



Introduction

This tip sheet is for employers and employees who work in public transportation (e.g., buses, trains, subways, streetcars, ferries). It provides an overview of recommended controls to help reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace. Additional controls will be required depending on the workplace and specific types of tasks performed by employees.

For general COVID-19 prevention practices, both employers and employees can refer to the CCOHS resource [Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19](#).

Consider the Risks

- The risk of contracting COVID-19 increases in situations where people are in closed spaces (with poor ventilation) and crowded places when with people from outside their immediate household. Risk is higher in settings where these factors overlap and/or involve activities such as close-range conversations, singing, shouting or heavy breathing (e.g., during exertion).
- As a public transportation employee, potential sources of exposure include:
 - having close contact with a customer or co-worker who has COVID-19 and
 - touching surfaces or items that have been touched or handled by a person with COVID-19, and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.
- Each workplace is unique. Employers need to [assess the risks of COVID-19](#) for their specific workplace (including vehicles) and the activities conducted by their employees (such as operating public transit vehicles, performing maintenance tasks, conducting customer service tasks, and daily worker interactions).
- The employer must then implement appropriate hazard controls using the [hierarchy of controls](#) (i.e., elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative policies, and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)). Use multiple [personal preventive practices](#) in a layered approach.
- Consider implementing a written workplace safety plan that identifies potential exposures to COVID-19 and the controls used to protect employees.
- Employers should consider the following:
 - How will employees be screened? It is recommended that employees are screened before each work shift.
 - Where do employees interact with customers and co-workers? Controls (e.g., installing physical barriers, wearing non-medical masks) need to be implemented when in a shared space with people outside your immediate household.
 - How close are the physical interactions? The risk of transmission increases with close and frequent contact.
 - How long are the interactions? Evidence indicates that the person-to-person spread is more likely with prolonged contact.
 - How will shared surfaces be cleaned and disinfected? Ensure that all supplies are available, and that the disinfectant used has a drug identification number (DIN) from Health Canada.
 - What tasks are conducted at the workplace? Assess the risk of COVID-19 exposure for activities conducted by all job tasks or roles.
 - Has a COVID-19 safety plan been developed? The safety plan should be specific to the workplace and include all roles (e.g., transit operators, cleaning staff, maintenance employees, customer service, etc.). It should identify potential exposures to COVID-19 and the controls used to protect employees.



Communication and Training

- Provide clear information and instruction to employees 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
 - What to do if employees feel sick or may have been exposed
 - How the virus spreads
 - How layering multiple control measures helps to prevent the spread
 - How to protect themselves with personal preventive practices
 - How to properly wear, handle, and care for personal protective equipment and non-medical masks
 - How to safely use cleaning and disinfection chemicals
 - How to stay informed about COVID-19 ([using reputable sources](#)).
- Communication and training should be easy to understand, and in the preferred language(s) spoken or read by the employees if possible.
- Encourage employees to report any concerns about COVID-19 to their supervisor or employer. Employees can also report concerns to their health and safety committee or representative, or union if present.
- Provide regular communications so that employees are informed of updates and have an opportunity to discuss their questions and concerns.
- Provide mental health support resources for all employees.

Information for Customers

- Use all available means (e.g., website, social media, e-mail) to remind customers about the preventive measures being taken to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- Place posters or other signs in high passenger traffic areas at transit stations/terminals and transit vehicles about COVID-19 control measures (e.g., hand hygiene, use of non-medical masks, proper coughing/sneezing etiquette, physical distancing) where it is clearly visible.
- Remind passengers that they should stay home if they have any COVID-19 related symptoms.
- Communicate if schedules will be adjusted or extra transit vehicles are available to avoid rushing and crowding.
- Communicate how passengers can get assistance if transit stations or customer services have been closed or relocated.

Screening

- Consider asking screening questions to employees, before each work shift, using a [checklist](#) from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) or your local public health authority.
- Some jurisdictions require active screening of employees everyday before they come into work. Active screening steps may involve a self-assessment (e.g., using a web-based tool, having a person complete a questionnaire, or having a designated person asking direct questions). Consider the size of your workforce, the number of worksites, shifts, and activities when choosing your screening method.
- Employees who have COVID-19 symptoms should stay home. If they are at work and develop symptoms, they need to wear a medical mask (or if unavailable a well constructed and well fitting non-medical mask) and return home immediately (preferably not by public transit). They should also contact their health care provider and local public health authority.
- The most common symptoms are:
 - New or worsening cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Temperature equal to or over 38°C

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- Feeling feverish
 - Chills
 - Fatigue or weakness
 - Muscle or body aches
 - New loss of smell or taste
 - Headache
 - Gastrointestinal symptoms (abdominal pain, diarrhea, vomiting)
 - Feeling very unwell
 - Skin changes or rashes (young children)
- Symptoms can vary from person to person and within different age groups.
 - Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19. Some people have mild or no symptoms.
 - Older adults, people of any age with chronic medical conditions or who are immunocompromised, and those living with obesity are at risk for more severe disease and outcomes from COVID-19.
 - Develop procedures for contacting local public health authorities for further advice in the event of a positive COVID-19 case. If the case is work-related, additional notifications may be required (e.g., the [jurisdictional health and safety regulator](#) and [jurisdictional worker compensation board](#) for your province or territory).

