

Safely Returning to Work

A Post-Covid Canadian Guide



May 2020

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"The reality of returning to work in some ways is more difficult than mobilising everyone to work from home. Working remotely meant working with new technology but everyone was dealing with unknowns and uncertainties. Now we have staff returning to their old "norm" and comfortable behaviours, which can be risky for your teams if not managed effectively. The health and safety of your most valuable asset must be your priority."



Craig Brown, CEO, Agilus Work Solutions

Preparing Employers for the “New Norm”

Canada has never experienced a pandemic of this magnitude in the twenty-first century. Small businesses, large companies and provinces have shut down to flatten the curve. Manufacturing plants have gone quiet or retooled to produce PPE. Shuttered restaurants pivoted to deliver meals and parents balanced working from home and children learned online. Suddenly everyone recognizes the critical role essential services plays within our society. Canada came together by staying apart. And now we need to open Canada back up for business – safely and gradually. So how do businesses keep their employees safe and not start a second pandemic.

As companies contemplate the “new norm” and begin to consider lifting pandemic-related workplace restrictions, a vast array of issues must be considered for the health and safety of workers. Things such as phasing in operations, determining essential departments, reintegrating remote working for employees, implementing new federal and provincial requirements, and most importantly – protecting the health and safety of employees, candidates and clients. Employers who proactively plan for these challenges will be best positioned to adapt to the “new norm”.

"If we do things right, this will be the first and worst phase that we go through as a country in terms of COVID-19."

**Justin Trudeau,
Prime Minister of Canada
Reuters, April 7, 2020**

This guide offers some practical implementation steps for employers to consider prior to reopening or expanding existing operations, with the understanding that when or how workplaces can reopen will rely largely on federal and provincial guidelines and requirements. When analyzing essential operations and the employees required to support those operations, employers must continue to focus on decreasing risks to workers and ensuring steps are in place to avoid a resurgence of COVID-19.

Deconfinement (noun) [kuhn-fahyn-muhnt] : In physics, deconfinement is the property of a phase in which certain particles are allowed to exist as free excitations, rather than only within bound states. In business it means allowing people to freely move about after being confined through social distancing.

Key Considerations for Deconfinement:

1. Cleaning and Disinfecting of Work site:

Prior to any workers returning to the workplace, a best practice would be to complete a thorough cleaning and disinfecting of workplace using appropriate chemicals (bleach, isopropyl alcohol and hydrogen peroxide are recommended by Health Canada and other authorities). All surfaces, floors, workstations, equipment, break rooms, kitchen areas, entry/reception areas, doors etc. need to be cleaned and disinfected. Some employers may want to consider having carpets professionally cleaned. Any floor mats should be cleaned and/or replaced. Worksites that had or may have had a confirmed COVID-19 or exposure to COVID-19 case should consider hiring professional cleaners that have the training, knowledge and appropriate equipment to clean and disinfect the worksite.

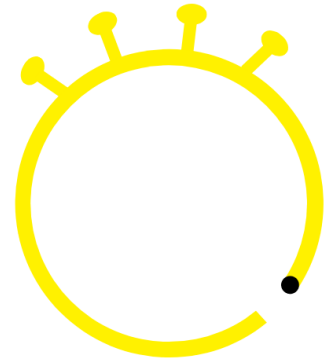
2. Implementing a re-entry team, lead by the Safety Department:

- Identify a key person(s) or designate in each office who will be responsible for monitoring the worksite on a daily basis. A recommendation is having the office safety representative or member of the Joint Health & Safety Committee.
- Provide ongoing training and updates
- Have team meetings on regular basis



"We're not going to wait till this is over, we're going to get started on the economy right now and we have to see the slow of this spread and the flattening of the curve, we need to see it start going down, health is the No. 1 priority."... "We can get this engine going again, not just because of the government – it's about the people," "You unleash businesses, you let people move forward with the ingenuity..."

