

# Retail:

## Protocols for returning to operation

The following content was posted to WorkSafeBC's website on May 22, 2020. For the most current version, please visit [worksafebc.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).

These protocols are for employers providing retail services in a variety of environments, including shops, malls, and department stores, as well as employers who have a retail component to their business, such as gas stations. Retail employers may also benefit from reviewing other protocols if their workplace includes other work environments such as [office space](#), or [retail services](#). Employers must also ensure they are abiding by any [orders, notices, or guidance issued by the provincial health officer](#), and the appropriate health authority, which are relevant to their workplace.

Some retail operators have continued to operate through the COVID-19 pandemic. These protocols may be used by these retailers as resources to further strengthen the protocols they already have in place. For retailers that are re-opening following a COVID-19 related closure, these protocols are provided to support the development of their [COVID-19 Safety Plan](#). Retailers who have been in continuous operation as well as those returning to operation may also refer to WorkSafeBC's [Retail and COVID-19 safety](#) page for additional information and resources.

### Developing a COVID-19 safety plan

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. This plan follows the six steps outlined on [COVID-19 and returning to safe operation](#). Employers must involve frontline workers, joint health and safety committees, and supervisors in identifying protocols for their workplace. You do not need a formal plan in place to begin operation, but are expected to develop it while protecting the safety of your workers.

Employers are not required to submit plans to WorkSafeBC for approval, but in accordance with the order of the [Provincial Health Officer](#), this plan **must be posted** at the worksite. During a WorkSafeBC inspection, we will ask employers about the steps they have taken to protect their workers or to see the plan if it has been developed.

One part of developing your COVID-19 Safety Plan is identifying protocols that everyone at the workplace must follow to keep workers safe. We've provided industry-specific protocols below to consider as you develop the plan for your workplace.

These protocols are not a list of requirements; however, they should be considered and implemented to the extent that they address the risks your workplace. You may need to identify and implement additional protocols if the protocols suggested here do not sufficiently address the risk to your workers.

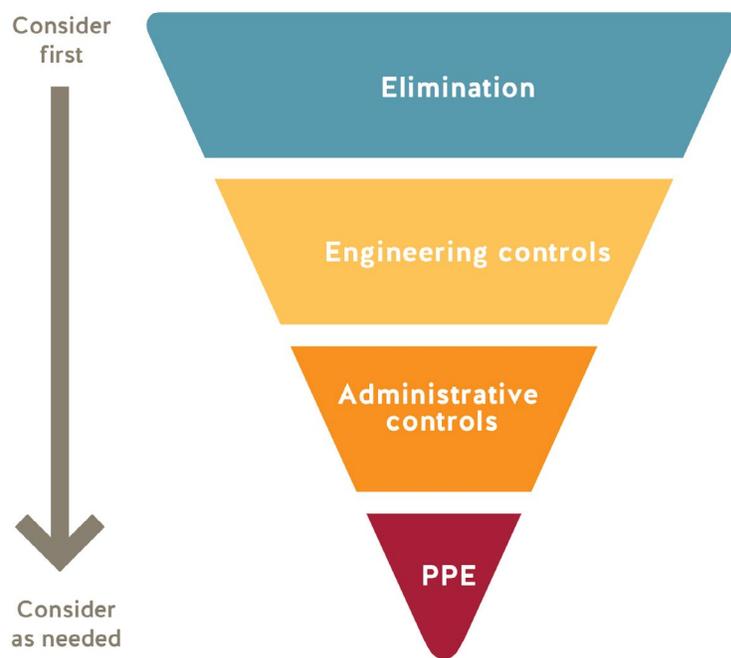
## Understanding the risk

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads in several ways, including through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, and from touching a contaminated surface before touching the face. Higher risk situations require adequate protocols to address the risk.

- The risk of person-to-person transmission is increased the closer you come to other people, the amount of time you spend near them, and the number of people you come near. Physical distancing measures help mitigate this risk.
- The risk of surface transmission is increased when many people contact same surface, and when those contacts happen in short intervals of time. Effective cleaning and hygiene practices help mitigate this risk.

## Selecting protocols for your workplace

Note that different protocols offer different protection. Wherever possible, use the protocols that offer the highest level of protection and add additional protocols as required.



