COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Office Environments

Guidance for Office Environments

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Key Points

- Unless work must be done on-site, enable employees to work from home.
- Screen all staff and visitors who must enter the office and ask employees to stay home if they are sick.
- Workstations should be spaced at least 2 metres apart and physical distancing between employees should be maintained at all times.
- Face coverings that cover the mouth, nose and chin must be worn while in indoor areas at all times, with limited exemptions. In areas not accessible to members of the public (e.g. a private office), face coverings can be removed if physical distancing of 2 metres is maintained at all times.

This document reflects the current need for protection from COVID-19 in Ontario. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, this document is subject to change. Please visit the Southwestern Public Health website www.swpublichealth.ca regularly for updates and additional information.

Work from Home

- While the stay-at-home order is no longer in effect in the Southwestern Public Health region, employers are encouraged to enable employees to work from home whenever possible to reduce the number of people in the workplace.

Physical Distancing

- Ensure employee workstations are spaced to allow employees to maintain 2 metres of physical distance while seated. If a distance of 2 metres between desks cannot be maintained, plexiglass or another impermeable barrier may be used. See Guidance for Physical Barriers for more information.
- Encourage staff to maintain physical distance of 2 metres from other staff at all times. Post signage around the workplace to remind staff.

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- Staff should be reminded to stay home if they are sick. Symptoms commonly associated with a cold are similar to symptoms seen with COVID-19, and COVID-19 cannot be ruled out unless testing is completed.
- Employees that have a member of their household experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and/or awaiting COVID-19 test results should also self-isolate at home. For more information on self-isolation requirements, please visit our website.

Hosting a Safe and Physically Distanced Meeting

- Meet virtually whenever possible. Face-to-face interactions and in person meetings should be discouraged, particularly during the provincial state of emergency and stay-at-home order.
- Choose a space large enough for attendees/staff to remain at least 2 metres apart.
- Limit the number of in-person attendees to enable physical distancing of 2 metres.
- Ensure face coverings are worn for in-person meetings.
  - If only staff are in attendance and the meeting area is not accessible to members of the public, face coverings can be removed if physical distancing of 2 metres is maintained.
  - If the meeting is attended or accessible to members of the public, face coverings cannot be removed during the meeting, even if physical distancing of 2 metres is maintained.
- Provide hand sanitizer for all in-person attendees/staff to use and ensure washrooms have soap and paper towels available for hand washing. (Paper towels are preferred to hand dryers as they allow staff to turn off the taps without directly touching them with their hands).
- Remove extra chairs and specify seating arrangements in the room to leave space between attendees/staff.
- Ensure that all meeting participants and staff understand that physical distancing is required before arriving at the meeting.
- Consider hosting your meeting outdoors when weather permits.
- Ensure that meeting and training rooms are cleaned after each use with close attention paid to cleaning the most frequently touched surfaces.
- The use of face coverings is required whenever staff are going to be within two metres of each other, which could happen when entering or exiting the meeting space.

Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection

- Ensure hand sanitizer is available throughout the office for employee use. Provide personal hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes for each desk space.

- Clean and disinfect office surfaces that are frequently touched including keyboards, mice, photocopiers, staplers, hole punchers, light switches, door handles and other commonly touched surfaces.
- Clean tablets, telephones and anything that comes into direct contact with your hands frequently with alcohol or disinfectant wipes twice per day.
- Use only disinfectants that have a drug identification number (DIN) that indicates Health Canada has approved it.
- Check the expiry date of products you use and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Keeping Kitchens and Lunchrooms Safe and Clean

- Limit the amount of time staff spend in kitchens/lunchrooms and increase space between staff in the kitchen/lunchroom by staggering lunch breaks.
- Ensure staff are physically distanced by at least two metres and use face coverings when entering and exiting kitchens/lunchrooms.

If questions or concerns arise about adhering to these measures, consult with your occupational health and safety representative or contact Southwestern Public Health.

Southwestern Public Health
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