- Doug Ford, Ontario Premier , Global News April 9th, 2020



3. Conducting a risk assessment

It is important to identify hazards and use the Hierarchy of Controls to decrease or, if possible, eliminate the risks. When doing a walk-about of the worksite, pay specific attention to:

Workspace modifications:

- Limiting number of people in elevators or stairwells
- Modify entry by using card keys instead of keys for locks to minimize touch points;
- Modifying latch-based door handles with door that can be easily pushed open or closed (hands don't touch a handle);
- Separating desks and workstations (6-9 feet apart)
- Modifying open floor plans by, for example, adding temporary partitions;
- Making only certain workstations available (every other or every third workstation, or every other cubicle);
- Closing or modifying access to boardrooms/breakrooms/kitchen areas – or use every third chair for distancing with maximum of 10 people in the room;
- Consider staggered lunch/break times;
- High use appliances such as coffee makers and water coolers need to be cleaned/disinfected after each use;
- Ensure instructions are posted and disinfectant wipes are available
- Availability of touchless hand sanitizers and disinfectant wipes, and appropriate signage to remind employees of proper usage;
- Availability of any PPE including disposable gloves for employees and directions for their proper disposal.

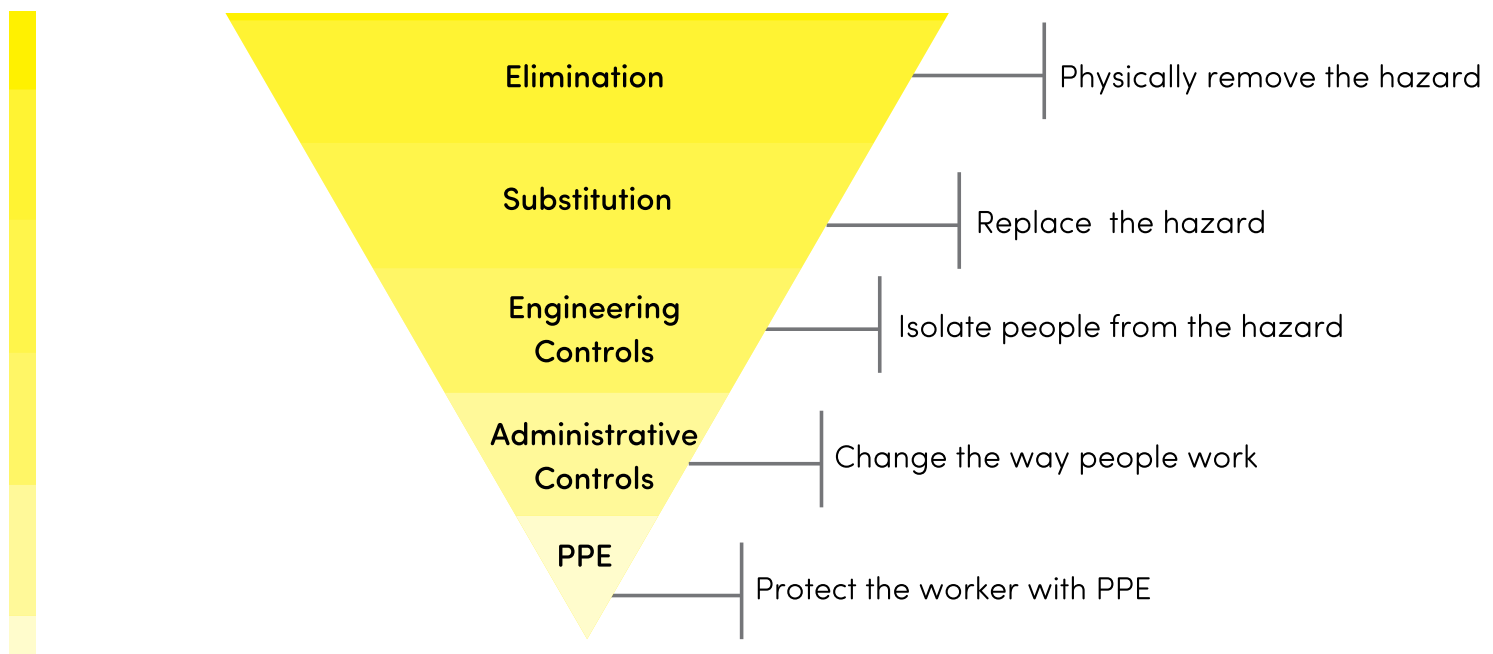
- Signage or displaying markers to remind employees of social and physical distancing protocols;
- Barriers that may be required are in place (i.e areas such as reception where employees may come into contact with the general public)
- Touchless soap dispensers and touchless taps in washrooms and kitchen areas
- Upgrade or install air filtration systems
– consider air purification and sanitization systems

Physical and Social Distancing:

