



WORKPLACES OUTSIDE OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

FOR MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES IN THE CORE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OF CANADA'S FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE REQUIRED TO WORK OFF-PREMISES AND/OR IN THE FIELD

PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

- This supplemental tip sheet builds on the general tips in Tip Sheet #3; please use in conjunction with the general tips.
- This tip sheet is designed for employees who are required to work in the field, including off-premises from a federal government facility, for example, employees carrying out inspections, other compliance and enforcement activities, audits, seizures, or legal activities; nurses in First Nations communities; scientists conducting field work, etc. The tip sheet is structured in three broad sections: pre-visit, during visit, post-visit.
- This tip sheet is guidance only and is not intended to replace the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Task Hazard Analysis (THA), Safe Work Procedures, direction and instruction, etc. that employers must provide to employees. Certain unique work conditions, such as working in Northern communities, may present particular challenges or barriers from adhering to the following guidance. In these circumstances, consult your departmental Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) committees, existing SOPs, THAs, and/or procedures (if applicable) and your management team for further guidance before implementing the easing of restrictions for the work environment. Please ensure that you have been informed of and trained on any new procedures or equipment required to protect you from contracting COVID-19 prior to conducting any site visits.

PUBLIC HEALTH CONTEXT

- Coronaviruses** are commonly spread from an infected person, even one with only mild or no **symptoms**, through respiratory droplets that are generated when they cough or sneeze. Laughing, singing or talking enthusiastically may also generate respiratory droplets. Maintain **physical distancing** by staying more than 2 metres (6 feet) from others as much as possible, as transmission can happen when these droplets land directly on your eyes, nose or mouth. Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds in case you have touched something with the virus on it.
- Self-monitor for symptoms throughout the period of the pandemic. If you are experiencing symptoms or believe you may have been exposed to individual(s) with symptoms of COVID-19, take precautions to contain the infection by isolating, reporting the incident to your manager, not going to work, contacting your local public health authority, and following their instructions.
- If you need **mental health** support, there are services and resources available to help you, such as the **Wellness Together Canada: Mental Health and Substance Use Support** portal and your Department or Agency's **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**.
- Consider and respect all local, provincial and community-specific instruction and guidance in the geographic area of the premise especially if it is a geographic area with a higher level of community transmission. If you are at **increased risk of severe COVID-19**, speak to your manager about postponing off-premises work in these geographic areas or reassigning another inspector until transmission in the community decreases.

A. PRE-VISIT

- Determine the time sensitivity and/or risk of not performing off-premise work. Consider the public safety and security risk and departmental/agency direction on their particular compliance and enforcement oversight activities to determine whether the work can be postponed, modified (consider minimizing or eliminating tasks that increase potential risks) or conducted by leveraging technology. All appointments that can be postponed should be.
- When considering what work can be done virtually or remotely, consider any limitations that may be present in the enabling Act that may preclude certain aspects of the work to be performed in this way. When making the decision to conduct the work virtually, ensure that you have established clear and defensible criteria for the decision, particularly for circumstances that the virtual approach may be called into question or subject to an appeal, and that the virtual method selected will meet the standards for evidence and privacy.
- If the work is deemed critical, high priority and/or time-sensitive, the decision on how to proceed needs to follow federal directives and respect the provincial/territorial precautions and local and Indigenous community COVID-19 protocols that can include restrictions to travel and interaction with community and require check-ins
- For situations where it is anticipated that 2-metre **physical distancing** may not be consistently possible, managers should work with their Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) committees to determine the appropriate actions to ensure the health and safety of employees, which may include the use of a **non-medical mask and/or cloth face covering** (for more information on non-medical masks and cloth face coverings, see Tip Sheet #3).
- Ensure you have adequate supplies for the visit as required, e.g., **cleaning and disinfectant supplies** (wipes) to clean and sanitize goods and equipment you handle while on site, or non-medical masks/cloth face coverings (for yourself and individuals you come into contact with).