Vaccine

- Encourage employees to get the vaccine once available in your jurisdiction.
- For additional information on the vaccine please refer to the Government of Canada website “[What you need to know about the COVID-19 vaccine for Canada](#)”.

Reducing Potential Exposures

- Evaluate if any employees can perform their job from home (e.g., dispatch, customer service, or administrative staff).
- Provide ergonomic support and resources for employees setting up home offices.
- Eliminate non-essential work travel for all employees.
- Avoid in-person meetings where possible. Use remote communications methods instead (e.g., teleconferencing, videoconferencing). When in-person meetings are unavoidable, use a large well-ventilated space, stay the greatest physical distance (at least 2 meters) apart from co-workers, and wear non-medical masks.
- Discourage unnecessary physical contact such as handshakes.
- Encourage contactless methods of fare payment (e.g., tapping credit cards or transit passes, buying tickets on-line, loading transit passes on-line, etc.).
- Encourage passengers to stay in their vehicles, where possible, when waiting for the ferry.
- Where possible, limit the number of interactions between the transit operator and passengers.
- For office-based roles (e.g., dispatch, control centre employees), assign employees to a single workstation. If employees move between workstations, make sure the area is cleaned and disinfected between users.
- Stagger meetings and breaks to minimize the number of employees in one place at the same time.
- For inspector or security roles, that regularly work in groups of two or more, consider altering shift schedules to routinely pair the same employees together for the entire shift.
- Consider scheduling teams or groups of maintenance employees on the same shift.
- Limit or reschedule non-essential site visits by contractors, vendors, or other visitors.
- Avoid sharing of electronics, equipment, tools, instruments, etc. where possible.

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- Consider assigning driver to a specific vehicle and avoiding drivers being designated multiple vehicles.
- Reduce the amount of paper documentation being exchanged between employees (e.g., receipts for deliveries, company policies, business cards). Consider using digital or electronic methods to exchange documents. If this can't be avoided, wash hands after exchanging documents.

Physical Distancing

- Keep the greatest physical distance possible (at least 2 metres) from people outside your immediate household.
- Maintain physical distancing during breaks and lunch hour.
- Consider reducing the capacity of passengers on vehicles. Adjust trip schedules or add more vehicles, trains, or ferries to routes to provide more space on-board. Prevent crowding, especially during rush hour.
- Provide signs, floor markings, and other visual cues in appropriate areas (such as on the vehicle, at the transit stop etc.) to encourage physical distancing.
- Prohibit access to the seats immediately beside the driver, if a physical barrier is not installed, to create at least a 2 metre physical distance from the driver. Use tape to create a barrier or cover the seats.
- Consider adding a red line on the floor at the front of the bus. Ask customers to remain behind the red line to encourage physical distancing away from the driver.
- Where possible, instruct passengers (using announcements and signs) to enter and exit using specific doors. For example, on a bus, instruct riders to enter from the front and exit using the rear door. However, allow customers requiring mobility assistance to also exit using the front door.
- Designate travel paths so employees and passengers do not have to pass each other closely (e.g., one set of stairs for up, another for down).
- Establish one-way flow of pedestrian traffic when entering stations or terminals, passing through fare gates, and boarding and deboarding transit vehicles. Use signs and markers where appropriate.
- Examine the activities conducted and determine if there are any situations where physical distancing cannot be maintained. Create rules for any work that requires employees to work within two metres of each other and include precautions such as the use of personal protective equipment.
- Encourage passengers to store their luggage in the designated spot (e.g., overhead bin above the seat). For checked luggage, designate a luggage drop area or method that allows for physical distancing. Space luggage adequately when passengers are claiming bags.

Physical Barriers

- At stations and terminals, install transparent barriers where physical distancing is not feasible (e.g., check-in counters, service desks, etc.).
- Consider installing a barrier (e.g., plexiglass full partition barrier) between the transit operator and the passengers. Make sure the barrier does not create a safety hazard, such as reducing the driver's visibility, hindering access to controls, or blocking emergency exit of the vehicle.
- The physical barrier should be made from a non-porous material such as plexiglass than can be easily cleaned and disinfected.

Ventilation

- Verify that the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system(s) for transit buildings is working properly.
- Ensure preventative maintenance for the HVAC system(s) is conducted according to manufacturer's instructions (e.g., regular filter changes and inspection of critical components).
- If possible, consult a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) professional to determine whether your HVAC system:

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- can be adjusted to increase air exchange rates if needed,
- is using filters of the highest Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) rating the system can sustain, and
- can be kept running for 2 hours at maximum outside airflow before and after the building is occupied.
- For additional information on indoor ventilation, please refer to:
 - "[COVID-19: Guidance on indoor ventilation during the pandemic](#)" (Government of Canada) and
 - "[Indoor Ventilation: Guidance During The COVID-19 Pandemic](#)" (CCOHS).
- For vehicles, increase the amount of fresh air by opening the windows (weather permitting) and setting the ventilation to outside air. Do not use the recirculated air option in the vehicle.

