

WorkSafeBC 2020 Q4 initiative: Maintaining COVID-19 safety plans

On November 7, 2020, the provincial health officer [issued an order](#) to all employers in the Vancouver Coastal Health and Fraser Health Authority regions.

This order requires that all employers in the affected regions review their COVID-19 Safety Plan to ensure that appropriate protocols are in place to protect workers from the risk of transmission, including physical distancing, the use of barriers, and the use of masks. Employers are also required as part of this order to ensure that workers and others are prohibited from entering the workplace if they have symptoms of COVID-19.

Enhanced COVID-19 inspections and consultations

Beginning November 9, 2020, WorkSafeBC is conducting enhanced COVID-19 Safety Plan inspections and consultations at workplaces in the Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal Health regions to complement the order.

Prevention officers will be focusing on ensuring that workplace controls are effectively implemented and managed, that appropriate workplace protocols are in place, and that health screening is being conducted. This will be done by focusing on the following elements of the [COVID-19 Safety Plan](#):

Step 1: Assess the risks Confirmation that the COVID-19 Safety Plan was developed based on a robust risk assessment that considered areas where people congregate, including vehicles, work spaces, break rooms and washrooms.

Step 2: Implement protocols to reduce the risk Confirmation that employers have selected and implemented protocols that address the risks to their workplace by following the hierarchy of controls.

Step 3: Develop policies Confirmation that employers are requiring health screening to ensure those with COVID-19 symptoms are prohibited from entering the workplace.

Step 4: Develop communication plans and training Confirmation that the COVID-19 Safety Plan has been operationalized effectively through training, signage, communication, and supervision.

Step 5: Monitor workplace and update plans as necessary Confirmation that COVID-19 Safety Plan has been reviewed and continually revised to keep pace with changes at the workplace since its development.

Workplaces in the Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal Health regions identified as the highest risk for COVID-19 transmission will be prioritized for inspections. This includes workplaces where it is difficult to maintain physical distance, with enclosed work areas, where workers interact with large numbers of people, and where workers come into frequent contact with shared surfaces, tools, and equipment. The enhanced COVID-19 inspectional focus will also be included in every inspection conducted provincially for High Risk Strategies and Industry Initiatives.

To supplement the inspections, we'll also be increasing ongoing consultations with employers about COVID-19. OHS consultants will assist employers in managing COVID-19 risks at their workplace and provide additional support around COVID-19 risk management. OHS consultants will also engage with employer groups, labour groups, sector associations, Health and Safety Associations and other stakeholders to share key messaging around managing COVID-19 safety risks on an ongoing basis in the workplace.

Information and resources for employers

WorkSafeBC is updating its COVID-19 website content and developing resources to assist employers in understanding how to effectively review and update their COVID-19 Safety Plans. Beginning in mid-November, a marketing campaign will be conducted across social media, television, and digital media that reminds workers and employers to remain vigilant, to follow their COVID-19 Safety Plan, and to update those plans as needed.

Workers and employers with questions or concerns can call WorkSafeBC's Prevention Information Line at 604.276.3100 in the Lower Mainland (toll-free within B.C. at 1.888.621.SAFE).

For more information about how to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in your workplace, visit www.worksafebc.com.