



BC **MUNICIPAL**
SAFETY Association

**MUNICIPAL BEST PRACTICES:
PHYSICAL DISTANCING IN
VEHICLES**

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Municipal Best Practices Guidelines

1.0 Overview

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide Local Governments in British Columbia a standard guidance document for physical distancing in vehicles during the Covid-19 pandemic. As the document is considered as a guideline, Local Governments are encouraged to continually assess risks associated with workers traveling in vehicles and manage those risks accordingly.

1.2 Public Health Directives

The Provincial Health Officer is the senior public health official for B.C. and is responsible for monitoring the health of the population across the province, providing independent advice to the ministers and public officials on public health issues.

The responsibilities of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) are outlined in the *Public Health Act* and include the following:

- provide independent advice to the ministers and public officials on public health issues;
- monitor the health of the population of B.C. and advise on public health issues and on the need for legislation, policies and practices;
- recommend actions to improve the health and wellness of the population of BC;
- deliver reports that are in the public interest on the health of the population and on government's progress in achieving population health targets;
- establish standards of practice for and conduct performance reviews of Medical Health Officers; and
- work with the BC Centre for Disease Control and Prevention and BC's Medical Health Officers across the province to fulfill their legislated mandates on disease control and health protection.

For the purpose of developing this guideline, the Province of BC restart plan is used to match the recommendations to the timing of the restart phases. At the time of writing this document, BC was in Phase 3 on the restart plan. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/gdx/bcs_restart_plan_web.pdf

1.3 WorkSafeBC Directives (*Workers Compensation Act/OHS Regulation Requirements*)

WorkSafeBC is a provincial agency dedicated to promoting safe and healthy workplaces across BC. They partner with workers and employers to prevent work-related injury, disease, and disability. Their services include education, prevention, compensation and support for injured workers, and no-fault insurance to protect employers and workers.

WorkSafeBC helps businesses meet their obligations under the *Workers Compensation Act* and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. All employers in British Columbia have an obligation under the *Act* to ensure the health and safety of workers and other parties at their workplace. With respect to COVID-19, that responsibility includes protecting workers by following the orders issued by the office of the provincial health officer, guidance provided by the BC Centre for Disease Control and the latest news

released from the government. In addition, employers must implement policies and procedures to protect workers from the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

WorkSafeBC has provided a template for a [COVID-19 Safety Plan](#). Municipalities may choose to use this, or any other format they choose, as long as it meets the key requirements:

1. Assess the risks
2. Implement protocols
3. Develop policies
4. Develop communication plans and training
5. Monitor workplace and update plans as necessary
6. Assess and address risks from resuming operations

Employers should consider how best to communicate to workers about potential exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace. A system should be introduced so workers (including joint health and safety committee representatives and worker representatives) are able to inform management of concerns related to being exposed to COVID-19 in the workplace. Open communication is key to finding out about specific tasks that concern workers as well as gaining input on appropriate control measures to keep workers safe.

Workers should know and understand their workplace health and safety responsibilities — and those of others. Workers have three key rights:

- the right to know about hazards in the workplace;
- the right to participate in health and safety activities in the workplace; and
- the right to refuse unsafe work.

1.4 Recognize Hazards/Assess Risks

Every municipal workplace is unique. Employers must regularly assess all the hazards within their operations, taking appropriate steps to eliminate or control the associated risk. This process is referred to as a risk assessment.

Within municipalities, there are many routine situations where staff will have contact with customers, coworkers, and the physical environment itself (surfaces, doors, equipment etc.). These encounters could give rise to contact with COVID-19, if not controlled adequately.

All municipalities must think about the risks in their workplace and take steps to control them. Such controls will include adhering to current public health orders, if applicable, public health advice, as well as implementing best practices to keep your employees and customers safe.

A Risk Assessment table, adapted from WorkSafeBC Safety Regulation Guideline G6.34-6, is in Appendix B. Employers may choose to use these tables as a reference when completing their own risk assessments. Many more risk assessment tools are available on the [BCMSA](#) website.

When selecting a safeguard or a combination of safeguards, always start at the top of the hierarchy shown below to control the hazards. Choose a less effective safeguard only when more effective solutions are impracticable and continuously monitor to ensure they are providing the best level of protection to workers.

