

COVID-19 WORKING WITHIN PHYSICAL DISTANCING PROTOCOL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Definitions
 - Physical Distancing
 - Close Contact
- 3.0 Before a Daily Task/Tasks Begin
- 4.0 Controlling the risk of COVID-19 Transmission if Physical Distancing is not maintained
 - 4.1 Workers
 - 4.2 Supervision
 - 4.3 Handwashing
 - 4.4 Cleaning and Disinfecting
 - 4.5 Clothing
 - 4.6 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
 - 4.7 Absence of Construction Environmental Factors
 - 4.8 If there are Construction Environmental Conditions (e.g. Particulate Matter)
 - 4.9 Additional Considerations to be taken when utilizing facial PPE

1.0 Introduction

This guide is produced by the Gillam Group, members of the Ontario General Contractors Association (OGCA) Safety Committee and other health and safety professionals. Special thanks to Craig Lesurf, President of Gillam Group for his leadership on the development of this guide.

The primary purpose of the Guide is to provide Owners, Consultants and Proponents with recommended “best practices” for when Physical Distancing is not possible on a construction site. It is particularly important that an effective policy and procedure is in place as we begin the first phase of reopening business in Ontario.

It is our goal to illuminate the transition of COVID-19 on all Ontario construction sites.

The recommended practices in the Guide reflect the underlying principles for conducting safe work practices in construction and support the Chief Prevention Officers Guidelines for COVID-19.

We offer this document to the industry to support healthy and safe workplaces. We encourage you to use it and share it with any interested party.

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2.0 Definitions

Physical Distancing means keeping a distance of two (2) metres (6 feet) between workers. All work and movement on site are to respect the Physical Distancing guidelines and needs to consider:

- Restricting the number of people on site and in areas where they are assigned to work
- Controlling site movement (by limiting the potential for workers to gather and avoiding pinch points in common paths of travel)
- One-way staircases and aisles are established wherever practical to minimize worker contact
- Avoid large groups, keep gatherings at a minimum. If needed, break up into smaller groups for orientations, job planning/coordination, JHA reviews, Toolbox Talks, etc.
- Holding virtual meetings, or outside, or within large open spaces to enable Physical Distancing and taking account seasonal restrictions and weather
- Limiting unnecessary on-site contact between workers and outside service providers/workers and encourage Physical Distancing
- Foremen and superintendents should consider the importance of collaboration and site planning activities to facilitate appropriate Physical Distancing two (2) metres between workers from different Trades during any particular shift
- The construction site is to be segregated to the extent possible in zones or other methods to keep different crews/trades physically separated at all time. This promotes Physical Distancing and supports the containment of COVID-19 should it arise
- Eating is restricted to clearly identified, dedicated eating areas with handwashing stations, cleaning and disinfectant materials and adequate space and facilities to maintain minimum Physical Distancing
- Restricting the number of people allowed in each zone and in facilities like meeting rooms, washrooms, trailers, elevators, hoists and eating areas to allow for the recommended minimum Physical Distancing
- Develop strategies for staggering work schedules for start times, breaks and meals
- Freight elevators and man/material hoists are operated/occupied by only one individual at a time or by respecting the minimum Physical Distancing guidelines or PPE protocols
- Where distancing between workers cannot be achieved due to the work task/activity being performed, employers shall create and communicate with their workers task specific safe work procedures that include measures to protect their workers from breaching Physical Distancing limits, including the provision of engineering controls, administrative controls, or appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to their workers to provide source control of any potential exposure to respiratory secretions (e.g. coughing or sneezing)

Close Contact means being within two (2) meters (6 ft) of another person for longer than 15 minutes in the following scenarios:

- had direct contact with infectious bodily fluids and exposure to respiratory secretions of a presumptive case (e.g. was coughed or sneezed on without the appropriate use of recommended PPE) or
- lived with or otherwise had close contact with a case up to 48 hours prior to symptom onset or while the case was symptomatic and not isolating, or
- provided direct care for a case (without consistent and appropriate use of recommended PPE)

3.0 Before a Daily Task/Tasks Begins

For any task that dictates a breach of Physical Distancing, a procedure must be written by the foreman/supervisor with an attached hazard assessment ensuring all controls have been discussed and agreed to by all workers involved with the task or tasks.