Personal Hygiene

- Provide hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for all employees.
- 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.
- Wash hands at the start of shift, before eating or drinking, after touching shared items, after using the washroom, after handling cash or credit/debit cards, after assisting passengers, after refueling, and at the end of the shift.
- Encourage customers to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when entering a public transit station / terminal or vehicle. If possible, place a hand sanitizer dispenser for customers in a location that is on their path of travel. Regularly inspect sanitizer dispensers and refill as required.
- Discourage individuals from touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Remind employees not to touch the outer surface of their mask while wearing or handling it as it may be contaminated. Promote hand washing or use of hand sanitizer after putting on, touching, or removing non-medical masks.
- Promote good respiratory hygiene. Provide disposable tissues and remind individuals to cough or sneeze into the bend of your arm 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 (e.g., hand sanitizer, garbage disposal, disposable tissues).
- Post signs to remind passengers to practice hand hygiene, especially when using an on-board washroom.
- Make sure washrooms are cleaned frequently, and are stocked with soap, paper towels, and plastic lined waste containers.
- Provide access to washroom facilities when employees are stationed at remote locations, or when other facilities are closed (e.g., an agreement is made with a local business that drivers can use their washroom facilities).

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Viruses can remain on objects for a few hours to days depending on the type of surface and environmental conditions.
- To promote consistent disinfecting practices, create and provide a routine cleaning and disinfecting [procedure](#), schedule and checklist.
- Clean and disinfect all high contact surfaces. For example:
 - Driver cockpit areas should be cleaned and disinfected between shifts (e.g., seat, seatbelt, steering wheel, control knobs and switches, radio controls, both sides of any physical barrier, keys, in-vehicle communication devices, etc.).
 - Transit vehicles (e.g. seats, straps, handrails, windows, etc.).
 - Transit stations or terminals, paying close attention to surfaces frequently touched by customers (e.g., turnstiles, stair and escalator handrails, elevator buttons, door handles, counters, staff room surfaces,

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washrooms, machines for loading transit passes, seats, etc.).

- Tools and equipment if shared by employees (e.g., during maintenance tasks)
- Office doorknobs, and workstations (e.g., computer keyboard, mouse, phone)
- Staff room surfaces (e.g., furniture, tables, countertops, sinks, faucets, light switches, cabinets, kettle, coffee maker, refrigerator, microwave)
- Washroom surfaces (e.g., door handles, counters, faucets, soap dispensers, door locks and support bars)
- Use household or commercial disinfectants to destroy or inactivate viruses and bacteria. The disinfectant used should have a drug identification number (DIN), meaning that it has been [approved for use in Canada](#).
- Employees should be trained on the safe use of cleaning and disinfecting products. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when using, handling, or storing the product. Review the product's label, and (if applicable) safety data sheet to determine what precautions to follow.
- Provide employees with adequate supplies and access to any required personal protective equipment.

Non-Medical Masks

- A well-fitted and well-constructed non-medical mask should be worn whenever employees and customers are in a shared space (indoors or outdoors) with people from outside of their immediate household.
- Employers should develop policies regarding the use of non-medical masks.
- Transit employees and passengers should wear non-medical masks when on public transit, in a transit station/terminal, or any area used for boarding or disembarking.
- Ensure the requirements for non-medical mask use set by your local public health authority are followed.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Transit employees completing tasks that require them to be less than 2 metres from another person without a physical barrier (e.g., assisting customers) may require personal protection equipment, such as a surgical mask and eye protection (e.g., goggles, face shield).
- Transit cleaners may also require PPE depending on the nature of the cleaning product and the safe handling instruction provided by the manufacturer.
- Employers should conduct a hazard assessment and make sure that employees have the correct PPE. Employees will also need to be trained on how to use the PPE properly.

COVID Alert App

- Encourage employees to install the [COVID Alert App](#) on their phone. This app is designed to let Canadians know whether they may have been exposed to COVID-19.
- The app maintains your privacy; it does not record or share your geographic location.

Evaluate Controls

- Regularly review the adequacy of the controls implemented and make improvements as necessary.
- Determine if there are any new hazards created by any of the changes implemented at the workplace. For example, for cleaning and disinfecting have employees been trained on how to safely use the cleaning and disinfecting chemicals? Have they been provided the required PPE? Review and adjust programs as necessary.



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](#).



It is important that mental health resources and support are provided to all workers, including access to an employee assistance program, if available.

For further information on COVID-19, refer to the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

Note that this guidance is just some of the adjustments organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization's specific needs.

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 from any use or reliance upon the information.