**First level protection (elimination):** Use policies and procedures to keep people at a safe physical distance from one another. Limit the number of people in your workplace at any one time, and implement protocols to keep workers at least 2 metres from other workers, customers, and members of the public.

**Second level protection (engineering controls):** If you can't always maintain physical distancing, install **barriers** such as plexiglass to separate people.

**Third level protection (administrative controls):** Establish rules and guidelines, such as cleaning protocols, telling workers to not share tools, or implementing one-way doors or walkways.

**Fourth level protection (PPE):** If the first three levels of protection aren't enough to control the risk, consider the use of **non-medical masks**. Be aware of the limitation of non-medical masks to protect the wearer from respiratory droplets. Ensure workers are **using masks appropriately**.

## Protocols for retail

Retailers who are re-opening following a COVID-19 related closure can follow these protocols to support the development of their [COVID-19 Safety Plan](#), while retailers who continued to operate through the COVID-19 pandemic may use them to further strengthen the safety plan they already have in place.

The [Retail and COVID-19 Safety](#) page developed for the first phase of the provincial government's [B.C.'s Restart Plan](#) contains additional information and resources suitable for all retailers.

### Store layout and customer occupancy limits

- Determine the occupancy limit for your store and post it at the entrance to the store. See the [COVID-19 Safety Plan](#) for guidance on establishing occupancy limits.
- If possible, rearrange the store layout to support physical distancing. Consider limiting the products and services or store-front space available until restrictions are removed. Consider the use tape markers on the floor to designate areas and directions to move throughout the store.
- Evaluate and rearrange specific areas of the store where it may be a challenge to practice physical distancing, such as waiting areas, fitting rooms, elevators, and check out areas.
- If rearranging an area is not possible, establish procedures to follow physical distancing practices, such as posting maximum occupancy limits and restricting entry.
- If it is not possible to maintain physical distance with clients, consider the use of masks. Masks can reduce the spread of droplets from the wearer, but may not prevent the wearer from inhaling the droplets of others. It is therefore important to ensure that customers are wearing masks as well as the workers to ensure protection for both parties. Refer to WorkSafeBC guidance on the [selection and use of masks](#).
- Consider creating cohorts of workers who work together and who do not interact with other cohorts. This will assist in reducing transmission throughout the workplace in the event that a staff member becomes ill.

### Welcoming customers into the store

- [Place signs near entrances](#) informing customers not to enter the store if they are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. Ensure signage is placed at a location where it is visible, draws attention and is readable. Consider posting signage in other majority languages or provide pictograms.
- Ensure customers understand the protocols in place at the workplace. Consider posting requirements at the entrance to the store, as well as posting these to the company website, social media, or through email communications.
- Use physical queue line controls such as crowd control cones or floor markers at entrances.
- When possible, monitor the number of customers entering and leaving the store. Once the maximum number of people for a store is reached, allow one person in for every person that leaves.
- If possible, separate incoming and outgoing customer flow.
- Ensure any staff that are expected to manage line-ups of customers are trained in COVID-19 protocols. Ensure that they have support and strategies for dealing with customers who may be unwilling or who are unable to understand the approach to managing volumes.

### Deliveries

- Delivery drivers should be reminded to maintain their distance and not enter the warehouse unless necessary.
- Coordinate access for contractors at the workplace and remind them of the physical distancing requirement.

## Stocking shelves and product displays

- Consider stopping or reducing stock shelving and product display arrangements during the store operating hours. Where stocking or product display arrangements are needed during operating hours, define safe practices for workers. Consider closing aisles while restocking or placing a sign asking customers to stay 2 metres apart.
- Place signage and information for customers asking them to follow store policy on touching merchandise.
- Workers should wash their hands before and after they are finished stocking or rearranging shelves or product displays.
- Establish hygiene practices that address the needs of the workplace that includes the requirement to **wash or sanitize hands** after coming into contact with public items.

## Assisting customers

- Consider stopping, reducing or modifying your customer interaction, demonstration, and assistance practices to reduce contact intensity and number of contacts.
- To minimize physical contact with customers, offer online or telephone orders with delivery or pick up services as alternatives to shopping in person.
- Encourage customers to consult your product catalogue using your website or virtual catalogue to find product information.
- Any retailers serving food or beverages should refer to the **Restaurants, cafés, and pubs protocols**.

