

Records of all safety toolbox talks, and communications shall be recorded and kept on file. Current communications can be posted on the Business’ safety board for review at any time by employees, management, and visitors.

# POLICY REVIEW

This Policy is intended to be temporary, and shall be monitored, reviewed, and amended as necessary, in the Business’ sole discretion, in accordance with official federal and provincial government announcements, information, and orders.

**COVID-19 EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM**

I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand my company’s COVID-19 Policy and agree that I must follow all safety measures outlined in the Policy to reduce and prevent the risk of spreading COVID-19. I understand that failure to comply with the requirements of this Policy could result in disciplinary action.

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| Name of Employee: | Date Policy was reviewed by the employee: |
| Employee Signature: | Employee’s Supervisor: |

Note: Please submit this form to your immediate supervisor.