

WorkSafeBC releases industry-specific guidance for next phase of restart

Media Frequently Asked Questions

What has WorkSafeBC released today?

Every employer must ensure the health and safety of their workers, including developing a plan on how to assess the risk of COVID-19 exposure in the workplace and implement measures to keep their workers safe.

We have developed various general and industry-specific materials in consultation with industry and labour stakeholders to ensure they are practical and understandable for workplaces in each sector.

To complement the protocols for specific industries, WorkSafeBC has also developed general resources intended for all workplaces.

These include: a COVID-19 safety plan template, workplace posters, information on cleaning and hygiene practices, and guidance on the selection and use of masks.

Please explain how businesses are to use these guidance materials?

Employers are required to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan that outlines the policies, guidelines, and procedures they have put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

WorkSafeBC has provided industry-specific protocols to help employers develop an effective plan for their workplace.

Each workplace is unique, and employers may need to identify and implement additional protocols if these do not sufficiently address the risks to workers.

Tell me about the COVID-19 Safety Plan guide?

A COVID-19 Safety Plan template is available on the worksafebc.com website. It will guide employers through a six-step process to help them create the plan. The plan is provided as a fillable PDF file that can be downloaded.

Why are some of the sector-specific guidelines not complete yet?

A few sectors are awaiting some additional reviews and input, and we will have them posted in the coming days.

Will WorkSafeBC be reviewing and approving the COVID-19 safety plans of all businesses before they reopen?

No, WorkSafeBC will not be reviewing or approving the COVID-19 safety plans of individual employers, but employers will need to provide their plan during a WorkSafeBC inspection.

How will you ensure that a business has a plan in place?

WorkSafeBC will be launching a verification and inspection initiative the week of May 19.

The purpose of the province-wide inspection initiative is to ensure workplaces have a COVID-19 Safety Plan in place and that it's being implemented effectively to keep workers safe.

Did WorkSafeBC work with industry groups to develop these?

Yes. WorkSafeBC had very thoughtful input from the Provincial Health Office, and we worked with numerous industry associations who provided practical comments and input in the development of our sector-specific protocols.

Some businesses say the timing of your guidance is too late for them to be able to open next week. Why did it take so long?

We certainly empathize with businesses that have been closed and are anxious to resume operations.

The industry-specific guidance was developed in consultation with industry associations, and we needed to be diligent and have the right materials to support employers.

Most importantly, any employer resuming operations needs to take the time to ensure they are protecting the health and safety of their workers.

Please explain whether masks are going to be required for businesses as they resume operations?

The most effective ways to prevent the spread of infection include handwashing, cleaning and disinfecting work areas, physical distancing, and having sick workers stay at home.

Employers may consider the use of masks as an additional control measure in combination with these measures.

Some industry associations may recommend the use of masks as a worker protection or public health measure.

There is guidance on the selection and use of masks available online at [worksafebc.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).

What if an employee doesn't feel safe at work? What can they do?

Workers in B.C. have the right to refuse unsafe work if they believe it presents an undue hazard.

If the matter is not resolved, WorkSafeBC should be contacted and a prevention officer will consult with workplace parties to determine whether there is an undue hazard.

Where can I get more information?

There is information available online at: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation/faqs-returning-to-safe-operation>

You can also call WorkSafeBC's Prevention Information Line at: 1.888.621.7233.