EXPECTED/ANNOUNCED VISITS

- Make a preliminary call or send a pre-drafted note to clients before going on-site. This will help to ensure those on-site are prepared for the visit by providing them with instructions and information on what to expect. Conduct a pre-visit risk assessment considering the following:
 - ▶ Consult any publically available guidance and protocols on the **COVID-19** safety measures in effect on the premises and discuss what standard precautions have been implemented, including systems and protocols for physical distancing, **hand hygiene** (using soap and water or an **alcohol-based hand sanitizer**), employee sickness and enhanced cleaning;
 - ▶ Determine if there have been known or suspected COVID-19 cases in the workplace and the last date of a new or suspected case. If there have been several or recent known or suspected cases of COVID-19, determine what measures the worksite has taken to prevent transmission, e.g., compliance with public health advice, employee and visitor screening protocols, communications with employees, infection prevention and control plans, isolation procedures. Encourage the client organization to have an infection prevention and control plan if they do not already have one;
 - ▶ Discuss any additional protective measures within your itinerary that may be unique to the site. If possible, make every effort to request in advance, site-specific safety protocols;
 - ▶ Request that the number of people present during the visit be limited to as few as possible and that plans are in place to maintain physical distancing as much as possible;
 - ▶ Discuss the protocol for handling paperwork, samples, materials, equipment, evidence and/or samples in advance to minimize the amount of people who handle objects. If possible, request paperwork, materials, samples and/or evidence in advance;
 - ▶ Schedule an appointment including precise time and location. Discuss any necessary arrangements required to ensure physical distancing at all stages of the on-site visit, to the extent possible; and
 - ▶ Discuss if hand washing station and supplies (e.g., soap/water, paper towels) will be available. If not, be sure to have an acceptable alternative for washing/sanitizing hands.

FLEET VEHICLES

- When planning the use of a fleet vehicle, assign one driver/operator per vehicle for as long as possible to minimize switching. Drive alone if possible.
 - ▶ If unable to drive alone, as much as possible, employees are to avoid physical contact. Eliminate the use of the front passenger seat to maintain physical distancing. Alternate seats so the driver and passenger are diagonal from each other (not beside or right in front/ behind each other). Wear a non-medical mask or cloth face cloth covering, as long as it does not interfere with the safe operation of the vehicle. Ensure the vehicle ventilation system is adjusted to have fresh air circulation and not to re-circulate the interior air;
 - ▶ Consider using a daily register to log all trips (who, when, where) and cleaning frequency;
 - ▶ Clean frequently touched surfaces in the fleet vehicle;
 - A higher frequency of stops can increase the amount of times you may need to clean touched surfaces in and outside the vehicle. Perform hand hygiene before re-entering the vehicle; and
 - Get into the habit of cleaning your vehicle interior as often as needed (minimum twice daily) in order to limit the risk of transmission.
- Clean high touch areas (if potentially touched and/or soiled since last clean) and then disinfect with disinfectant wipes every time you re-enter the vehicle.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (included but not limited to):
 - ▶ Keys or FOBs;
 - ▶ Starter button on vehicles with FOBs;
 - ▶ Inside and outside door handles; pads and armrests;
 - ▶ Steering wheel;
 - ▶ Shift lever and console;
 - ▶ Dashboard;
 - ▶ Power window and power door lock switches;
 - ▶ Radio and climate control buttons;
 - ▶ Turn signal and wiper stalks;
 - ▶ Seat and seat adjuster;
 - ▶ Touch screens;
 - ▶ Glove compartment;
 - ▶ Trunk;
 - ▶ Gas caps; and
 - ▶ Seatbelts.
- Have a garbage bag or a plastic-lined wastebasket in the fleet vehicle to dispose of any used tissues or cleaning waste. Place the garbage bag or wastebasket in a convenient location to ensure materials are not spreading contamination. Dispose of garbage bags when necessary at stops.
- Review and reduce the belongings that you have in the vehicle and eliminate any unnecessary clutter.
- Organize your belongings to ensure that everything in your fleet vehicle is neat and organized. This will help make the daily routine of cleaning the vehicle easier.
- As you increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting, monitor your supply of disinfectant wipes, cleaning products, **personal protective equipment (PPE)**, towels, etc.

