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COVID-19 and the workplace

The WCB continues to monitor the impact in Saskatchewan of COVID-19. Our top priority is the health of all our staff, customers and our partners and as such, we follow the guidance of public health officials both provincially and federally on precautionary steps to ensure everyone's well-being.

Please follow Saskatchewan government guidelines to protect yourself and your family.

The WCB is practicing social distancing and utilizing technology to communicate with our customers to avoid all unnecessary in-person meetings whenever possible.



When workers should not be at work

Workers who are ill and believe to have been at high risk of contracting COVID-19 after travel abroad; or are immunocompromised, should alert their manager or supervisor and contact the Saskatchewan Health Line to seek medical advice. Dial **811** or 1-877- 800-0002 to connect with a licensed health-care professional.



Workers' compensation

Employer sick leave policies

Every employer should have a policy around sick leave and compensation if a worker cannot work due to COVID-19 or any other medical condition. Employer policies need to abide by the [Saskatchewan Employment Act](#), which sets standards for payment, compensation, and working conditions in most workplaces.

On March 17, 2020, the Saskatchewan government passed an unpaid sick leave bill, which extends unpaid sick leave to all workers during a declared public health emergency regardless of how long they've been on the job. It also eliminates the requirement for workers to provide a sick note. The province's new law is retroactive to March 6.

Employment insurance

For workers who qualify for employment insurance (EI) sickness benefits and have to undergo quarantine due to COVID-19 concerns, the federal government recently announced it would waive the one-week waiting period to receive EI sickness benefits so the worker can receive benefits for an entire 14-day quarantine.

Workers' compensation

Workplace compensation in Saskatchewan is only available for work-related injuries or illnesses and is not provided for workers who choose to withdraw from work for preventative reasons.

If you are a worker who is submitting a claim for a COVID-19 virus infection contracted through a work-related exposure, please visit the WCB website to understand what qualifies as a work injury and how to file a work-related injury claim: www.wcbsask.com/workers/if-youre-injured/

If you are an employer who is reporting that one of your workers has contracted the virus through a work-related exposure, please see [how to file an employer's initial report of injury](#) and see the [guidelines for self-isolation](#).

Read the WCB's policy on work-related communicable diseases

Read the WCB's policy, Injuries – Communicable Disease (POL 02/2010) and the WCB's procedure, Injuries – Communicable Disease (PRO 02/2010): www.wcbsask.com/wcb-policy-and-procedure-injuries-communicable-disease/



Recommendations for some key workplace issues related to COVID-19

If a worker falls into one of the categories below, employers need to instruct workers to follow the advice from their family medical physician and/or public health authorities to ensure the worker does not come into work and risk infecting others.

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19

Health authorities advise that if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, you need to stay home. Contact your local health care provider to get advice or call the Saskatchewan Health Line to seek medical advice. Dial **811** or 1-877 800-0002 to connect with a licensed health-care professional.

If you have travelled internationally

The Public Health Agency of Canada is recommending that travellers avoid all non-essential travel outside of Canada. Canada is shutting the border to non-Canadian citizens. Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 will not be allowed to enter the country or board a plane. When you return to Canada, you must self-isolate for 14 days after your return.

Monitor yourself daily for symptoms like fever, cough or difficulty breathing for these 14 days. If you develop symptoms, call the Saskatchewan Health Line at any time or speak with a health-care provider to discuss any need for testing and follow up. Dial **811** or 1-877-800-0002 to connect with a licensed health-care professional.



COVID-19 self-assessment

Ask your employees to self-assess. Please review the Saskatchewan government's guidelines on self-monitoring and self-isolation practices. The WCB will be implementing self-monitoring and self-isolation in accordance with the provincial government's guidelines.

The Saskatchewan government has developed a self-assessment tool to determine if you should be tested for COVID-19: www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-self-assessment

As per the government's website:

“Please note: You do not need to be tested for COVID-19 if in the past 14 days you have not travelled outside Canada or had contact with someone diagnosed as having COVID-19.