- Limit in-person interaction and physical contact by:
 - o No in-person meetings
 - o Using technology to reach out i.e. video conferencing such as Skype, Facetime, Microsoft Teams
- Limit visitors to the worksite by encouraging use of technology to host meetings
- Do not conduct face-to-face meetings or interviews. Utilize technology to protect yourself and the candidate.
- Establish ongoing restrictions regarding travel, including meetings/conferences
- Avoid direct contact (e.g. handshaking) when greeting others;

NOISH Hierarchy of Controls

Most Effective



Least Effective

4. People:

- Consider how employees will feel when they prepare to return to the office:
 - Are there employees with health issues that would be high risk to return to work?
 - Are there employees who are nervous/fearful of returning to work? How will they be reassured?
- Public transportation – have employees use their own vehicles. Practice distancing if using public transportation
- Considerations for reducing the number of employees at the worksite – staggered shifts, staggered start times, alternating workdays, possible continuation of working remote.
- Instructing employees to not use other employee's workspaces or equipment;
- How to properly clean and disinfect surfaces – what to use and how to properly dispose of disinfectant wipes or cleaning cloths.
- Social and physical distancing protocols and procedures, including where to go with questions or complaints.

5. Ongoing Training for Employees:

- Continued importance of Good Hygiene
 - Wash hands frequently with warm running water and soap for at least 20 seconds
 - Use an alcohol-based disinfectant if soap and water are not available
 - Cover mouth and nose with arm when coughing or sneezing to reduce the spread of germs
 - Remain at home at all times if symptoms develop (cough, fever, difficulty breathing or sudden loss of smell)
 - Physical and social distancing

Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister said he's aiming for his province to be the first to reopen. He's even coined an acronym for it: "First in restoring safe services together," or FIRST.

"That FIRST acronym is what's in my mind every day," Pallister said on Tuesday. "Together, we're going to beat this thing." National Post, April 21, 2020

6. Assessing the health of workers arriving at the workplace:

- Employers should assess the health of each worker (and visitor) upon their arrival and ask the following questions:
 - Do you have any symptoms – cough, fever, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, or loss of smell?
 - Have you returned from a trip outside the country in the past two weeks?
 - Have you been in contact or are you residing with someone who may have had contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19?
- If the worker or visitor answers 'yes' to any of the questions, they should return home and remain there for a sufficient period of time to minimize the risks of propagation within the workplace. Workers returning after testing positive for COVID-19 can only return when:
 - A period of at least 14 days has elapsed since the onset of the acute phase of the illness
 - There have been no acute symptom for a period of 24 hours
 - There has been no fever for a period of 48 hours

"Bonnie Henry, B.C.'s medical officer, said she believes many businesses can find ways to reopen over the coming months, including shops and restaurants, but it will require coming up with creative ways to reduce social interactions. "I think there's lots of innovative ways that we can have in-restaurant dining that protects both the staff as well as people who are coming in," she said. "And I'm looking to industry to come up with those ideas for how this could work."

- National Post, April 21, 2020

7. Determining the need for daily health assessments

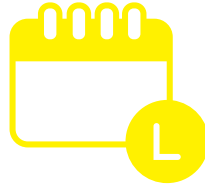
Determine the need for and develop a procedure for conducting temperature screens or other symptom checks for anyone coming to the worksite. Check the type of test to conduct, and at what intervals will it be required (daily, weekly, exhibiting symptoms etc). Develop a process for any complications if tests are failed, including how to alert the employee and their colleagues and revisiting all of the steps above again.

Conclusion



Working Remotely

- Encourage remote work if physical presence is not essential
- Provide guidelines & best practices for remote work
- Manage expectations and productivity



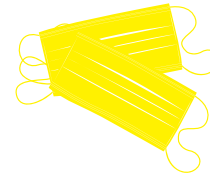
Coordinate Work Shifts

- Manage work shifts to ensure minimum congestion in workplace
- Divide shifts & disperse seating arrangements to ensure adequate distancing
- Identify critical employee groups & isolate if possible
- Develop contingency plans to address future emergencies or workplace closures



Worker Safety & Hygiene

- Define physical distancing guidelines at workplaces
- Ensure regular cleaning & disinfection procedures are followed
- Promote mandatory hygiene protocols (hand washing, use of mask, sanitizers etc.)
- Avoid sharing of office supplies and spaces among employees - offer single use or individual use items