If Physical Distancing is not possible while doing work tasks, you must carefully manage and minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and eliminate any Close Contact and follow the protocol outlined below.

First, consider whether or not the task is truly essential at this time:

- Can the task be delayed?
- Can the workforce times for start, break and lunches be staggered?
- Can the task be performed safely if done in another manner?
- Can the number of workers involved be reduced?

Foreman/Supervisors will monitor Any Physical Distancing breaches and ensure they are controlled and ensure their workers do not neglect other safety procedures during Physical Distancing breaches. If tasks need to be performed where Physical Distancing cannot be maintained, it is recommended that a risk assessment be performed prior to performing the task to mitigate any potential hazards.

4.0 Controlling the Risk of COVID-19 Transmission if Physical Distancing is not maintained

4.1 Workers

A task that requires a Physical Distancing breach should not be assigned to workers who are at higher risk of complications due to COVID-19 including:

- Workers who are over the age of 60
- Workers with chronic health conditions including diabetes, heart disease and lung disease
- Workers who are immunocompromised

Use the Government of Ontario COVID-19 self-assessment <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/> before allowing access to the worksite.

Do NOT permit workers on to a worksite until they complete the COVID-19 Screening Questionnaire or if they meet the following criteria:

- Have or had symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days (dry cough or sore throat, fever, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever or chills, loss of taste or smell, cold or flu symptoms)
- Have travelled outside of Canada within the previous 14 days
- Live with or have been in Close Contact with someone with COVID-19 (presumed or confirmed) within the past 14 days

4.2 Supervision

It is recommended that any work underway that breaches the 2 metre Physical Distancing requirements be regularly monitored by a supervisor/foreperson, who has a basics of supervision record of training (ROT) or a letter from their employer stating they are competent to direct all tasks to complete the job and qualified to administer the OHS Act and regulations.

This supervisor/worker would ensure that the:

- COVID-19 hazard assessment and procedures have been properly followed
- Physical Distancing breaches are as brief as possible
- Other safety considerations are not overlooked during the execution of work involving the Physical Distancing breaches

4.3 Handwashing

- Meticulous hand hygiene is crucial to avoid self-inoculation from face touching
- Provide a handwashing or hand sanitizing station that is easily accessible for the workers that are working within the Physical Distancing breach
- Wash hands thoroughly and at the end of any task, especially when a Physical Distancing breach has been actioned. If gloves are worn, wash hands when gloves are removed. Re-usable gloves should be disinfected or if disposable gloves are used, they should be placed into a garbage container

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. When soap and running water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands that are visibly soiled
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed bare or gloved hands.

4.4 Cleaning and Disinfecting

- When the task is completed, ensure the tools, ladders, platforms and equipment that were used are cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the Canadian Guidelines for Disinfecting Work Areas, Machines, Equipment and Supplies or <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/cleaning-disinfecting-public-spaces.html>
- Schedule regular sanitization of common touch areas including but not limited to door handles, ladders, washroom facilities, hand tools, electrical cords, elevating devices, lifts, scaffolding, machine equipment levers and commonly touched office equipment, etc.
- Do not share personal items or supplies such as phones, pens, notebooks, tools, PPE, etc.
- Use a checklist or spreadsheet to document cleaning activities

4.5 Clothing:

Clothing should be changed at the end of the shift to help reduce the risk of take-home exposure. Bring work clothing home in a plastic bag and wash work clothing daily

4.6 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

The procedures outlined above shall be followed before the use of specialized PPE is considered. When the procedures above are followed, the risk of disease transmission between workers is minimized and specialized PPE may not be required.

Essentially, there are two different scenarios that need to be considered when choosing the correct PPE for your face. Does the task need a respirator, or can a face covering be used to protect from COVID-19-related concerns and provide source control? In all cases, proper safety eye protection must be worn, and depending on the work being performed, the correct respiratory protection selected.

Currently with the shortage across the globe; Medical masks, including surgical, medical procedure face masks and respirators (like the N95 or equivalent), must be kept for health care workers and others providing direct care to COVID-19 patients as directed by Public Health Authorities. These respirators are to ONLY be utilized in a normal construction situation that demands a respirator due to on site environmental factors.

