



Introduction

This tip sheet is intended for employers and workers in the rail transport sector (e.g., train conductors, station masters, train dispatchers, train maintenance, etc.). It provides an overview of potential COVID-19 risks and recommended controls to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

In all cases, guidance from local [public health authorities](#) and your [jurisdictional health and safety regulator](#) must be followed.

Refer to guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada:

- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Adjusting public health measure in the context of COVID-19 vaccination](#)
- [COVID-19 measures, updates, and guidance issued by Transport Canada](#)

Refer to these CCOHS documents for general COVID-19 prevention practices:

- [COVID-19 Health and Safety Resources](#)
- [Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 Health and Safety Planning for Employers](#)
- [COVID-19 Prevention for Workers](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQ](#)

For operations offering passenger services, please refer to the [Public Transportation](#) tip sheet.

Consider the Risks

COVID-19 spreads from infected individuals to others through respiratory particles. Workers can be exposed when they have close contact with a person who has COVID-19 or by touching surfaces or items contaminated with the COVID-19 virus.

The risk of [COVID-19 transmission](#) is increased when:

- Person-to-person interactions are longer and more frequent, especially when less than 2 metres apart.
- Being in crowded or poorly ventilated places.
- Taking part in activities that generate respiratory particles (e.g., when speaking, coughing, etc.).
- People have inadequate hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, or do not have access to cleaning facilities and products.
- Frequently contacting contaminated high-touch surfaces, and shared objects.
- There is a high number of COVID-19 cases or hospitalizations in the local community.
- COVID-19 vaccination rates among workers, their families, or the local community are low.

Risk of transmission increases when several of these risk factors occur at the same time.

Each workplace is unique. Consider all possible COVID-19 exposure scenarios in the workplace setting by performing COVID-19 [risk assessments](#). An existing [risk assessment checklist](#) may be used to document and evaluate all work setting characteristics, activities, and job roles. Consider the following questions when developing the COVID-19 risk assessment:

- Where and when do workers interact with others at the workplace (e.g., kitchen at lunch time)?
- How close, long, and frequent are the interactions?
- What are the high-touch surfaces and objects and how often are they cleaned and disinfected?
- Do workers have the knowledge they need to protect themselves and others from the spread of COVID-19?
- Are workers with COVID symptoms rapidly identified? Are appropriate actions taken to prevent transmission?



- Which workers are at higher risk (i.e., older or otherwise vulnerable)?
- Are there many existing or rising COVID-19 cases in the local community?
- What are the community and workplace vaccination rates?
- How many workers are in the workplace or vehicle at one time?
- Have mobile workplace risks been evaluated? Are plans in place to handle COVID-19 emergencies during long haul travel?

Control Measures

Meet your legal occupational health and safety obligations by doing everything reasonably possible in the circumstances to protect the health and safety of your workers.

To provide the highest level of protection to workers, use multiple [public health measures](#) and workplace control measures (following the [hierarchy of controls](#) i.e., elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative policies, and the use of personal protective equipment) in a [layered approach](#). No single measure is completely effective alone. Be careful not to create new workplace hazards or negatively impact existing safety controls. Review and adjust measures as necessary in consultation with the workplace health and safety committee or representative.

Create and implement a written workplace [COVID-19 safety plan](#). The plan should document the control measures used to protect workers from exposure to COVID-19 and may be legally required by the jurisdiction in which you operate. Follow local authority rules for the plan such as content and posting requirements, etc.

Implement policies and programs to accommodate workers who are at high risk of [severe disease or outcomes](#) (i.e., immunocompromised, have chronic medical conditions, unable to be vaccinated, or older) from a COVID-19 infection.

Vaccination

- Create and implement a COVID-19 [vaccination policy](#), make sure it follows applicable government vaccination requirements (e.g., mandatory vaccination for federally regulated workers).
- Encourage workers to get vaccinated.
- Discuss any concerns about the vaccine policy with workers, health and safety committee or representative, and union (if applicable). Make sure the policy includes a list of valid exemptions and need for accommodations.
- Request proof or attestation of vaccination as required by your local legislation or as guided by your vaccination policy. Keep in mind that a company policy should not conflict with the law.
- Consider providing support for workers to attend local vaccination clinic appointments if these times occur during work hours. Additional time away from work may be required by workers experiencing temporary side effects from vaccination.
- Maintain COVID-19 workplace controls and public health measures, even if most workers are vaccinated. Follow local public health authority guidance on easing or reimposing controls.
- For additional information on the vaccines refer to:
 - [Vaccines for COVID-19](#) – Government of Canada
 - [COVID-19 Vaccines](#) – CCOHS
 - [COVID-19 Vaccines: What it Means for Employers](#) – CCOHS

Communication and Training

- Provide information and instruction to workers about the hazards of COVID-19 and what they need to do to protect themselves and others. Topics should include:
 - What COVID-19 is and the common symptoms.
 - How the virus spreads.
 - What to do if sick or exposed and how to get tested for COVID-19.