## Fitting rooms

- Remove unnecessary or decorative objects from inside of fitting rooms.
- Fitting rooms are separated by **barriers**, limiting the risk of transmission between rooms. However, you may consider closing every other fitting room to reduce the overall number of people in the changing area.
- Determine the protocols for cleaning fitting rooms.
- Refrain from handing out tokens or placards to customers with the number or items to try on. Consider other options, such as writing the number of items on a whiteboard on the door.
- Ask customers to leave unwanted items in a designated location, including hangers.

## Payment and till area

- Provide physical **barriers**, such a plexiglass, if the physical distancing requirement cannot be maintained. Ensure the **barriers** cover all areas where the customer is expected to move around while interacting with the cashier.
- Place alcohol-based hand sanitizer near pay stations.
- Curbside pick-ups or staff-assisted purchases (e.g., large items or building materials) should be done with prepayment, a means of identification, and ensuring the customer stays in the vehicle while the worker loads the items.
- Encourage the use credit cards and loyalty cards wherever possible and have customers scan or tap their cards and handle the card readers themselves. Encourage tap payment over pin pad use. As some customers will need to pay with cash, establish hygiene practices that include washing or sanitizing hands after handling cash.
- Have customers hold their ID so it is visible and allows identification for controlled products.

- If reusable bags are accepted at a retail store, the store should consider asking customers to pack the bags themselves.
- If workers handle or pack goods into reusable bags they are expected to practice frequent handwashing.

### Product delivery

- Adjust practices for delivering the package to a person to ensure physical distancing is maintained. For example, if possible, drop packages at the door or outside buildings and avoid contact with other people.
- Communicate that a delivery has been made by phone call, text or email and avoid touching any surfaces, such as a doorbell.
- If possible, adjust practices for proof of delivery so that in-person signatures can be avoided and online confirmation of receipt of package can be used instead.
- Place disinfecting wipes and alcohol-based hand sanitizers in delivery and dispatch vehicles.
- Clean and disinfect tools and frequently touched surfaces within the vehicle and between deliveries or installations.
- Assign a delivery vehicle to one worker only, if possible.

### Recycling facilities and depots

- Establish control procedures to reduce customer contact intensity and maintain physical distancing.
- Determine where splashing may occur and ensure appropriate PPE is used to protect the worker.
- Workers handling recycled items should **wash their hands** after the task is complete.

### Travelling sales representatives or service providers as part of a retail operation

- When possible, consider stopping or reducing sales person or service providers' travel by replacing it with virtual sales or service meetings.
- Develop and train workers on travelling safe practices for hand hygiene, and surface cleaning while travelling, when visiting clients, and before and after meals.
- When travelling cannot be avoided, consult the travel recommendations and restrictions at the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) website to define the travel plan and safe practices.

### Additional information

See the following links for additional information, guidance, or resources that may assist you in the development of your plan.

- [COVID-19 guidance to retail food and grocery stores \(BC CDC\)](#)
- [Recommendations for malls, shops and stores \(BC CDC\)](#)
- [Workplace guidance for sector employers and employees \(Government of Canada\)](#)
- [Resources for retailers \(Retail Council of Canada\)](#)
- [Retail safety and COVID-19 \(WorkSafeBC\)](#)

## For more information

The information on this page is based on current recommendations and may change. For the latest guidance, please see the health information from the [British Columbia Centre for Disease Control](#) and the latest news from the [government of British Columbia](#).

### If you have a question or concern

Workers and employers with questions or concerns about workplace exposure to COVID-19 can call WorkSafeBC's Prevention Information Line at 604.276.3100 in the Lower Mainland (toll-free within B.C. at 1.888.621.SAFE). You'll be able to speak to a prevention officer to get answers to your questions, and if required, a prevention officer will be assigned to assess the health and safety risk at your workplace.

## Resources

### COVID-19: A guide to reducing the risk

This resource is for employers, outlining the steps to follow to make sure you are minimizing the risk of COVID-19 so your business can operate safely.

### COVID-19 Safety Plan

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. This tool will guide...

### Help prevent the spread of COVID-19: Cover coughs and sneezes

This poster reminds workers and visitors to cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze, and to wash their hands afterward.

[See more resources](#)