

December 15th, 2020

COVID-19 –Managing a Pandemic on site

Recommended process for Employers to follow

The Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association recommends every employer to conduct a workplace specific risk assessment related to the COVID-19 situation. Here are steps to follow:

1. Identify a workplace specific pandemic coordinator or team. Understand that during this time the team's regular duties may need assistance by other employees. It is best to have more than one individual managing this in case someone falls ill.
2. Define the team's roles and responsibilities for preparedness and response planning. What measures need to be planned for that are different than the current emergency response plan or exposure control plan?
 - Identify who they need to work with i.e. the Joint Health and Safety Committee, Superintendents, regulatory bodies etc. Inform the worksite (management, supervisors, workers, JHSC) who the team members are and explain their role in a bulletin / email.
3. Identify essential employees and essential / critical tasks. Employers should seriously consider whether they can keep their workers out of the workplace.

If practicable, employers should:

- Curtail non-essential work at the workplace.
- Consider having workers work remotely (e.g., work at home).

Employers should ensure that the following workers do not come to work:

- Workers who are ill, whether or not the illness has been confirmed as COVID-19.
- Workers who have travelled internationally. In these cases, they must remain away from the workplace for at least 14 days.
- Workers who have an ill person in their home.
- Workers who share a residence with a person who has been exposed to COVID- 19.
- Workers who have been exposed to anyone confirmed to have COVID-19, or to anyone with possible symptoms of COVID-19, should call The Saskatchewan Health Authority HealthLine at 8-1-1 for an assessment and to determine any necessary next steps.

4. Operations may need to be altered or postponed to maintain distancing. Where distancing is not possible (i.e. for safety reasons, in transport situations, on essential production lines), staff should wash hands often, and practice good respiratory hygiene. If practicable, reconfigure the workplace to maintain appropriate distance between workers. Ensure that safe work procedures are compatible with social distancing.

5. Plan for impact on financials. Control scheduling and overlap / stagger shifts where possible to maintain the social distancing measures required. Each shift should have an assigned staff member to monitor disinfecting protocols.

6. Identify measures to control exposures that follow recommendations of the Government of Saskatchewan, Government of Canada and Public Health Ministries. Determine all high risk areas (common spaces, etc.) and prioritize locations for cleaning and additional monitoring for social distancing.

7. Post Educational posters and up to date bulletins can be found on their websites:

<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html>

Follow all these recommendations in order to reduce or eliminate the spread of the virus. Keep directions to employees simple, ensure workers are following the plan and have all available information. This is what supervisors are expected to do in their current roles already. For example: Mandatory mask requirements for all indoor activity.

8. Plan for large absences (10% to 50%) - Forecast and plan for absences during this situation due to factors including personal illness, family illness, community containment measures, school and infrastructure closures, self isolation due to immuno-compromised family members and closure of public transportation.

9. Train and prepare ancillary workforce when possible. Having employees cross-trained is vital. Identify who could perform work if regular staff is unavailable or needs time away due to illness or overwork i.e. contractors, employees in other positions etc.

This is the best way to ensure due diligence when a pandemic occurs. The SCSA would support this type of plan / response as it meets the requirements of OH&S Act Part 3-8 through 3-13.