The hierarchy of controls (in order of their effectiveness):

Elimination or substitution: Has the employer fully considered eliminating or postponing work tasks that may create a risk of exposure to COVID-19? Are there opportunities to work from home or can work processes be changed to eliminate or reduce contact with others?

Engineering controls: Are engineering controls, such as physical barriers, practicable?

Administrative controls: Has the employer fully considered how work practices can be altered to minimize exposure, such as physical distancing or enhanced cleaning protocols?

Personal protective equipment (PPE): This last form of protection should only be considered after careful consideration of the previous control measures. The use of gloves and face masks may be considered where none of the above controls are possible/effective. If gloves and masks are used, proper usage guidelines should be followed.

2.0 Procedure

If workers are travelling by road vehicle, the following control measures should be considered:

- Employers should have hand-washing or sanitizing stations available to workers as they enter and exit the vehicle.
- Whenever possible, no more than two workers should travel in vehicles in order to practice physical distancing. (Consider working alone or in isolation controls, in this situation).
- Employers must ensure that high-contact surfaces within the vehicle are routinely cleaned. These include seatbelts, headrests, door handles, gear shift levers, steering wheels and hand holds.
- Gather supplies, including disposable gloves, sanitizing wipes or paper towels and sanitizing solution in a spray bottle (10:1 water to quat solution or any broad-spectrum disinfectant such as Lysol®).
- Open all the vehicle doors and allow for natural ventilation.
- Disinfect all the commonly shared and high-touch surfaces, daily and when transitioning to another driver.
- Allow the disinfectant to dry with the vehicle doors open before driving.

Spray disinfectant on cloth or paper towel and wipe all surfaces. Ensure to clean:

- Steering wheel
- Centre touchscreen and GPS screen
- All buttons, dials, and switches, including for the climate control and stereo
- Door handles, inside and outside
- Key fob and starter button
- Turn signal, gear shift and wiper lever
- Lock, and power window controls
- Seat adjuster, whether power- or manually adjustable
- Flat surfaces such as the dash, console, armrest, and door side pads
- Rear-view mirror

Two workers may drive in a single vehicle if the following conditions have been considered:

- This practice has been approved by management within your organization
- Physical distance is maintained within the vehicle of at least 2 Meters (6 feet) between workers
- An initial employee screening process has taken place for employees where they are asked if they are feeling any signs and symptoms of illness, prior to them entering a vehicle together
- Workers are following the self-monitoring requirements as outlined in the link below:
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/gdx/orders-april-10/covid19_travel_guidelines_for_essential_workers_april_10_final.pdf
- Keep windows open whenever possible.
- Turn on air ventilation and ensure “recirculation of air” is not on.
- Assign and agree between passenger(s) and driver which radio and temperature controls, operating controls/levers, etc. will be touched by which passenger to limit multiple people touching multiple components of vehicle and controls/levers.

Where physical distance cannot be maintained within a vehicle of 2 or more workers, consider one of the following preventative measures that best suits your organization:

- Consider the use of effective PPE, a cohort system for employees, or separating workers with partition or plexiglass barriers
- Consider the use of non-medical masks, understanding that these have limitations (please see Appendix A for guidelines on wearing a non-medical mask in enclosed vehicles)

As staff may share vehicles with other workers, staff should be encouraged to practice the following protocols when at home or any other place where you can self-isolate:

- Monitor yourself daily for symptoms of illness, such as a fever, cough, sore throat, or gastrointestinal issues
- If you develop symptoms, contact 811 for assessment and direction. In addition, the [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) can also be used to determine if you need further assessment or testing for COVID-19; and
- Stay home if you are sick; if your illness is mild enough to treat at home, stay home for 10 days starting with the day your symptoms started.
- Family members who have been in close contact with you are required to self-isolate for 14 days.

Staff should be encouraged to practice the following protocols when at work:

- Follow the infection prevention and control protocols of your employer to prevent the spread of COVID-19;

- Wash your hands frequently and avoid touching your face;
- Try to maintain a 2-metre distance from customers and fellow workers as much as possible (do not shake hands or congregate in lunchrooms on breaks, for example); and
- If you become ill, report to your supervisor immediately and self isolate from others. From there, call 8-1-1 or your health care provider and self isolate for 14 days unless instructed otherwise by your health care provider.
- Call 811 or your health care provider if you have come in contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and who is self-isolating as instructed to do so by a health professional.