TRAVEL

One of the factors identified as a risk during COVID-19 is overnight stays at traditional accommodations where physical distancing options are limited and/or there is a risk of exposure from high contact surfaces, such as hotel lobbies or elevators. If you are traveling by air, train or bus, review federal **travel advisories**, as well as guidelines, instructions and restrictions currently in place by Transport Canada.

- Pre-Travel
 - ▶ Contact your accommodations and review their COVID-19 cleaning policies and procedures;
 - ▶ Single occupancy rooms are highly recommended;
 - ▶ Confirm that the unit has been cleaned and disinfected;
 - ▶ Inquire about contactless services;
 - ▶ Confirm whether there are facilities to prepare and store food items. For travel to remote areas, confirm that there will be a source of food and water for the duration of the stay;

- ▶ Plan your travel route carefully.
 - Factor in current restrictions on domestic (inter- and intra-provincial/territorial) travel;
 - Identify washroom facilities, gas stations and restaurants on route; and
 - Identify local health emergency services (e.g., clinics, hospitals etc.).

□ During Travel

- ▶ Upon arrival at your place of lodging, inspect the room for cleanliness and consider using your own approved disinfectant for high-touch surfaces;
- ▶ Upon entering your room at a place of lodging, remove remaining layers of clothes at the door, shower and change into clean clothes;
- ▶ If possible, and weather permitting, considering opening a window to allow for fresh circulation of air in the room;
- ▶ Request non-contact service during your stay, including the stopping of cleaning services to ensure physical distancing and electronic receipts;
- ▶ Physical distancing is to be optimized in all modes of travel wherever possible, including chartered plane, boat or car. Risk is elevated with multiple modes of travel, multiple travelers, and multiple contact. Avoid traveling in larger groups wherever possible;
- ▶ Use bottled water and refillable water containers so you do not drink directly from public water fountains;
- ▶ Consider sanitizing touch surfaces before using washrooms during travel;
- ▶ Avoid restaurants and bars. Order take-out or contactless delivery if possible, and stay in your room for meals; and
- ▶ Avoid using public common areas (pool, gym).

B. DURING VISIT

- If working with others on site, ensure, if possible, **COVID-19** safety is discussed at the outset of the visit to ensure individuals on-site understand the risks and mitigations to prevent transmission of the virus.
- Review the on-site measures that have been put in place against the pre-site visit risk assessment to determine if there are gaps which would compromise your safety.
- The most important and most effective measure to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 is **physical distancing** and frequent **hand hygiene**. In the field, this may mean:
 - Using work areas at different times or in a manner that maximizes physical distancing;
 - Avoiding sharing tools and equipment as much as possible. Where tools and equipment must be shared, ensure enhanced cleaning occurs before and after use by each individual;
 - Eliminating contact greetings such as handshakes or other greetings that would require people to be closer than the 2-metre physical distance as required;
 - Obeying floor markers;
 - Working with the same colleague(s) in smaller teams if more than one person is required for the task. Consider keeping teams separate as much as possible to minimize possible transmission;
 - Bringing your own lunch/food/utensils to avoid making additional stops;
 - Managing the flow of people and/or limiting numbers of people admitted to only a few at a time in your workspace wherever possible;
 - Politely informing your site contact that you will increase your physical distance from all individuals to the extent practical, in order to adhere to public health recommendations. Establish a larger than typical “personal space” (2-metres or more).
 - Using a **non-medical mask** or a cloth face covering when physical distancing cannot be consistently maintained or if required by the worksite;

