

Workplace Sanitary Standards Guide for the Forest Management Sector – COVID-19

OHS is everyone's business!



The purpose of this guide is to support forest sector businesses for management of occupational health and safety (OHS) in their work environment. It seeks to guarantee that operations can resume or continue under the safest and healthiest possible conditions in the context of COVID-19.

The information contained in this Guide is taken from the interim recommendations produced by the Réseau de santé publique en santé au travail (RSPSAT) and the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ) and specifies the CNESST's expectations in relation to [these recommendations](#).

In a crisis period, it is important that workers, employers and other players in the workplace collaborate to have healthy and safe work environments for all! Dialogue and cooperation are essential to achieve this.



Management of occupational health and safety

Management means implementing the necessary measures to honour the employer's legal obligations, namely identify, correct and control the risks and encourage the workers' participation in this preventive approach.

Good cooperation between the employer and the staff is essential to encourage management of OHS.



The employer must **proceed with identification of the risks of transmission of COVID-19 in the work environment**. If the risks of contamination cannot be eliminated, the employer must seek to reduce and control them. The employer must identify the tasks during which workers may be exposed to the virus. The suppliers, subcontractors, partners and customers have been informed of the preventive measures implemented in the business to reduce and control the risks associated with COVID-19 and make them aware of the importance of complying with these measures.

The preventive measures that may be applied are based on the principles of exclusion of symptomatic persons from the workplace, physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and maintenance of hygiene measures for the tools, equipment and frequently touched surfaces.

The COVID-19 context can be a major stress factor, whether for the employer or for the workers, suppliers, subcontractors and partners, due to the upheaval it causes in the different spheres of society. Special attention must therefore be paid to the psychosocial health of personnel.



Exclusion of symptomatic workers from the workplace

Persons exhibiting symptoms are part of the COVID-19 transmission chain in the workplace. Procedures accounting for the following factors can avoid transmission of the disease:

- Identification of workers with COVID-19 symptoms before they enter the workplace, by means such as:
 - a questionnaire,
 - self-evaluation by the workers;

The information collected in this way is confidential. The employer must take the necessary measures to protect the confidentiality of this information;

When forest accommodations for the workers are organized by the employer, the screening measures must be adapted when workers are transported to the accommodations Sunday evening or early Monday morning.

Even once the workers are in the accommodations for the week, the search for people with COVID-19 symptoms must be repeated on each shift change for harvesting work and every day for non-commercial silvicultural work.

- Isolation in a room of a worker who starts feeling symptoms associated, in the workplace, wearing a procedure mask and reporting to 1-877-644-4545;
- The suppliers, subcontractors and partners have been informed of the measures implemented in the company to control the risks associated with COVID-19 and made aware of the importance of complying with these measures;
- Casual customers of forest camps, such as hunters, fishermen, vacationers, students or others, are informed of the measures in place at the forest accommodations, and interactions with forest workers (presence within two metres) are reduced to the strict necessary minimum;
- Stability of teams in contact with personnel coming from outside the business (e.g. delivery persons, truckers) is preferred.



Physical distancing

- Whenever possible, a minimum of 2 metres of distancing between people must be maintained at work, from arrival to departure;
- This distance must also be maintained during breaks and lunch hour;
- Handshakes and hugs must be avoided;
- The work methods have been reviewed to comply with 2 metres of physical distancing whenever possible;
- Interactions between workers are limited;
- For deliveries to forest camps or in service trucks of harvest crews, the tasks are organized so that the delivery persons and the suppliers avoid comings and goings in the building and maintain 2-metre distancing between individuals.

Adjustments must be made to limit the risk of transmission when the principles of physical distancing cannot be respected:

- Organization of work methods. For example:
 - prefer teams that are as small and stable as possible,
 - reduce the number of workers and job rotations,
 - If applicable, do not hold meetings that require a physical gathering,
 - avoid sharing objects, whenever possible,
 - limit trips to those strictly necessary;
- Personal protective equipment adapted to the risk is supplied and worn:
 - visor or protective glasses,
 - procedure mask;

A procedure mask and protective eyewear (protective glasses or visor covering the face down to the chin) are supplied to personnel who perform a task requiring them to be within 2 metres of another person and in the absence of physical barriers.

However, if wearing both the procedure mask and protective eyewear does not appear to be possible, a risk analysis must be performed to determine the protective equipment that best ensures the worker's health and safety. Heat, dust, humidity, the tasks performed, work position, frequency of handling the mask and the breathing requirement must be considered in the risk analysis. After the risk analysis, wearing a visor may be accepted as a last-resort solution.

- Single-use personal protective equipment is placed in a trash can or in reclosable bags or containers reserved for this purpose, and then discarded;
- Reusable personal protective equipment (e.g. protective eyewear) is cleaned and disinfected with a product adapted to the equipment (see manufacturer's recommendations);

- If physical distancing cannot be maintained and it is impossible to use a physical barrier or protective equipment (for example, during a complex repair on a forestry machine), interaction must be limited to a total of 15 minutes per day per worker.