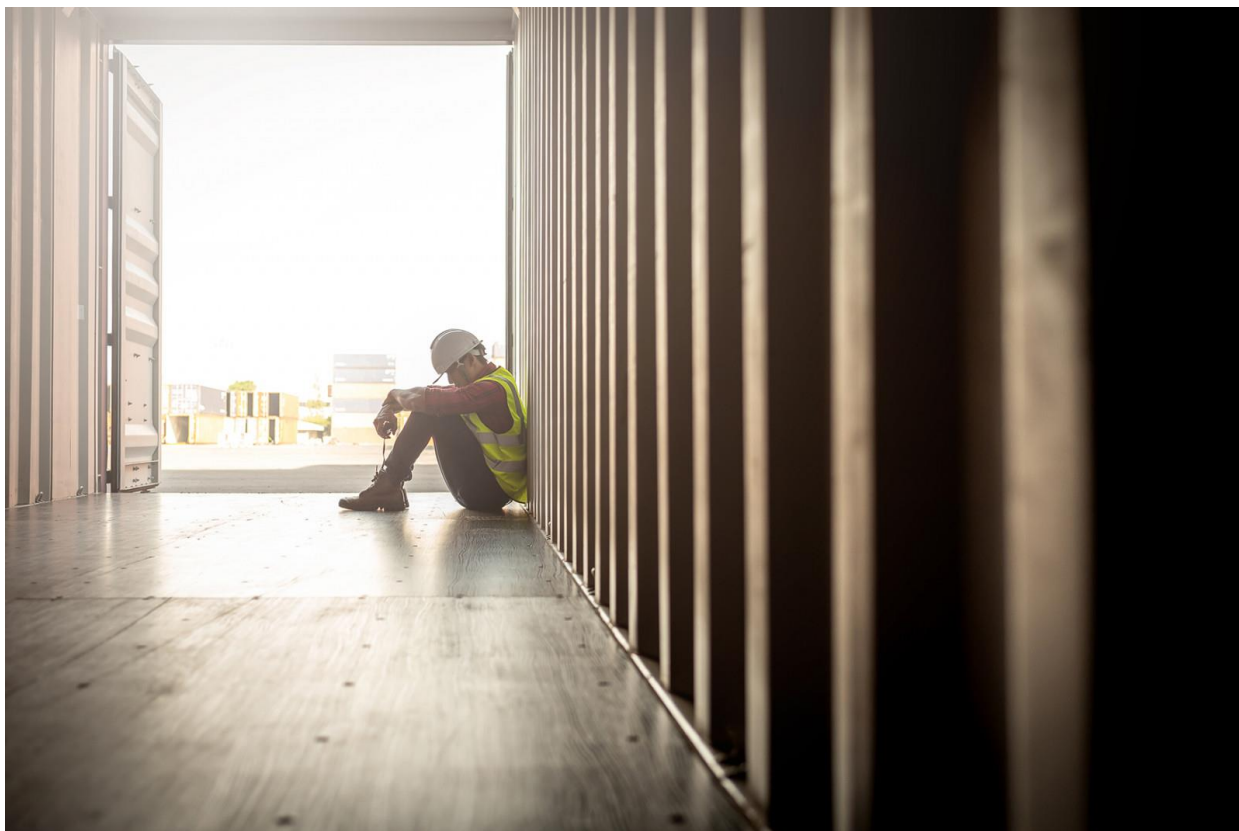
“Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

“All residents should be familiar with [self-monitoring](#) and [self-isolation](#) precautions, in order to keep you and those around you safe.

“To protect yourself while out in public, wash your hands frequently and maintain a safe distance from others.”

If you have taken the self-assessment and believe you have COVID-19

Follow the directions on the site based on your responses. Unless your symptoms worsen, do not go to an emergency department, family doctor or walk-in clinic. Don't go out into the public and stay at home until your test results are available. Call the Saskatchewan Health Line to seek medical advice. Dial 811 or 1-877 800-0002 to connect with a licensed health-care professional.



Managing your mental health

COVID-19 has many people anxious about their personal safety and many are worried about their safety at work as well. Some amount of anxiety is normal and can help to keep us safe but it's important to keep it at a manageable level.

The WCB has information available from Dr. Joti Samra, R.Psych, CEO and founder of MYWORKPLACEHEALTH, including tools to help those struggling to cope with COVID-19 or who would like more information about managing their mental health.

Access these tools here: www.wcbsask.com/managing-your-mental-health-through-covid-19-tools-to-help-you-cope/



Recommended personal hygiene practices for the workplace

Employers are required by law to ensure that work is conducted safely, and to protect their workers from all work-related hazards.

We are advising employers and workers to follow the recommended personal hygiene practices set out during influenza season, such as:

1. frequent hand washing
2. avoiding touching your face
3. avoiding direct contact with others

There are posters available on our WorkSafe website that we encourage employers to post in their workplaces to encourage healthy hygienic practices:

[Sneezing and coughing poster](#)

