APRIL 17, 2020
COVID-19 | WHAT IF PHYSICAL DISTANCING IS NOT POSSIBLE?

Physical distancing means keeping a distance of 2 meters (6.5 feet) between workers.

On March 22, 2020 The Provincial Health Officer issued Guidance to Construction Sites Operating during COVID-19. The guidance states that “Where possible, employees should maintain a distance of two metres apart from each other”.

The following document describes best practices that may reduce the risk of transmission of the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, however working under these procedures may still be a breach of the Provincial Health Officer’s orders.

If physical distancing is not possible while doing work tasks, you must carefully manage and minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

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

• Can the task be delayed?
• Can it be safely done in another way?
• Can the number of workers involved be reduced?

Any physical distancing breaches should be brief and rare. Do not neglect other safety procedures during physical distancing breaches.

Suggestions to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission when physical distancing is not maintained:

Workers:

This work should not be completed by workers who are at higher risk of complications due to COVID-19. This includes:

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

Only workers who are considered to be at a lower risk of transmitting COVID-19 should complete this work. Use the BCCSA Health Screening Tool before allowing access to the worksite. Do not permit workers on to a worksite if they meet the following criteria:

• Have or had symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 10 days (cough, sneeze, sore throat, fever, difficulty breathing).
• Have travelled outside of Canada within the previous 14 days.
• Live with or have been in close contact to someone with COVID-19 (presumed or confirmed) within the past 14 days.
Task Supervision

It is recommended that any work that breaches physical distancing requirements be monitored by a designated observer, ideally with health and safety training or experience. This person would ensure that:

- best practices are followed.
- physical distancing breaches are as brief and as rare as possible.
- other safety considerations are not overlooked during physical distancing breaches.

Handwashing

- Provide a handwashing or hand sanitizing station that is easily accessible for the affected workers.
- Wash hands thoroughly and at the end of the task for which less than 2 meters of distance is required. If gloves are worn, wash hands when gloves are removed.
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. When soap and running water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand rub with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands that are visibly soiled.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with bare or gloved hands.

Cleaning/Disinfecting

- When task is completed ensure the tools that were used are cleaned and disinfected (see BCCSA document on Enhanced Surface Cleaning and Disinfection).
- Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces in the area.

Clothing

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

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

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

- Alternate face coverings (e.g. masks, face shields): If none of the people who are breaching physical distancing are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, alternate face coverings may reduce the risk of any asymptomatic transmission. These do not protect the wearer of the face covering, but they may reduce the spread of droplets from the infected individual. When used, they should be used by all workers who are involved in physical distancing breaches.

These alternate face coverings include plastic face shields and cloth face masks. These 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.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - continued

- Wash or sanitize hands immediately before putting on the face covering and immediately after removing it.
- Avoid touching the face while wearing the face covering.
- 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 at least daily, or whenever a mask becomes damp or soiled.
  - 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 (for example, first aid attendants treating people who develop symptoms of COVID-19 at work).
- Safety glasses can be used in conjunction with masks.
- If gloves are used, hands should be thoroughly washed after removing gloves.