

[WorkSafeBC Workplace Closures and COVID-19 Inspections](#)

On April 11, 2021, an [order of the provincial health officer](#) (PHO) delegated specific powers to WorkSafeBC prevention officers. The order provides WorkSafeBC prevention officers the ability to serve a 10-day closure order on an employer with COVID-19 transmission when directed so by a medical health officer. WorkSafeBC's role is well defined and narrow in scope, with no role in deciding which workplaces will be served with a closure order.

Questions regarding the closure order itself are referred to the Health Authority Medical Health Officer.

When WorkSafeBC prevention officers deliver a closure order to affected workplaces, they will also help the employer understand their need to review their COVID-19 safety plan and make any necessary changes during the closure period. WorkSafeBC will be available to provide guidance around reviewing and updating COVID-19 safety plans.

Then, once the workplace has re-opened, WorkSafeBC will conduct an inspection to review the employer's COVID-19 safety plan and ensure the employer is effectively implementing measures to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Findings from COVID-19 inspections

Throughout the pandemic, we have been engaging employers to ensure that protocols identified in their COVID-19 safety plan have been effectively reviewed, updated, and implemented, and that exposure to COVID-19 is being effectively managed in the workplace. This includes issuing an inspection report with orders in cases where improvements to COVID-19 safety plans and protocols are required.

We recently analyzed 1,600 COVID-19 orders to identify the controls most frequently identified as needing improvement. They include:

Physical Distancing

- Ensure physical distance of 2 metres is maintained between workers and others whenever possible, especially in shared spaces; consider changing the layout of workspaces to enable physical distancing in all work and break areas.
- Provide physical barriers such as Plexiglas if physical distancing between workers and customers cannot be maintained.

Signage

- Post signage that reminds workers of the controls in place, including occupancy limits, handwashing practices, health-check requirements, and entrance restrictions.
- Use physical queue controls, such as crowd-control cones or floor markers to regulate traffic and physical distancing.

Policies and Protocols

- Develop and post a COVID-19 safety plan that identifies and addresses the risks in all areas of the workplace.
- Ensure there are posted policies for employer and visitor daily health screening.

Training

- Ensure health and safety information and training is provided in the required languages so it can be understood by everyone at the workplace.

Supervision and Monitoring

- Communicate safety programs and policies clearly to workers through information-sharing, instruction, training, and supervision to ensure the controls in place are being followed.

Facilities

- Provide adequate hand-washing facilities on site for all workers.
- Place alcohol-based hand sanitizer at key areas of your workplace (near pay stations, in break rooms, etc.).

Personal Protective Equipment

- Make sure appropriate masks are available and being used properly for the work being carried out.

For more information about all aspects of a COVID-19 safety plan, please refer to the following resources:

- [Reviewing and updating your COVID-19 safety plan: A guide for employers](#)
- [COVID-19 safety plan video series: Five steps to developing your COVID-19 safety plan](#)

Reporting COVID-19 exposure claims

As a reminder, employers and workers should continue to report a workplace injury or disease during this time, including those involving a work-related exposure to COVID-19. Contracting COVID-19 in the workplace may be considered a work-related occupational disease, and affected staff members have the right to make a claim and could be eligible for health care and wage-loss benefits.

For information on when and how to report a COVID-19 illness to WorkSafeBC, please visit the [Claims COVID-19 pages on worksafebc.com](#) for information for both workers and employers.