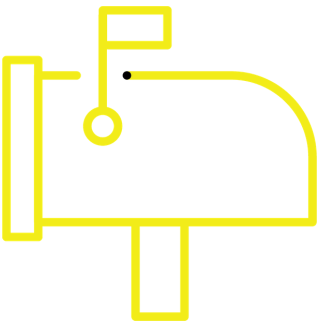
Control Access & Quarantine

- Outline & communicate policies for workplace access
- Measure body temperature & ask about possible symptoms at entry
- Random body temperature testing & visual checks during workdays
- Employee quarantine even in case of mild symptoms
- Record & document entries & exits



Communication & Reporting

- Communicate the purpose & changes in effect every day, to staff
- Implement random checks
- In case of symptoms, report to health authorities immediately
- Follow federal, provincial and health authority guidelines on opening & closures



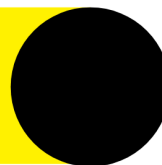
Looking for staffing solutions to right-size your team or enhance the collective skill set? Agilus Work Solutions™ is Canada's largest, privately-owned staffing firm. We provide a wide range of work solutions across all skill sets & industries. With 18 branches across Canada, we offer a deep understanding of the country, regions and the local markets it serves. We provide a national perspective complemented with local knowledge and outreach.

Agilus' knowledge of work trends, challenges and opportunities makes us uniquely capable of leading better outcomes for employers and the engaged working communities we serve. To schedule your free 30-minute Safely Back to Work consultation, send us an email at info@agilus.ca, or speak with your Agilus rep to learn how we can support your staffing efforts.

Together we can keep Canadian businesses open.

All information and content contained within this guide are to be used as suggestions and/or are intended to be used for information only. Agilus Work Solutions will not be liable for the content or opinions enclosed. Please consult your federal and provincial governments for specific employment requirements on returning to work safely.

COVID-19 Prevention & Help



How can you protect yourself?



Avoid
crowds



Wash your
hands



Disinfect
surfaces



Avoid
touching your
face



Cover your
mouth



Stay
home

Where can you find help?

Provinces & Territories	Phone Contacts	Websites
British Columbia	811	www.bccdc.ca/covid19
Alberta	811	www.myhealth.alberta.ca
Saskatchewan	811	www.saskhealthauthority.ca
Manitoba	1-888-315-9257	www.manitoba.ca/covid19
Ontario	1-866-797-0000	www.publichealthontario.ca
Quebec	1-877-644-4545	www.quebec.ca/coronavirus
New Brunswick	811	www.gnb.ca/publichealth
Nova Scotia	811	www.nshealth.ca/public-health
Prince Edward Island	811	www.princeedwardisland.ca/covid19
Newfoundland & Labrador	811 or 1-888-7092929	www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19
Nunavut	867-975-5772	www.gov.nu.ca/health
Northwest Territories	911	www.hss.gov.nt.ca
Yukon Territory	811	www.hss.gov.yk.ca

Where can you find more information?



1.833.784.4397



canada.ca/coronavirus

Agilus continues to support businesses & candidates working across Canada, amid the Covid-19 crisis. Whether you are a business seeking qualified candidates immediately or a professional looking for a new role, reach us at info@agilus.ca to learn how we can help you with support & information. Together we can keep Canadian businesses open!

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Useful Health & Safety Websites

BC Centre for Disease Control
Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
Canada Safety Council
Canada's National Workplace Health and Safety
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
Occupational Health and Safety Administration
Public Health Agency of Canada
Public Safety Canada
Government of Canada
Federal Occupational Health and Safety Legislation
Workplace Safety

<http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/>
<https://www.ccohs.ca/>
<https://canadasafetycouncil.org/>
<http://www.canoshweb.org/>
<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/index.htm>
<https://www.osha.gov/>
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html>
<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/index-en.aspx>
<https://www.canada.ca/en.html>
<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/workplace-safety.html>

Occupational Health and Safety Provincial Legislation

British Columbia	http://www.worksafebc.com/
Alberta	https://www.alberta.ca/occupational-health-safety.aspx
Saskatchewan	http://www.worksafesask.ca/
Manitoba	http://safemanitoba.com/
Ontario	https://www.canada.ca/en.htm
Quebec	https://www.quebec.ca/en/employment/standards-occupational-health-and-safety/
Nova Scotia	http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/novascotia.ca/lae/healthandsafety/
New Brunswick	http://www.worksafenb.ca/
Prince Edward Island	http://www.wcb.pe.ca/
Newfoundland and Labrador	http://www.workplacenl.ca/
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	http://www.wscc.nt.ca/

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Now is the time
to think
differently.
How can we help?

Contact us for temporary,
contract or permanent help.

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