- Carrying paper bags or envelopes in which to place reusable non-medical masks/cloth face coverings if/when they are removed so as not to contaminate surfaces; and
 - Avoid close contact with anyone exhibiting **symptoms** of respiratory sickness such as shortness of breath, coughing, sneezing, and physical appearance of fever (e.g., sweating). Keep a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic individual and after assessing the severity of the situation, confirm whether the off-premises work can be rescheduled or completed remotely. The ill individual should be dealt with appropriately adhering to public health recommendations.
- Conduct **cleaning and disinfecting** activities on high-touch areas before, and after, use and as necessary. Clean all surfaces and equipment before and after use.
 - Wherever possible, quarantine equipment, documents or objects/samples collected for several days.
 - Consider keeping detailed notes as applicable including dates, time in and out, location, persons present, and any direct contact within 2 metres with an individual or anything unusual observed including any sick or possibly sick persons while adhering to privacy standards.
 - Consider sanitizing touch surfaces before using washrooms. Minimize recontamination of hands after washing by covering your hands with paper towel to turn off taps and open doors.
 - If you need to enter into a vehicle or building for off-premises work, ensure that you make every effort to maintain physical distancing throughout the duration of the activity. In addition:
 - ▶ Perform hand hygiene before and after entering the vehicle or building;
 - ▶ Wear a non-medical mask/cloth face covering or **PPE** as appropriate (PPE use should be discussed with your manager and the OHS committee);
 - ▶ Provide a non-medical mask or cloth face covering to individuals if working within 2 metres of others, if possible; and
 - ▶ Avoid touching objects unless necessary. Whenever possible, try not to touch equipment or objects that are not your own. For example, when inspecting an object, direct the subject to manipulate the object as required and observe from a safe physical distance.

CLOSE CONTACT INTERACTIONS

- Where employees have close contact with an individual during off-premises work, they should consider the following:
 - ▶ Incidences that require physical contact should be minimized as much as possible. It is advised to record as much information as you can, disengage and follow up when it safe to do so. Every effort should be made to minimize the duration of the required intervention. For example, complete administrative tasks that do not require interaction with others (such as documentation, radio and phone calls), in a separate location or at a distance from others, as permitted given the security risk;
 - ▶ If your work requires physical contact with others, (e.g., use of force, search or arrest) you may need to use appropriate PPE as discussed with OHS committees. Following the incident, the PPE should be removed and disposed of and reusable gear such as a duty belt, should be disinfected;
 - ▶ Providing a non-medical mask to others to protect you and others from potential exposure;
 - ▶ Asking screening questions (see Tip Sheet #3) to identify whether the person may be infected with COVID-19;
 - ▶ Performing hand hygiene immediately afterwards; and
 - ▶ Containing and laundering uniform and work clothes as soon as possible at the end of the shift/work day (consider utilizing plastic bags to isolate work clothes).

C. POST-VISIT

- Once off-premise work is complete:
 - ▶ Properly remove gloves (if worn) and dispose of them in an appropriate lined garbage receptacle at the site, or in a sealed plastic bag for future disposal with regular garbage;
 - ▶ Properly remove reusable **non-medical masks** (if worn) and place in a paper bag or envelope so it can be properly washed and dried prior to reuse;
 - ▶ If hands are visibly soiled, use of soap and water is recommended. If not available, soiling should be removed first, followed by use of an alcohol-based **hand sanitizer**. This control measure applies whether or not you were wearing gloves;
 - ▶ Perform proper **hand hygiene** prior to packing up tools and equipment. Wash/sanitize tools and equipment if facilities are available or store in a plastic bag for washing/sanitizing later. **Clean/disinfect** other **PPE** (if PPE is re-usable) to the extent practical when there is an opportunity to do so. Perform hand hygiene again after handling these items;
 - ▶ Shower at the end of any work day involving a site visit and change into clean clothes. Launder your work clothes at frequent intervals, ideally after each day of off-premises work. Launder with detergent at the warmest appropriate temperature, based on the garment label and dry items completely;
 - ▶ Continue to self-monitor for **symptoms** throughout the period of the pandemic. If you are experiencing symptoms or believe you may have been exposed to individual(s) with symptoms of COVID-19, take precautions to contain the infection by self-isolating, reporting the incident to your manager, contacting your local public health authority and following their instructions.
- Ensure fleet and shared vehicles are cleaned and disinfected after use and recorded in the daily log.
- Ensure all incidents and hazards are recorded and communicated to your manager.

Public Health Information: canada.ca/coronavirus

Information for Federal Public Service Employees: canada.ca/coronavirus-publicservice

Risk Mitigation Tool for Workplaces/Businesses Operating During the COVID-19 Pandemic: canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/risk-informed-decision-making-workplaces-businesses-covid-19-pandemic.html

Mental Health and COVID-19 for Public Servants: canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/covid-19/protect-mental-health.html

Health Canada Public Service Occupational Health Program in collaboration with the Community of Federal Regulators (10 July 2020)