



# **COVID-19: Safe Return to Work Guidelines**

*Returning to work and establishing a healthy and safe workplace is a top priority for Nova Scotia's employers and Construction Safety Nova Scotia. When thinking about the "new normal", there will be specific precautions that will need to be taken to ensure the health and safety of all employees, clients and guests of workplaces. Construction Safety Nova Scotia has constructed guidelines to enable a smooth transition back into the workplace, while keeping the health, safety and wellness of everyone as our guiding principle.*

## **Part 1: Planning for Return of Staff**

### ***Risk Assessment***

A risk assessment needs to be completed to determine the areas where transmission of COVID-19 is likely. Where do staff gather? Which tools and equipment are shared? Which surfaces are touched frequently (doorknobs, keypads, etc.)? A team of frontline staff, JOHS Committee member/Safety Representatives and management should conduct the risk assessment collaboratively.

### **Policy, Practice and Procedure Development and Adoption**

The results of the risk assessment will guide the development and/or adoption of policies, practices, and procedures. Appropriate control strategies will be contained in these documents. Resources can be found at [constructionsafetyns.ca](https://www.constructionsafetyns.ca) in the COVID-19 drop down menu.

### **Implementing Measures to Reduce Risk**

Management needs to ensure required PPE, handwashing facilities, sterilization equipment and materials as well as other resources required to implement policies, practices and procedures are available and ready to deploy.

### **Communication and Training of the Return to Work Plan**

Staff will require training on the new policies, practices, and procedures. Additionally, communication methods including posters, handouts, emails should be widely distributed throughout the workplace and workforce.

### **Workplace Set-Up**

Considerations of physical distancing will guide the physical design of the workplace. Workstations may require increased distances. One-way travel procedures may be needed for travel ways, pathways, etc. Multiple user washroom facilities may require the locking of doors to create a one user limit. Where physical distancing is not possible plexiglass barricades may be required. The location of handwashing and sanitization facilities will need to be addressed at this stage. Numerous, easily accessible hygiene facilities will increase compliance.



## **Identify Essential Workers**

Management will need to carefully assess who must be in the physical workplace and who can perform their duties remotely. The limiting of persons in the workplace will enable more effective implementation of practices and procedures, reducing the risk of disease transmission.

## **Daily Hours**

If employees are required to be in the office, think about reducing the daily hours needed to be within the office to maintain a safer environment. If physical distancing cannot be maintained, use a schedule which alternates when staff work in the workplace and when staff work remotely. By doing so, we lessen the amount of contact between persons therefore reducing the risk of disease transmission.

## **Part 2: Return to Work**

### **COVID-19 Health Screening Checklist**

Prior to returning to the workplace, staff should be directed to complete a COVID-19 health screening checklist. For a screening checklist please see [https://constructionsafetyns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CSNS\\_Site-Access-Questionnaire\\_PDF.pdf](https://constructionsafetyns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CSNS_Site-Access-Questionnaire_PDF.pdf)

### **Sign-in/Sign-out Logs**

A sign-in/sign-out procedure should be implemented to track when staff are in the workplace. Locations of work areas accessed by staff members can also be captured during this process. Please visit <https://constructionsafetyns.ca/additional-resources/> for resources.

### **Physical Distancing**

Policies, practices and procedures must consider the requirement for a minimum of 2m of physical distancing between staff, clients, guests and all other individuals who may enter the workplace. Specific procedures must be followed when physical distancing is not possible, please see Construction Safety Nova Scotia's COVID-19 Toolkit- Safe Work Practices Guide for NS <https://constructionsafetyns.ca/additional-resources/> for detailed information.

### **Cleaning and Sanitization**

Ensure enhanced cleaning protocols are in place concerning routine cleaning and disinfection tasks. Highly used areas such as doorknobs, light switches, control buttons, taps, counters, handrails, touch screen surfaces and keypads require regular sanitization.



## **Signage and Posters**

Signs and posters should be used to provide necessary information to staff in order to positively influence behaviours. Proper respiratory technique, handwashing techniques and sanitization procedures should be prominently posted in applicable areas. Occupancy limits for the entirety of the workplace and specific work areas should be prominently posted.

