Communicable disease prevention A guide for employers

This guide is not meant for workplaces that are required to have an existing exposure control plan (ECP) related to communicable disease, such as health care employers. See section 6.34 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation for more information about ECPs.

As COVID-19 vaccinations have become widely available to British Columbians, the overall risk of COVID-19 transmission and serious consequences has diminished. Despite this, the virus will still circulate like other communicable diseases.

This guide provides information for employers to develop a communicable disease plan. An effective plan includes ongoing measures to reduce the risk of communicable disease and additional measures for when there's an elevated risk of communicable disease.

Managing communicable disease at your workplace is part of an effective occupational health and safety program.

Communicable disease prevention

A communicable disease is an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxic product that can be transmitted in a workplace from one person to another. Examples of communicable disease that may circulate in a workplace include COVID-19, norovirus, and seasonal influenza.

This guide describes a four-step process to help employers develop a communicable disease plan. This plan does not need to be written, posted, or approved by WorkSafeBC. Your plan may be supported by policies, signage, or other materials as appropriate to your workplace and the level of risk. Some employers may benefit from documenting their plan to assist in planning and communicating their communicable disease prevention measures, practices, and policies. A template is provided at the end of this guide for that purpose.

Step 1: Understand the risk

Preventing communicable disease involves taking ongoing measures to reduce the risk of communicable

disease transmission in your workplace. It also involves implementing additional measures when advised to do so by Public Health during periods of elevated risk.

The level of risk of certain communicable diseases, including COVID-19, may increase from time to time or on a seasonal basis. This may occur at a local or regional level, or within a certain workplace.

Monitor and review communicable disease-related information issued by your regional medical health officer or the provincial health officer if it's related to your industry, region, or workplace. This includes orders, guidance, notices, and recommendations issued by a medical health officer or the provincial health officer.

Step 2: Implement measures, practices, and policies to reduce the risk Ongoing measures — Maintain at all times

As an employer, you must implement and maintain the following measures at all times.

- Implement policies to support staff who have symptoms of a communicable disease (e.g., fever or chills, coughing, diarrhea) so they can avoid being at the workplace when sick.
- Provide hand-hygiene facilities with appropriate supplies (see section 4.85 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation). Use policies and signage to remind workers to wash their hands regularly and to cover coughs and sneezes.
- Maintain a clean environment through routine cleaning processes that are appropriate for your industry and work practices.
- Make sure building ventilation is adequate and ventilation systems are properly maintained and functioning as designed. For more



 your workers healthy and safe Setting up, organizing, and working comfortably in your home workspace Post signage in your workplace to support the measures you have in place. Make sure your supervisors are knowledgeable about your measures, practices, and policies, and incorporate these into supervision practices at the workplace. Provide information, signage, and materials to workers in a language they understand.
 Be mindful that some aspects of managing communicable disease in the workplace may raise privacy and confidentiality issues. Seek
advice on these issues as necessary. Step 4: Monitor your workplace
and update your plan as necessary
Continuously evaluate and update your plan to reflect changing risk levels and work practices. Joint health and safety committees and worker representatives play an important role in identifying and resolving workplace health and safety issues. When identifying and resolving safety issues, involve joint health and safety committees or worker health and safety representatives (or, in smaller workplaces, other workers).
Use workplace inspections and ongoing supervision in the workplace to ensure measures are functioning properly, followed, and maintained.
Monitor the guidance, notices, orders, and recommendations from Public Health (as required in Step 1). Adjust your plan as necessary.
☐ Monitor your workplace and risk level.
☐ Change your measures, practices, and policies
as necessary.



Communicable disease prevention planning template

The following template may be useful for employers in documenting and communicating their communicable disease prevention measures, practices, and policies. This is an optional resource, and may be used or adapted as suited to the individual employer.

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Regulation). Use policies and signage to remind workers to wash their hands and to cover coughs and sneezes. The following resources may be of use to employers in communicating appropriate practices around the workplace: · Prevent the spread of communicable disease: Handwashing • Prevent the spread of communicable disease: Cover coughs and sneezes Maintain a clean environment through routine cleaning processes that are appropriate for your industry and work practices.

Provide hand-hygiene facilities and appropriate supplies (see section 4.85 of the Occupational Health and Safety

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