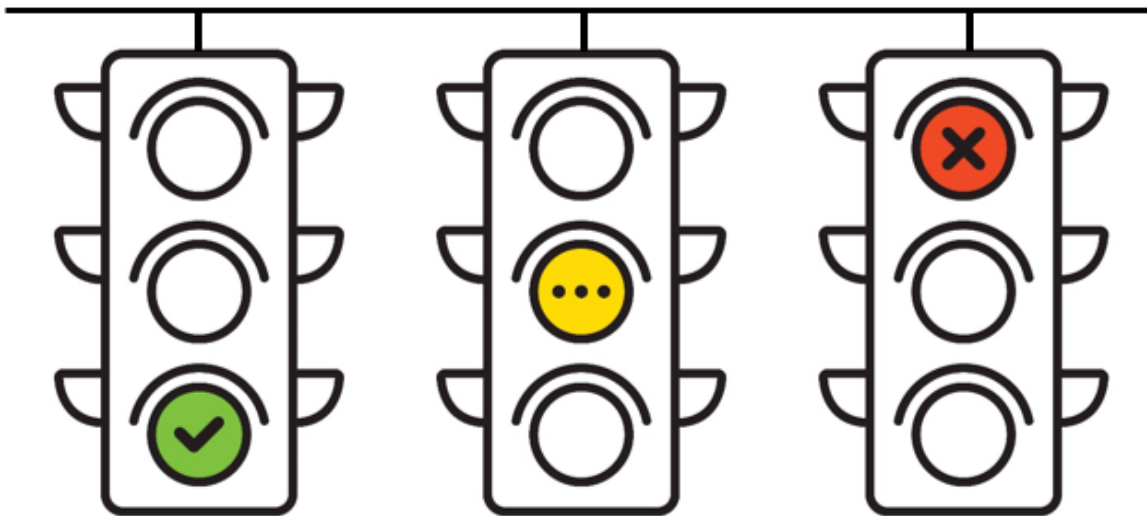
[Hand washing poster](#)

[Hand sanitizing poster](#)

SOCIAL DISTANCING:

What does it mean?

Social distancing is the practice of reducing close contact between people to slow the spread of infections or diseases. Social distancing measures include limiting large groups of people coming together, closing buildings and cancelling events.



Social distancing

Help limit the spread of germs and viruses by practicing social distancing by staying two metres apart. Download our poster on [what social distancing means](#).

The Canadian government has resources available that might be helpful for employers to share in their workplaces: www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/awareness-resources.html

If you have been in contact with a person infected with COVID-19

If you have had close, unprotected contact with an infected person you are at high risk of exposure. The [Public Health Agency of Canada](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html) (<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html>) says in these circumstances, you should home quarantine (self-isolation) and practice hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, cleaning and self-monitoring.

The [Government of Saskatchewan](https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government) states you do not need to be tested for COVID-19 if you have not travelled outside of Canada or had contact with anyone diagnosed as having COVID-19.

How to isolate at home when you have COVID-19:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/covid-19-how-to-isolate-at-home.html>



Workers' right to refuse work

Workers in Saskatchewan have the right to refuse work if they believe it is unsafe. In those circumstances, employers need to consider the refusal on a case-by-case basis, depending on the situation. ***To report dangerous work, please contact the Occupational Health and Safety Division at 1-800-567-7233 (SAFE).***

Workplace protections

Respiratory protection

Respirators are currently only recommended for certain tasks.

Health authorities advise that surgical/procedure masks should be used by sick people to prevent transmission to other people. A mask will help keep a person's droplets in.

They also advise that it may be less effective to wear a mask in the community when a person is not sick themselves. Masks may give a person a false sense of security and are likely to increase the number of times a person will touch their own face (e.g., to adjust the mask).

Additional recommendations for employers

- Prepare a business continuity plan, as well as a contingency plan, to use if the progression of the virus impacts your workplace.
- Avoid events, conferences and meetings of more than 250 people and avoid events of no more than 50 people with speakers or attendees who have travelled internationally in the last 14 days.
- Consider whether workers can effectively work remotely (e.g., work at home).
- Increase workplace cleaning and disinfection practices.
- Provide the necessary supplies to staff, and reinforce personal hygiene messages to workers.



Related links:

Resources from the Government of Saskatchewan:

[2019 Novel Coronavirus](#)

[COVID-19 Self-Assessment](#)

[COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[COVID-19 Guidance: Mass Gatherings, Risk for Elderly Populations](#)

[Self-Monitoring Information Sheet](#)

[Self-Isolation Information Sheet](#)

[COVID-19 Guidance: Residents Returning to Saskatchewan](#)

Saskatchewan Health Line:

www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/accessing-health-care-services/healthline

Printable resources and downloads from the Government of Canada:

[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

[COVID-19 updates](#)

[Travel advice](#)

[Being prepared](#)

[Symptoms and treatment](#)

[Prevention and risks](#)

[Canada's response](#)

[Awareness resources](#)

[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Information sheet - Travellers returning from Iran, Italy and Hubei Province, China](#)

Other resources:

- [Public Health Agency of Canada: Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) Information sheet - Travellers returning to Canada](#)
- [Countries and regions with active health notices from the Government of Canada](#)
- [World Health Organization: Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19](#)

Do you have questions specific to compensation?

Contact the WCB at askwcb@wcbask.com for compensation information.