## **Employee is Feeling Unwell**

Anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms of COVID-19 including fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat and painful swallowing must be directed to call 811 and follow the directives of Public Health officials. Staff should be informed to contact their direct report (supervisor or manager) if they are experiencing symptoms. If feeling unwell an employee should notify their supervisor or manager and stay home. If an employee begins to feel unwell while at work notify their supervisor or manager and go directly home. Alternatively, a designated member of the management team can be the assigned contact for all members of staff.

## **Part 3: Traveling for Work**

### **Travel Considerations**

If employees are required to travel for work, considerations for self-isolation may need to be followed. Consider the risks and benefits related to any upcoming essential travel and evaluate telecommuting or virtual meetings. Always remember to check the travel advisories on the Government of Canada and Government of Nova Scotia's website and follow all recommended guidelines.

### **Intra-Provincial Travel**

Travel within the Province of Nova Scotia could be permitted with all sanitization protocols being followed, and the follow up prior to a site visit that the site has protocols in place

### **Inter-Provincial Travel**

Inter-Provincial Travel should not be permitted unless utterly necessary. A mandatory 14-day self-isolation protocol may be required upon return.

### **International Travel**

Travel outside of Canada should not be permitted.

## **Part 4: Consideration for Staff with Specific Needs**

### **At Risk Staff Members**

Special consideration may be required for staff with specific health risks or those living with at-risk individuals may need special consideration.



## **Childcare**

Special consideration may be required for staff who do not have access to childcare. Reasonable and practicable accommodations, such as working remotely or working alternative hours may be employed. Authorized absences from work may be required to address childcare needs.

## **Sick Leave and Absences**

Employers should continue to maintain flexible policies that will allow employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be cognizant of the fact that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members; and/or may have childcare issues that will continue to require them to work from home.

## **Technology Needs**

An assessment of technology and material needs for at home workers should be completed. Ensure staff are provided with the resources required to complete daily tasks.

## **Personal Protective Equipment**

Employers may also need to provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that may include respiratory protection keeping in mind that respirator fit testing may be required, disposable gloves, or disposable face mask and/or face shield. Please see Construction Safety Nova Scotia's COVID-19 Toolkit- Safe Work Practices Guide for NS <https://constructionsafetyns.ca/additional-resources/> for detailed information.

## **Part 5: Additional Considerations**

### **Refusal of Unsafe Work**

Refresh employees, foremen, supervisors and managers on the principles and processes involved in a work refusal. Encourage employees to report concerns immediately. React positively and effectively to all reports. Refer to sections 42-46 of the *NS OHS Act* for detailed information.

### **Questions or Concerns**

Employers and employees with questions or concerns may contact:

NS Department of Labour and Advanced Education by phone at 1-800-952-2687 or by email at [ohsdivision@novascotia.ca](mailto:ohsdivision@novascotia.ca) or;

Construction Safety Nova Scotia by phone at [1.800.971.3888](tel:18009713888) or [902.468.6696](tel:9024686696) or by email at [info@constructionsafetyns.ca](mailto:info@constructionsafetyns.ca)



## Employee Mental Health and Available Resources

Workers in the workplace may also be affected by the anxiety and uncertainty created by the COVID-19 outbreak. It's important to remember that mental health is just as important as physical health, and to take measures to support mental well-being

### Part 6: Resources

**Construction Safety Nova Scotia:** <https://constructionsafetyns.ca/>

**Government of Nova Scotia's current information regarding Covid-19:**  
<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/>

**Government of Canada's travel advisories for the latest guidance and recommendations:** <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notice/221>

**CCOHS pandemic resources:** <https://www.ccohs.ca/outbreaks/>

**Symptoms poster:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19-symptoms.pdf>

**Prevent the spread poster:**  
[https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/infographics/download/Prevent\\_Spread.jpg](https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/infographics/download/Prevent_Spread.jpg)

**FREE E-course for Pandemic Planning:**  
[https://www.ccohs.ca/products/courses/pandemic\\_plan/](https://www.ccohs.ca/products/courses/pandemic_plan/)

**Government of Canada's current information regarding Covid-19:**  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks.html>

**Approved hard surface and disinfectants:** <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>

**Assistance to help establish Workplace Safety Policies:**  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/risk-informed-decision-making-workplaces-businesses-covid-19-pandemic.html>

**Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia:**  
<https://www.mentalhealthns.ca/>

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