



Employers' Toolkit

COVID-19 Pandemic: A guide to help
keep your employees and customers safe

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INTRODUCTION

NORCAT is a private, non-profit organization that develops and provides world-class programs, services, and resources to reduce injuries, save lives, and enhance productivity in the workplace. To accomplish this, over the past 20 years NORCAT has worked with clients and partners to develop an array of integrated training and development programs to serve multiple sectors both in Canada and around the world.

NORCAT offers training and development services for mining, construction, forestry and manufacturing industries – working with leading companies around the world on a variety of strategic and tactical programs. In addition, NORCAT has worked closely with various government ministries and corporations to assess, review, and make recommendations for enhanced training programs, health and safety policies, standard operating procedures, and technical regulations and guidelines.

The NORCAT Advisory team has developed this Employers' Toolkit to help employers reduce the impact of COVID-19 conditions on employees, visitors and customers.

This toolkit provides resources to employers of all sizes and provides steps organizations can take to understand, prepare and mitigate the potential impact of COVID-19 within their operations, including:

- Assist employers in evaluating potential situations where there may be possible exposure to COVID-19
- Describe steps employers can take to mitigate potential exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace
- Provide measures that employers can use to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace

Guiding Principles

- Each organization is unique and appropriate mitigation strategies will vary based on the type of industry, business functions, operating activities and the organization's capacity to implement strategies
- Consider all aspects of the organization that might be impacted in order to select appropriate actions
- When developing mitigation plans, organizations should identify ways to ensure the health and safety of working groups or critical roles that may be most vulnerable or at increased risk
- Activation of crisis communication plans is critical for the implementation of mitigation strategies to ensure all stakeholders receive appropriate communications in a timely manner as information is updated



About COVID-19

Symptoms of COVID-19

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It is a new illness that can impact your lungs and airways.

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure of COVID-19 and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Cough
- Fever
- Shortness of breath

For a complete list of COVID-19 symptoms, please refer to the following health officials:

- World Health Organization – https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_3
- Public Health Agency of Canada – <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/symptoms.html?topic=tilelink#s>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

The Public Health Agency of Canada provides a COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool for individuals who think they might have symptoms:



<https://ca.thrive.health/covid19/en>

This tool also provides links to province and territory-specific self-assessment tools, where applicable. Guidance is provided to individuals based on the self-assessment results.

How COVID-19 Spreads

Human coronaviruses are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- Close, prolonged personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Respiratory droplets generated when you cough or sneeze
- Touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands

How to Stop the Spread of COVID-19

Self-isolate (quarantine) immediately for 14 days if you have no symptoms and you:

- Are returning from travel outside of Canada
- Had close contact with someone who has or is suspected to have COVID-19
- Have been told by the public health authority that you may have been exposed and need to quarantine

Isolate for at least 14 days if you have:

- Been diagnosed with COVID-19, or are waiting for laboratory test results for COVID-19
- Symptoms of COVID-19, even if mild
- Been in contact with a suspected, probable or confirmed case of COVID-19
- Been advised to do so by your public health authority
- Returned from travel outside Canada and have symptoms of COVID-19

There is a difference advice to self-isolate (quarantine) and advice to isolate. Learn the difference:



<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks.html?topic=tilelink#self>

COVID-19 Prevention Strategies

There are various prevention strategies recommended by the Government of Canada, which have been described below.

Physical (social) distancing:

- Avoiding crowded places and non-essential gatherings (please reference province-specific emergency orders which stipulate limits on social gatherings)
- Avoiding common greetings, such as handshakes
- Limiting contact with people at higher risk (e.g. older adults and those in poor health)
- Keeping a distance of approximately 2 meters (6.5 feet) from others, as much as possible



The Public Health Agency of Canada has published a Physical Distancing fact sheet:

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/social-distancing/social-distancing-eng.pdf>

Hygiene:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available (list of hand sanitizers authorized by Health Canada can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/hand-sanitizer.html>)
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend of your arm, not your hand
- Dispose of any tissues you have used as soon as possible in a lined waste basket and wash your hands afterwards
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands

Cleaning:

- Disinfectant products can be effective for use against COVID-19 when used according to the label directions (list of hard surface disinfectants authorized by Health Canada can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>)
- High-touch surfaces should be cleaned often



The Public Health Agency of Canada has published a Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces fact sheet: [https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/cleaning-disinfecting-public-spaces/cleaning-disinfecting-public-spaces-eng.pdf)

[aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/cleaning-disinfecting-public-spaces/cleaning-disinfecting-public-spaces-eng.pdf](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/cleaning-disinfecting-public-spaces/cleaning-disinfecting-public-spaces-eng.pdf)

Wearing masks:

- Medical masks, like N95 masks, must be kept for health care workers and other providing direct care to COVID-19 patients
- Wearing a non-medical mask is an additional measure you can take to protect others around you as the mask acts as a barrier and helps stop the tiny droplets from spreading when you cough or sneeze (considerations in the use of homemade masks to protect against COVID-19 by Health Canada can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medical-devices/activities/announcements/covid19-notice-home-made-masks.html>)

Additional information and resources in relation to COVID-19 is provided below:

- Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) – <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>
- Health and safety in the workplace – <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/notices/coronavirus.html>



Employer Guidelines

Monitor Guidance from Health Officials

The [Public Health Agency of Canada](#), the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) and the [World Health Organization](#) provide up-to-date and reliable information on COVID-19.

Reference province and territory-specific guidelines and resources:

- Alberta – <https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>
- British Columbia – <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support>
- Manitoba – <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/index.html>
- New Brunswick – https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_diseases/coronavirus.html
- Newfoundland and Labrador – <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/>
- Northwest Territories – <https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/services/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>
- Nova Scotia – <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/>
- Nunavut – <https://www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>
- Ontario – <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/>
- Prince Edward Island – <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/covid-19>
- Quebec – <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/>
- Saskatchewan – <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/COVID19>
- Yukon – <https://yukon.ca/COVID-19>

In addition, refer to information provided by your local public health authority.

Develop a Pandemic Influenza Continuity of Operations Plan

Organizations should have continuity plans to assist in the continuance of their essential functions. Continuing to perform essential functions and provide essential services is vital to an organization's ability to remain a viable entity during times of increased threats.

Since the threat to an organization's continuity of operations is heightened during a pandemic outbreak, it is important for organizations to have a Pandemic Influenza Continuity of Operations Plan in place.

While organizations may be forced to suspend some operations due to the severity of a pandemic outbreak, an effective Continuity of Operations Plan can strengthen the ability of an organization to resume operations.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) developed a template which provides guidance to assist organizations in developing a Pandemic Influenza Continuity of Operations Plan. As indicated by FEMA, general guidance and sample information is provided for reference and organizations are encouraged to tailor the plan to meet specific organizational needs and requirements:



https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1396880633531-35405f61d483668155492a7cccd1600b/Pandemic_Influenza_Template.pdf

Develop a Crisis Communications Plan

Organizations should have a crisis communications plan to address the information needs of your various audiences; employees, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders. Your crisis communications plan will be informed by advice from applicable health officials as well as operational needs.

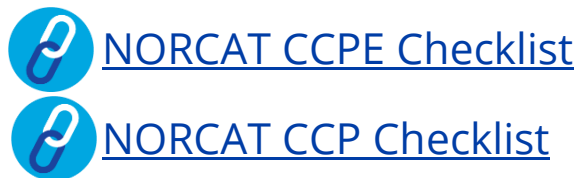
A Crisis Management Team should be able to:

- Respond to a crisis to ensure business continuity
- Monitor information updates from applicable health authorities
- Recognize and prioritize the needs and expectations of stakeholders
- Effectively communicate to various audiences, including employees, customers, suppliers and media
- Operate quickly and take decisive action

A pandemic requires a coordinated response from the organization with the intent of informing your audience:

- What is happening
- What is being planned
- Where they can obtain more information
- What they need to do, and when

NORCAT has developed a Crisis Communications Preparedness Evaluation (CCPE) Checklist and a Crisis Communications Planning (CCP) Checklist, which assists organizations as they evaluate or create a crisis communications plan:



Develop and Communicate Workplace Policies

Organizations should develop policies aimed at supporting the health and well-being of employees, visitors and customers and mitigating the potential impact of COVID-19 within the operations.

It is essential that policies be consistent with recommendations and requirements by applicable health and government officials.

Pertinent information for employees should be included within policies, such as:

- Employer commitment to health and safety of employees and key stakeholders
- Posting of infographics and fact sheets in the workplace
- Hygiene guidelines
- Housekeeping procedures (e.g. routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, equipment and other touch points in the work environment)
- Social distancing guidelines
- Guidelines for sick employees (e.g. stay home)
- Flexible worksite procedures (e.g. telecommuting, staggered shifts)
- Self-monitoring guidelines
- Screening guidelines
- Reporting procedures for employees who are sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19
- Sick leave policies consistent with health official guidelines
- Isolation and removal procedures for employees who have symptoms of COVID-19

The Public Health Agency of Canada has developed various infographics and fact sheets, which may be used by organizations:

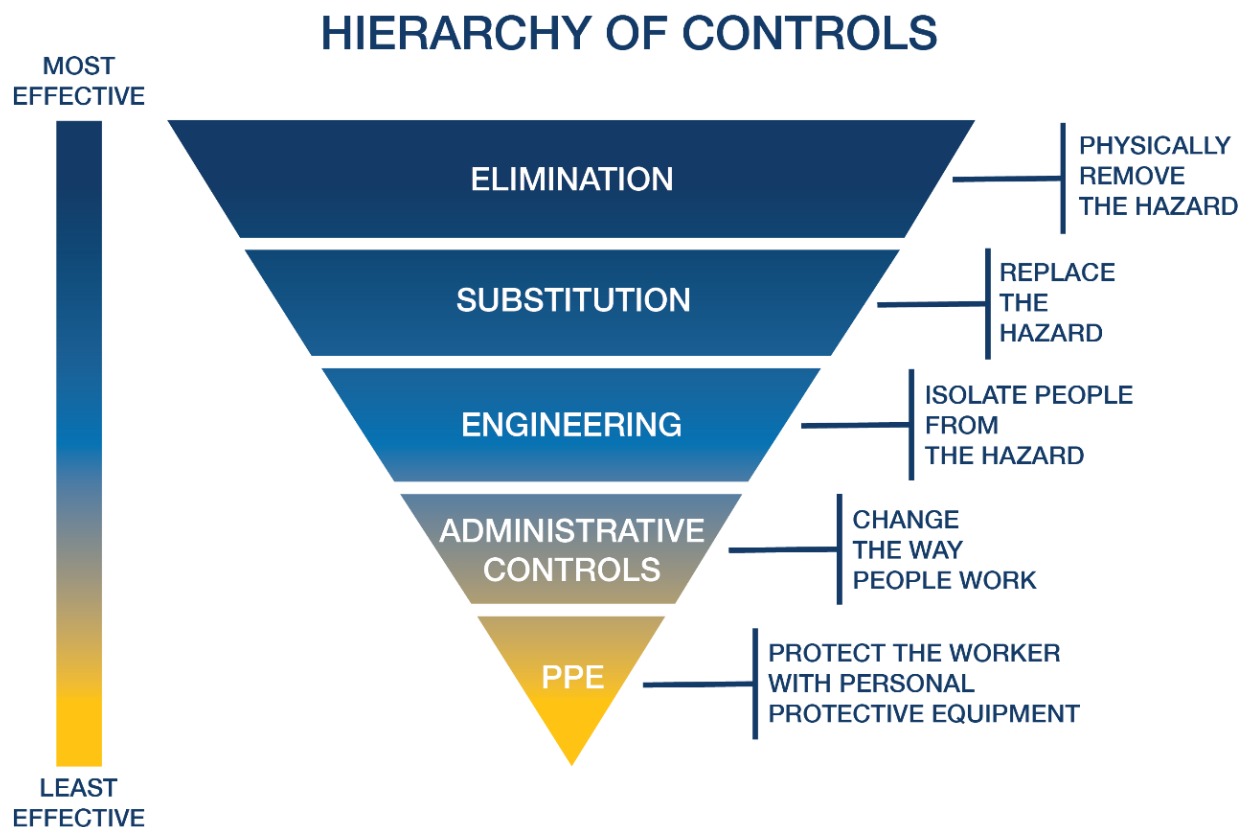
- About Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) – <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/about-coronavirus-disease-covid-19/about-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-eng.pdf>

- Reduce the Spread of COVID-19 – <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/covid-19-handwashing/covid-19-handwashing-eng.pdf>
- Be Prepared (COVID-19) – <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/covid-19-be-prepared-infographic/covid-19-be-prepared-infographic-eng.pdf>

Complete a COVID-19 Job Hazard Analysis

COVID-19 is a workplace hazard. Conducting a job hazard analysis (JHA) is the most effective way to identify potential sources of exposure within your operations.

Occupational health and safety professionals within your organization can use a framework called the “hierarchy of controls” to select ways of controlling these workplace hazards.



Examples of engineering, administration and personal protective equipment (PPE) controls have been listed for reference.

Engineering Controls:

- Installing physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards
- Installing a drive-through window for customer service

Administration Controls:

- Encouraging sick employees to stay home
- Replacing face-to-face meetings with virtual meetings
- Implementing telework
- Establishing alternating shifts or schedules
- Discontinuing nonessential travel
- Developing crisis communications plans to respond to employee concerns
- Providing up-to-date education and information to employees
- Providing resources and posting information that promotes hygiene

PPE Controls:

- Can offer some protection in certain circumstances
- Gloves, goggles, face shields, face masks, and respiratory protection

NORCAT has developed a COVID-19 Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) document:

**This document serves as a tool that will:**

- Guide employers in identifying potential hazards associated with workplace jobs / tasks
- Offer questions to ask when identifying potential hazards
- Provide considerations when conducting a JHA
- Make available for use a JHA Form template

The JHA form template follows a relatively simple process that involves the following three basic steps:

1. Determine the various jobs / tasks that employees perform
2. Identify the potential hazards associated with each job / task
3. Determine which controls are necessary to minimize or eliminate the potential hazard



Need more help?

Don't see what you are looking for?

Contact NORCAT Advisory

We are an organization rooted in health and safety



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Job Hazard
Analysis



Crisis Communications
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