Staff should be encouraged to practice the following protocols between your self-isolation location and work:

- Avoid unnecessary visits to public establishments except for basic needs (e.g., groceries, medications)
- Maintain a 2-metre distance between yourself and others;
- You may be asked by public health officials to take medical tests to identify and control the transmission of COVID-19; and

As with other sectors, Municipalities will be expected to develop safe operations plans, for review, that are in keeping with [Public Health and Safety Guidelines](#), as well as WorkSafeBC.

Resources to assist businesses and sectors as they restart their activities including new Health Guidelines and Checklists are available from [WorkSafeBC](#).

Appendix A - Guidelines on Wearing a Non-Medical Face Mask in Enclosed Vehicles

Staff who are required to sit in a vehicle where there are two or more workers per vehicle and are unable to distance 2 meters may use the option of donning a non-medical face mask as a means of preventing the spread of respiratory droplets. These masks should only be worn while in the vehicle to prevent the risk of respiratory droplets from others in the same vehicle. Once on the job site, staff are encouraged to maintain the 2-meter distancing at all times and as a result, are not required to wear the mask.

You may wear a non-medical face mask in a vehicle **only if** you are sharing a vehicle with another co-worker and are unable to maintain the 2-meter physical distancing within the vehicle.

When Wearing A Non-Medical Face Mask:

- Prior to putting on your mask, you must wash your hands (or use hand sanitizer).
- Prior to getting into the work vehicle, put on your face mask. It should fit well, and you should not share it with others.
- Avoid touching your face mask while it is on.
- When you arrive at the job site, carefully take off your mask and place into a designated zip lock bag.
- The mask is not required to be worn outside of the vehicle as you are encouraged to follow the physical distancing of 2 meters.
- When it is time to leave the worksite and prior to putting on your face mask, wash your hands (or use hand sanitizer).
- Locate your zip lock bag containing the face mask and put on your face mask.
- At the end of your work shift, wash your mask with soap and water and hang to dry prior to next use.

Maintaining and Disposing Your Non-Medical Face Mask that cannot be washed:

- Best attempts should be made to maintain and re-use your mask where possible due to worldwide shortages.
- Face masks can be continually used unless they get damp, soiled, or crumpled. When mask needs to be disposed of, place it in the zip type bag, seal the zip type bag and place in a lined garbage bin.

Maintaining Your Non-Medical Face Mask that can be washed:

- Best attempts should be made to maintain and care for your mask due to worldwide shortages.
- Employees wearing a non-medical cloth reusable face mask are responsible for the proper washing and caring of your mask.
- Reusable cloth face masks should be washed regularly.
- The mask can be washed using hot soapy water, or it can be washed with your other laundry in a washing machine. Do not machine dry; instead, let it air dry.

Non-medical face masks alone will not prevent the spread of COVID-19. You must consistently and strictly adhere to good hygiene and public health measures, including frequent hand washing, avoiding touching your face and physical (social) distancing when possible.

Appendix B – Department Risk Assessment Template

Department:	
Date:	
Completed by:	;

Potential Risk: Exposure through being in close proximity to other employees		Protocols to be implemented (if required):
Identify locations where employees gather (break rooms, meeting rooms, etc.):	1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • • • • •
Identify job tasks and processes where workers are close to one another:	1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • • • • •

Potential Risk: Exposure through contact with tools, machinery and equipment		Protocols to be implemented (if required):
Identify tools, machinery and equipment that workers share while working:	1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • • • • • •
Potential Risk: Exposure through interaction with / being in close proximity to members of the public		Protocols to be implemented (if required):
Identify job tasks and processes where workers are in close proximity to members of the public:	1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • • • • • •

<p>Identify what materials may be exchanged during these job tasks and processes:</p>	<p>1) _____</p> <p>2) _____</p> <p>3) _____</p> <p>4) _____</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • • • • •
<p>Potential Risk: Exposure through contact with “high-touch” surfaces</p>		<p>Protocols to be implemented (if required):</p>
<p>Identify surfaces that people touch often (doorknobs, elevator buttons, light switches, etc):</p>	<p>1) _____</p> <p>2) _____</p> <p>3) _____</p> <p>4) _____</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • • • • •

Other Potential Risks:		Protocols to be implemented (if required):	
	1) _____		
	2) _____	•	
		•	
		•	
	3) _____	•	
		•	
		•	
	4) _____	•	
		•	
		•	

Additional Comments

Department Manager Signature: _____ Date: _____

Original sent to: