



MEMORANDUM

RECIPIENT(S) **George Higgins**
SENDER **Andrea L. Zwack**
DATE **March 10, 2020**
SUBJECT **COVID-19 Guidance for Employers**

George – Further to your request, the following memo sets out guidance for employers in the context of the COVID-19 situation. This guidance is set out in the form of a communication that employers may wish to distribute to employees – in whole or in part, depending on the nature of the business, and which of the restrictions/guidance are applicable to the given business and workforce.

This situation is of course evolving, and therefore, this guidance may change going forward.

Dear Colleagues,

We are monitoring the evolving Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation. Your health and safety are top priorities. To help mitigate the risk of this virus spreading within our workplace, [company name] is taking action. Here’s what you need to know:

What do we know about COVID-19?

This virus is spread in large droplets by coughing and sneezing. Surfaces where droplets land are infectious; the air you breathe is not. You get infected through your nose and mouth via your hands or a cough into, or onto, your nose or month.

The [CDC](#) and [World Health Organization](#) have advised that healthcare workers, the elderly over 70 years of age, those with chronic illness, and those with heart disease or diabetes may be more susceptible to infection and severe illness.

What [Company Name] is Doing:

A COVID-19 response group has been formed and is meeting twice weekly to keep current on this issue, ensure preventative actions are being taken, and to address any personal or business impacts.

We have stepped up our cleaning routines and are deploying more cleaning products, to minimize the potential of infection within our workplace.

We will keep you up to date on pertinent information about COVID-19 and our ongoing actions.

The spread and impact of COVID-19 is an evolving situation. We will be assessing and implementing response best practices to protect your health and safety, and that of our customers, as long as COVID-19 is a concern.

That said, we all make decisions both inside and outside our workplace that may directly affect the possibility that the virus could enter our workplace. Following are the precautions that each of us can take to reduce the chance of infection for yourself and others:

Precautions you can take:

Look after your overall health and be mindful of your hygiene:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This should be done whenever you enter the workplace, and at reasonable intervals through the workday, particularly if you handled objects from outside the workplace;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or use your elbow/sleeve. Throw away any used tissues.
- Use disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizers regularly (although these are not a substitute for hand washing);
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using cleaning sprays;
- Avoid handshaking – use a fist bump or slight bow
- Use your knuckles or elbows to touch light switches, elevator buttons, etc.
- Open doors with a closed fist or hip if possible
- Where possible, avoid large scale gatherings;
- Avoid visiting sick relatives or friends, if possible. If this is unavoidable, use the above precautions.

Office practices:

- Reduce the number of face-to-face meetings with clients – where possible, conduct meetings by phone or video-calling;
- If you have reason to believe a client may have recently visited a high level risk area, request that they refrain from attending at our office or asking for in-person meetings for at least two weeks;
- Business travel should be limited to necessity, and should avoid any countries or areas on the CDC high risk list. Countries on this list currently include: China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Italy, Iran and Japan. This list is dynamic and will change over time. Please discuss any upcoming business travel with your senior manager, so that a decision can be made about whether it should proceed at this time.

Personal Travel:

- Avoid travel to any countries or areas on the high risk list.
- Avoid cruise ship travel.
 - If you, or someone you live with, choose to travel to a high risk area or decide to take a cruise at this time, you must disclose this to [management representative] in advance.
 - Be aware that if you make this choice, you will likely be required to self-isolate upon your return, and thus you will likely need to extend your time off work by an additional minimum period of two weeks. You should ensure that you have adequate vacation or are able to take unpaid leave for this additional period, or that you are able to work from home during this period.
 - These arrangements must be made in advance, and confirmed with your manager.
- Other international travel, or travel involving an airplane, train or bus, to a current non-high-risk area, is not currently precluded, but should be considered carefully.
 - As the situation is evolving, it is possible that you could experience travel disruptions or the need to quarantine or self-isolate while travelling or upon your return. This could delay your ability to return to work.
 - Again, you should ensure that you have adequate vacation time to cover this additional time off or be prepared to take unpaid leave.
 - In some cases, it may be possible to make arrangements for you to work from home, but this should not be assumed.
 - Again, you should inform your manager in advance of your travel plans, and have a plan in place in the event of a delay in your return to work.

If you think you may have been exposed:

If you are experiencing flu-like symptoms or respiratory symptoms, stay home to recover. If you are concerned that these symptoms could be COVID-19, call the BC Public Health Authority (8-1-1) and/or your family doctor for directions, and let your senior manager know immediately.

If you do not have symptoms, but have been in close contact with someone who has recently travelled to an affected area, or who is themselves ill, **do not come to the workplace**. Isolate yourself and contact your senior manager for guidance. Contact your family doctor or BC Public Health immediately and follow their directions for screening, diagnosis and treatment.

Employees who are unable to attend work due to their own illness or due to the illness of a family member that has resulted in directions from BC Public Health to self-isolate will be compensated in accordance with our usual sick leave policies. In addition, in some circumstances, there may be additional compensation available.

Thank you for doing your part to keep our workplace a healthy and safe place to work.