Hand hygiene

To limit the risks of transmission in the work environment, it is preferred to supply soap and water for frequent hand washing. If this is absolutely impossible, use a hydroalcoholic solution with an alcohol concentration of at least 60% for at least 20 seconds. Hand hygiene is necessary:

- before and after touching your face (eyes, nose, mouth);
- after coughing, sneezing or wiping the nose;
- before and after eating;
- after handling something that is frequently touched;
- when entering and leaving the premises;
- after each use of common facilities, such as the dry house, the showers, the kitchen, the fitness room or the TV room;
- before wearing personal protective equipment and after its removal.



Respiratory etiquette

Respecting respiratory etiquette consists of:

- covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, and using tissues or the crook of your elbow;
- using single-use tissues;
- immediately discarding used tissues in the trash can;
- frequent hand washing;
- not touching your mouth or eyes with your gloved or bare hands.



Maintenance of hygiene measures for tools, forest equipment and frequently touched surfaces

Given that the virus responsible for COVID-19 can survive on surfaces, application of hygiene measures is essential:

- Avoid sharing tools, accessories and devices such as tablet, GPS, paint and tapes;
- In the mobile shops, maintain two metres of distancing whenever possible. If this is impossible, wear a procedure mask in addition to the gloves and protective eyewear usually worn;

- Clean and disinfect the dashboard, the joysticks and the interior and exterior door handles and any other surface touched regularly during operation of heavy equipment with disinfectant wipes or with the usual cleaning products during the shift change.

Resources are available online for more information concerning [cleaning of surfaces](#) or the [recommended disinfectants](#).

Forest accommodations

Whenever possible, maintain physical distancing between workers, particularly:

- when entering acting as bottlenecks, such as camp entrances, locker rooms, dry houses and the cafeteria. Avoid creation of lineups at these locations;
- in areas where more than one worker could be present, such as showers, the fitness room and the TV rooms; restrict the use of these rooms to a limited number of people and, as needed, control access;
- during rest periods, when the same group of workers must eat at the same time in the same places. Increase the number of meal periods as needed, to ensure that the workers are located two metres from each other;
- by removing non-essential objects from the common areas, such as newspapers and magazines;
- by providing for only one person per bedroom. If this is impossible, prefer minimum distancing between workers (2 metres), or else install a physical barrier between the beds, easily washable and high enough to stop projections in case of sneezing or coughing. In case a worker uses a CPAP, refer to the [public health directives](#) in this regard;
- by encouraging cleaning of personal space by each worker.

Transportation of workers and forest trips

Ces consignes s'appliquent lors des déplacements entre le domicile et les lieux de travail autant qu'entre le lieu d'hébergement en forêt et les lieux de travail.

- Whenever possible, individual transportation is encouraged (only one individual per vehicle);
- If more than one worker absolutely must get into a vehicle, prefer installation of a physical barrier (according to the SAAQ's recommendations), and as a last resort, use of protective equipment [procedure mask and protective eyewear (protective glasses or visor)];
- If bus or minibus transportation is necessary, assign the workers to one place inside. Alternate one bench out of two on each side. If 2-metre distancing cannot be maintained, wear procedure masks or protective glasses or a visor;
- The mass transit vehicle must be cleaned and disinfected once a day;
- It is forbidden to eat during transportation.



Legal obligations

Legal obligations with respect to occupational health and safety, for both the employer and for workers, must be applied in the context of COVID-19. They are summarized below.

Employer

The employer has an obligation to protect the health, safety and physical well-being of their workers. *The Act respecting occupational health and safety* (AOHS) stipulates that the employer must take all the necessary measures to do so ([section 51](#)). This includes using methods to identify, correct and control risks.

In the context of COVID-19, the employer must ensure that the usual preventive measures are still appropriate. If not, they must modify them to protect workers against the risk of contamination.

The employer must also inform them about the risks associated with their work, including those associated with COVID-19. They must also provide workers with appropriate training, assistance and supervision so that everyone has the skill and knowledge required to safely perform the work assigned to them.

Worker

Every worker has an obligation to take the necessary measures to protect their health, safety or physical well-being and to ensure that they do not endanger the health, safety or physical well-being of other people in the workplace ([section 49](#) of the AOHS). To do this, they must follow the rules and measures put in place in the context of COVID-19, just as they follow the other rules applied in the workplace. Workers must also participate in identifying and eliminating risks. If they see risks or have suggestions in this regard, they must inform the health and safety committee (if there is one), their superior or a representative of the employer.

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- Institut national de santé publique du Québec
- Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs
- Prévibois
- Réseau de santé publique en santé au travail
- Rexforêt
- Unifor

The guide and the kit result from a reflective process intended to support the work environments in management of occupational health and safety in the context of COVID-19. The project is scalable and will harmonize with the preventive measures order by the Direction de la santé publique (public health authorities).

For more information, we invite you to consult the recommendations of the Réseau de santé publique en santé au travail published on the [Institut national de santé publique](#) website.

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