- How and when to report COVID-19 illness.
- Preventive practices for individuals.
- How to properly wear, handle, and care for masks and personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Safe use of cleaning and disinfection chemicals.
- How to stay informed about COVID-19 using reputable sources.
- New and updated work practices and policies (e.g., sick leave, mask wearing, vaccination).
- Encourage workers to report any COVID-19 concerns to their supervisor or employer, health and safety committee or union (if present).
- Provide regular communications so that workers are informed of updates and have an opportunity to ask questions.
- Review existing communication methods (e.g., bulletin board, email, team meetings), and use the most reliable methods to keep workers informed.
- Train workers about safe travel practices, such as:
 - Minimizing contact with others.
 - Disinfecting high touch surfaces (e.g., remotes, air conditioning units).
 - Staying in the accommodations as much as possible.
 - Having meals delivered to their room.
 - Booking single occupancy rooms.
- Post signs throughout the workplace:
 - [Take the Time to Wash Your Hands](#): Washrooms.
 - [Prevent the Spread of Infections](#): Entrances, high-touch surfaces.
 - [COVID-19 mask use: How to choose, use and care for a mask](#): Entrances.
 - [About coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#): Entrances.
 - Screening poster (available from your [local public health authority](#)): Entrances.
 - Signs indicating the maximum occupancy for rooms or spaces, especially those which should have few occupants such as washrooms.
 - Floor markers or posters which encourage physical distancing.
- Avoid in-person meetings and training sessions where possible. Use remote communications methods instead (e.g., teleconferencing, videoconferencing). When in-person meetings and training are required, use a large well-ventilated space, instruct participants to stay the greatest physical distance (at least 2 metres) apart, wear a mask, and limit the number of participants. If possible, hold meetings and training outside.
- Reduce the amount of paper documentation or other items being passed between workers. Consider using electronic methods. If this exchange can't be avoided, wash or sanitize hands after handling items.
- Provide [mental health](#) support resources for all workers, including access to an employee assistance program (EAP) if available.
- Communicate all implemented public health and COVID-19 control measure to suppliers and contractors. Make sure they understand and comply with all measures and controls.

Screening and Contact Tracing

- Implement a screening policy. The policy should outline which type of screening each worksite requires: passive or active. Some jurisdictions may require active screening in response local pandemic conditions.
 - Passive screening measures require individuals to self-monitor and self-report possible illness or exposure to COVID-19.
 - Active screening measures require individuals to be directly asked questions about possible signs or symptoms of infection, about recent possible COVID-19 exposures, or about recent travel outside of Canada. Use a [checklist](#), a web-based tool, or have a designated person ask screening questions.



- If readily available and feasible, consider implementing a rapid testing program as an additional screening measure.
- Deny entry to facilities and vehicles to anyone who fails the screening and follow the COVID-19 Response Plan below.
- Actively screen all workers before they begin working and before they return to their home communities.
- To support [contact tracing](#) efforts, record the names and contact information of all individuals who enter the workplace, as required by your local public health authority. Make sure that privacy is protected, and that the information is stored securely. Contact information must be destroyed in a timely manner according to [privacy laws](#).
- For further information:
 - [Screening for COVID-19](#) – CCOHS
 - [Guidance on Rapid Testing in the Workplace](#) – CCOHS
 - [COVID-19: Contact Tracing](#) – CCOHS
 - [COVID-19 rapid testing and screening in workplaces: What employers should know](#) – PHAC

