

# COVID-19 as a workplace hazard

This bulletin addresses the hazard assessment as it relates to COVID-19. Employers must review and update their hazard assessment to address the changing conditions related to COVID-19.

## Key information

- Hazard assessments must be reviewed and updated to reflect current conditions.
- Employers must protect the health and safety of workers at the work site and others at, or around, the work site.
- Hazards related to the COVID-19 virus must be considered during the hazard assessment.

## Hazard assessment

Occupational health and safety (OHS) legislation requires employers to protect the health and safety of workers at the work site and others at, or around, the work site. This includes performing a hazard assessment to identify existing and potential workplace hazards.

The hazard assessment must address the potential for all types of hazards, including those related to the COVID-19 virus. Employers must involve affected workers when doing a hazard assessment.

Some factors to consider when assessing the potential hazards from COVID-19 are:

- any orders of the Chief Medical Officer of Health that are applicable to the workplace,
- active cases or symptomatic workers at your work site,
- active cases in the region,
- number of vaccinated workers, if available,
- presence of persons with health vulnerabilities,
- type and duration of interactions with other workers or the public,
- physical distancing at the workplace,
- type of work or activities performed, and
- how other hazards and controls at the work site might affect COVID-19 controls.

## Hazard controls

Employers must address all identified hazards. Eliminate a hazard wherever reasonably possible. When a hazard cannot be eliminated, it must be controlled. There is a hierarchy of controls that must be followed.

**First choice: engineering controls.** These control a hazard at the source. Depending on the workplace and processes, examples might include ventilation systems or physical barriers.

**Second choice: administrative controls.** These change the way people work. Examples include worker training or hand hygiene, physical distancing, alternate work arrangements or regular workplace cleaning policies.

**Third choice: personal protective equipment (PPE).** PPE controls the hazard at the worker. PPE examples include gloves, eye protection, facemasks or respirators.

If the hazard cannot be controlled by a single control method, the employer must use a combination of engineering, administrative and personal protective equipment to ensure worker protection.

## Vaccination

Vaccination is an effective control to protect against the COVID-19 virus. The rollout of vaccines provides workers and all eligible Albertans, an opportunity to be immunized. Current evidence indicates vaccines are effective in preventing illness due to a COVID-19 infection.

Employers should consider seeking legal advice on issues and laws relating to human rights, labour and employment, privacy, health information and occupational health and safety before asking for proof of vaccination or implementing mandatory vaccine requirements.

# COVID-19 as a workplace hazard

## Contact us

### OHS Contact Centre

Anywhere in Alberta

- 1-866-415-8690

Edmonton & surrounding area

- 780-415-8690

Deaf or hard of hearing (TTY)

- 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta)
- 780-427-9999 (Edmonton)

### Notify OHS of health and safety concerns

[alberta.ca/file-complaint-online.aspx](https://alberta.ca/file-complaint-online.aspx)

### Report a workplace incident to OHS

[alberta.ca/ohs-complaints-incidents.aspx](https://alberta.ca/ohs-complaints-incidents.aspx)

### OHS website

[alberta.ca/ohs](https://alberta.ca/ohs)

## For more information

COVID-19 vaccines and records

[alberta.ca/covid19-vaccine.aspx](https://alberta.ca/covid19-vaccine.aspx)

Employer's toolkit for vaccination

[open.alberta.ca/publications/employers-toolkit-for-vaccination#summary](https://open.alberta.ca/publications/employers-toolkit-for-vaccination#summary)

Hazard assessment and control: a handbook for Alberta employers and workers

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp018](https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp018)

Occupational health and safety guidance for workers: respiratory viruses

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/covid19-14](https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/covid19-14)

Psychological hazards: returning to the workplace

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/covid19-18](https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/covid19-18)

Public health measures in effect

[alberta.ca/covid-19-public-health-actions.aspx](https://alberta.ca/covid-19-public-health-actions.aspx)

Respiratory viruses and the workplace

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bh022](https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bh022)

Worker deconditioning following an absence from the workplace

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/covid19-15](https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/covid19-15)

© 2022 Government of Alberta

This material is for information only. The information provided in this material is solely for the user's information and convenience and, while thought to be accurate and functional, it is provided without warranty of any kind. The Crown, its agents, employees or contractors will not be liable to you for any damages, direct or indirect, arising out of your use of the information contained in this material. If in doubt with respect to any information contained within this material, or for confirmation of legal requirements, please refer to the current edition of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, Regulation and Code or other applicable legislation. Further, if there is any inconsistency or conflict between any of the information contained in this material and the applicable legislative requirement, the legislative requirement shall prevail. This material is current to February 2022. The law is constantly changing with new legislation, amendments to existing legislation, and decisions from the courts. It is important that you keep yourself informed of the current law. This material may be used, reproduced, stored or transmitted for non-commercial purposes. The source of this material must be acknowledged when publishing or issuing it to others. This material is not to be used, reproduced, stored or transmitted for commercial purposes without written permission from the Government of Alberta.

PUB ID COVID19-25 Updated February 2022