What you need to know about Coronavirus

March 13, 2020

A new coronavirus is the cause of an outbreak of respiratory infections, also known as COVID-19. Symptoms can include fever and cough, and are similar to other respiratory infections, including influenza. A committee of City staff is monitoring this situation closely and is prepared to respond and support the community as required should the situation develop further.

It’s important to know that the Government of Canada and the BC Ministry of Health continue to deem the overall risk of spread in B.C. communities as low.

If you have specific concerns or questions about the coronavirus, contact your family physician or local health unit. You can also speak to a health-care professional any time of day or night by dialing 8-1-1 (HealthLink BC).

**Help protect yourself and reduce your risk of infection by taking the following precautions:**

• Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds

• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands

• Avoid close contact with people who are sick (maintain a safe distance of 3 to 6 feet)

• Stay home if you are sick

Visit the [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019) or [Public Health Agency of Canada](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html) or [BC Centre for Disease Control](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-%28novel%29) or <https://www.interiorhealth.ca/Pages/default.aspx> for accurate and up to date information on coronavirus response.

Further updates will be provided should the situation develop further.

**Q: What is the City doing to prepare?**

A: The Director of Emergency Management together with Corporate Safety and Department Heads are monitoring the situation and will adapt the City’s response according to the best information available. Interior Health is the lead agency for the region and the current risk level is considered low. The City of Nelson is prepared to support Interior Health and the region as needed.

**Q: What do I do if I’m sick?**

A: If you are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, which include fever, cough and difficulty breathing please advise your supervisor or Human Resources, then contact your physician or call 811. Additional information from the Government of Canada can be found here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/know-facts-about-coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

**Q:  I’m travelling soon. What do I need to know?**

A: Employees should check the Government of Canada’s [website](https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notices) for travel health notices before any international travel. You should monitor your health while travelling and after you return. Always tell health care providers about recent travel if you become ill after returning to Canada.

Travel for business to any high-risk areas should be rescheduled.  If you choose to travel for personal reasons to a high-risk area that has a Government of Canada’s [travel health notice](https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notices) or if an area is added to the list while you are travelling and you are told to self-isolate, you may book leave using vacation or banked time to cover your absence from work.  If you have no leave banks available, contact Human Resources.

**Q: What if I am told to self-isolate due to illness or exposure?**

A: If you are directed to quarantine by the BC Centre for Disease Control or your physician, you can code your absence to sick leave. Call in to your supervisor so they are aware of the situation. If you have exhausted your sick leave, you will need to apply for Employment Insurance or use time from another bank. The waiting period for quarantined individuals has been waived at this time.

**Q: How will I be paid if I self-isolate?**

A: If you choose to still travel – despite the advisories that have been issued and are required to quarantine upon your return, you will need to use additional vacation or banked time in order to continue receiving pay.

**Q: I’m worried about contracting an illness while at work. What should I do?**

A: Please report the details of your concern to your supervisor. WorkSafe BC is advising employers and employees that special precautions beyond [recommended measures](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks.html#p) identified by the Government of Canada to prevent common respiratory viruses like influenza are not required.

If you are adamant about taking time away from work due to the coronavirus (and you are not advised by a medical professional), you will need to use vacation or banked time and go through normal approval process for your leave based on the operational needs of your department.

**Q: Can I work from home?**

Many City roles do not have the ability to work from home due to the nature of the position and the duties associated with it. The BC Ministry of Health continues to deem the overall risk to Canadians as low. Should the risk level change, the City will consider altering work arrangements where possible. This may include different work locations, changing meeting practices, use of technology, travelling direct from home to work for outside workers, and work from home arrangements where feasible.

**Q: Can I get hand sanitizer for my workplace?**

The City always supports good hygiene in the workplace. Cleaning supplies for phones, workstations and hand-sanitizer can be ordered using the normal process. Additional hand-sanitizers are being provided in public areas and workspaces.