COVID-19 Response Plan

- When anyone reports [COVID-19 symptoms](#) while at work or fails screening, immediately have them wear a mask, preferably a respirator or medical mask. If not available, wear a well-constructed and well fitting non-medical mask.
- Call 911 (if available) for medical assistance if symptoms are life threatening. If transit to a healthcare facility is required, work with local or company emergency services to get them medical care as quickly as possible.
- For workers:
 - Have the person stop work immediately and isolate them from others in a designated space.
 - Thoroughly clean and disinfect any equipment, surfaces, or objects they came into contact with.
 - When it is safe, send the worker home. Ask them to avoid public modes of transportation, if possible.
 - Instruct them to seek medical care, if symptoms worsen, and to follow guidance from their [local public health authority](#).
 - Refer to guidance from the local public health authority to determine when the worker can return to work.
- When informed of a positive COVID-19 test result, report it to your local public health authority (if required) and cooperate with any contact tracing efforts. Employers may also be required to inform all individuals who may have been exposed unless that is the responsibility of the public health authority.
- Investigate all workplace COVID-19 infections. Additional notifications may be required, refer to guidance from your [health and safety regulator](#) and [worker compensation board](#) to determine reporting requirements.
- Have available, or have a plan for ready access to, the necessary health care professionals needed to support any COVID-19 cases among workers.
- Consider assigning a worker (or team) to coordinate infection prevention and control measures and to monitor public health advisories.
- Make sure that your sick leave policy supports workers who are or may be sick. Support may include paid or unpaid sick leave, long-term disability, and government programs.
- For additional information on what to do if someone is identified as having symptoms or has potentially been exposed to COVID-19, refer to [Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace](#).

Ventilation

- Verify that the mechanical ventilation systems are operating properly (for buildings and vehicles).
- Consult a ventilation specialist or vehicle manufacturer to determine whether any enhancements can be made



to ventilation systems (e.g., increasing fresh air intake, and improving filtration).

- Make sure that ventilation systems are properly maintained and inspected according to manufacturer's recommendations.
- Make sure that air circulation vents are not directing air flow from person to person.
- Keep humidity between 30% and 50%.
- For further information on indoor ventilation:
 - [COVID-19: Guidance on indoor ventilation during the pandemic](#) – Government of Canada
 - [Indoor Ventilation: Guidance During The COVID-19 Pandemic](#) – CCOHS

Physical Barriers

- Install physical barriers in areas where it is not possible to maintain physical distancing and workers are expected to directly communicate (e.g., screening areas, receptions).
- Barriers should be appropriately sized and positioned to block respiratory particle transmission.
- The physical barrier should be made from a non-porous material such as plexiglass than can be easily cleaned and disinfected.
- Carefully plan the placement of barriers to reduce interference with air movement (ventilation) and make sure not to block aisles or exits (i.e., emergency escape). Avoid surrounding workers with barriers as it may reduce the effectiveness of ventilation.
- For additional information, refer to the [Physical Barriers](#) tip sheet.

Physical Distancing

- Require all individuals in the workplace to keep the greatest physical distance possible (at least 2 metres) from each other, when safe to do so.
- Avoid non-essential in-person interactions and keep essential interactions as few and as brief as possible.
- Make physical distancing easier by limiting the number of people in the workplace:
 - Allow only essential workers and visitors into operation control rooms, offices, vehicles, maintenance bays, etc.
 - Eliminate non-essential work travel for all workers.
- Follow jurisdictional limits for in-person gatherings.
- Set up measures to promote physical distancing:
 - Determine if any workers can work remotely (e.g., roles that perform administrative functions). Provide ergonomic support and resources for workers setting up home offices.
 - Keep train crews together as much as possible (reducing crew rotation will help contain the size of potential COVID-19 outbreaks).
 - Create schedules that reduce worker interactions such as staggering shifts by 30 minutes, if possible.
 - Space chairs apart at least 2 metres in cafeterias, meeting rooms and break areas. Remove chairs if necessary.
 - Limit the number of people taking breaks at the same time. Arrange for breaks to occur in larger spaces or outdoors (if possible and weather permitting) and at staggered times.
- Prevent crowding in busy areas (e.g., platforms, stations, rail cars, change rooms, etc.).
- Maintain physical distancing when boarding and exiting a vehicle.
- Avoid in-person gatherings such as social events.
- Allow exceptions to distancing guidance in certain circumstances such as rescuing a distressed person, providing first aid, or performing Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).
- For further information:



- [COVID-19 and Physical Distancing](#) – CCOHS
- [COVID-19: Prevention and risks](#) – Government of Canada