4.7 Absence of Construction Environmental Factors

In the absence of construction environmental factors that require a respirator, then alternate face coverings (e.g. cloth face masks, medical and surgical styled masks, facial fabric coverings and face shields) are to be utilized. Following our site entry procedures including the Ontario Screening Questionnaire, workers breaching Physical Distancing would not be exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 and therefore, by using these alternate face coverings,

may further reduce the risk of any asymptomatic transmission. These do not necessarily protect the wearer of the face covering, but they may reduce the spread of droplets from an infected or asymptomatic individual. When used, they should be used by all workers who are involved in Physical Distancing breaches and within close contact.

Face coverings are loose-fitting face “masks” that cover your nose, mouth and chin. They’re used to:

- Protect the wearer from sprays, splashes, and large-particle droplets
- Prevent the spread of potentially infectious respiratory secretions from the wearer to others

They can vary in design, (be manufactured or homemade) but the face covering itself is often flat and rectangular in shape with pleats or folds. Numerous designs are available. Elastic bands or long, straight ties help hold the face covering in place while you’re wearing it. These can either be looped behind your ears or tied behind your head.

These face coverings should be used with caution as they may increase the frequency of hand-to-mouth contact and they need to be regularly cleaned and disinfected or new ones utilized.

Information about non-medical masks and face coverings utilized during the COVID-19 pandemic can be found on the Health Canada website at:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medical-devices/activities/announcements/covid19-notice-home-made-masks.html>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/instructions-sew-no-sew-cloth-face-covering.html>

4.8 If there are Construction Environmental Conditions (e.g. particulate matter)

Utilize N95 disposable particulate respirators which are designed to help provide reliable respiratory protection of at least 95 percent filtration efficiency against certain non-oil based particles (as a minimum). This respirator is designed for particles produced by applications such as grinding, sanding, sweeping, sawing, bagging, or other dusty operations. Other options might include reusable respirators such as the half face (that cover the nose and mouth) or the full face (that cover the eyes and much of the face and can sometimes replace the need for safety glasses). The respirators/filters can be rated at 95, 99 or 100 percent and alternately R or P rated (oil Present) designated respirators can be used in lieu of the N (No oil) rated version due to current availability due to the pandemic.

Only workers who have had a fit test can use a half face mask. A copy of the record of training shall be kept at the site trailer.

Foreman/Supervisors will refer to the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for the correct filter cartridge to be used in any given exposure.

4.9 Additional Considerations to be taken when utilizing facial PPE:

- Any PPE requirements for workers would supersede source control policies
- Wash with soap and water for 20 seconds or sanitize hands immediately before putting on the face covering and immediately after removing it
- Avoid touching the face while wearing the face covering
- Employ proper donning and doffing techniques for all face coverings, masks and respirators by ensuring that they are not handled on the surfaces of the face coverings, masks and respirators i.e. do not touch the dome to reduce the risk of the contamination to the hands. Instead always remove the mask utilizing the cheek strings and straps
- Plastic face shields should be cleaned and disinfected between uses
- Change the face covering only by touching the straps or ear loops
- Do not share cloth face coverings between workers
- Use a clean cloth mask whenever a mask becomes damp or soiled or change at least daily
- After use, place cloth masks into a bag that can be emptied into a washing machine
- Launder cloth masks with other items using a hot cycle and dry thoroughly
- Do not place face coverings on any work surface, common area or equipment
- Respiratory protection (half-face respirators with P95 or P100 filters, or N95 masks): These may be in short supply and are not required in most circumstances. If available, they should be prioritized for workers who need to work in proximity to people who have symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. first aid attendants treating people who develop symptoms of COVID-19 at work) or when environmental conditions dictate. All tight-fitting respirators must be fit tested and the wearer must be clean-shaven
- Safety glasses or safety goggles are to be worn at all times and can be used in conjunction with face coverings, masks, respirators and face shields
- If gloves are used, hands should be thoroughly washed after removing gloves. Re-usable gloves should be disinfected or if disposable gloves are used, they should be placed into the garbage

*Some people can spread the virus when they have very mild symptoms or may be unaware, they are infected. In this case, wearing a mask or face covering can help in containing your own droplets and protect others but it will not protect you from COVID-19. Masks may give a person a false sense of security and are likely to increase the number of times a person will touch their own face (e.g., to adjust the mask or remove the mask). **Any mask or respirator, no matter how efficient at filtration or how good the seal, will have minimal effect if it is not used together with other preventive measures, such as frequent hand washing and maintaining Physical Distancing.***