Hygiene Measures

- Encourage frequent and proper hand washing with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water aren't available, use a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Place hand sanitizer dispensers in high traffic areas (e.g., workplace entrances).
- Appropriate times to wash or sanitize hands:
 - at the start and end of shift,
 - before eating, drinking, or smoking,
 - after touching shared items,
 - after using the washroom,
 - after cleaning and disinfecting objects,
 - before and after putting on or removing PPE or a mask.
- Discourage individuals from touching their eyes, nose, mouth, or mask with unwashed hands.
- Discourage unnecessary physical contact such as handshakes.
- Promote good respiratory etiquette. Provide disposable tissues and remind individuals to cough or sneeze into the bend of their arms or a tissue and to dispose of tissues immediately, followed up with hand washing or use of hand sanitizer.
- Verify that all necessary materials are readily available in the workplace (e.g., hand sanitizer, no-touch waste receptacles, disposable tissues, etc.).
- Provide each worker with their own set of tools, if possible. Require any shared tools to be cleaned and disinfected between users.
- Change out of work clothing at the end of each shift and wash them according to the manufacturer's instructions. Do not store street clothes and work clothing in the same space unless both are clean.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Viruses may remain on objects for a few hours to days depending on the type of surface and environmental conditions.

- Use an approved [hard surface disinfectant](#).
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when using, handling, or storing the product. Review the product's label and safety data sheet to determine what precautions to follow, if necessary.
- Select PPE that will protect workers from exposure to COVID-19 and cleaning products.
- Clean and disinfect the workplace on a routine schedule. High-touch surfaces and items (e.g., tools, controls, equipment, railings, doorknobs, radios, PPE) should be cleaned and disinfected more frequently.
- Allocate vehicles, machinery, and equipment (e.g., haulage truck, scoop tram) to the same people each shift (if possible). Instruct operators to clean and disinfect shared equipment controls and tools (e.g., cab interiors, dashboards, seats, door latches and handles) before and after each shift and between use by different operators (if applicable).
- Launder items according to the manufacturer's instructions. Machine wash using the warmest appropriate water setting (preferably hot water at 60 to 90°C), use laundry detergent, and dry thoroughly. Do not shake dirty laundry.
- Ask workers to clean and disinfect workstations, controls, screens, tools, radios, personal devices (e.g., cellphones) at the start of each shift, or as necessary.
- Consider using high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter vacuum cleaners for seats and interior railcar surfaces.



- For further information:
 - [Cleaning and Disinfecting for COVID-19](#) – CCOHS
 - [Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects](#) – Government of Canada

Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

PPE includes respirators, medical masks, eye protection (e.g., goggles, face shield), gowns, gloves, and safety footwear.

- Continue to use PPE for existing occupational safety hazards and emergencies. COVID-19 PPE policies must not interfere when a higher level of protection is needed for the task.
- Conduct a hazard assessment and make sure that workers have the correct PPE for their tasks and activities.
- Workers may need PPE for COVID-19 protection if they are:
 - Performing tasks that require them to be less than 2 metres from another person.
 - Using cleaning and disinfecting products (refer to the manufacturers' safe handling instructions).
 - Providing emergency first aid.
 - Screening people.
- Workers must be trained on how to properly use and care for their PPE.
- For further information:
 - [Personal protective equipment \(COVID-19\): Overview](#) – Government of Canada
 - [Designing an Effective PPE Program](#) – CCOHS
 - [COVID-19 and Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#) – CCOHS

Mask Wearing

- Develop a policy on the use of masks.
- A well-fitting and well-constructed mask, covering the nose, mouth, and chin, should be worn whenever people share a space (e.g., indoors, outdoors, or when there are multiple occupants in a vehicle).
- Ensure that local public health authority mask requirements are followed. If not required, mask wearing should still be encouraged as an additional measure when there is a high risk for COVID-19 spread, or when physical distancing is not possible.
- Implement or update the workplace [heat stress program](#), as mask wearing may increase physiological stress during high-exertion tasks.
- Masks should not be worn by anyone who is unable to remove the mask without assistance (e.g., due to their age, ability, or developmental status).
- For further information:
 - [Get the facts on masks](#) – CCOHS
 - [COVID-19 mask use: How to choose, use and care for a mask](#) – Government of Canada

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact your local hospital, call 911 immediately, or contact a [Crisis Centre in your area](#).



Disclaimer: As public and occupational health and safety information is changing rapidly, local public health authorities should be consulted for specific, regional guidance. This information is not intended to replace medical advice or legislated health and safety obligations. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly



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