

Workplace Sanitary Standards Guide for the Construction Sector – COVID-19

OHS is everyone's business!



To address the construction industry's concerns regarding the spread of COVID-19, at the request of the Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Solidarity, the CNESST has joined forces with Direction générale de la santé publique and employer and labour associations in the construction industry to create the CNESST Tactical Committee – COVID-19 Construction Sites.

This Committee is responsible for identifying problems, sharing good practices and finding preventive solutions to enforce the public health guidelines of the Direction de la santé publique and recommend measures to be implemented on construction sites.

This document is the culmination of a joint effort by labour and employer associations to identify measures to reduce workers' exposure to COVID-19 at construction sites. These measures will apply when work resumes on construction sites and will be updated regularly as the COVID-19 situation develops and as issues brought before the Committee are analyzed. A checklist has been developed (Appendix C) to monitor on-site compliance on a daily basis.

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](#).



Special and interim control measures in the workplace in the context of the appearance of variants under increased surveillance

Given the threat of COVID-19 variants, which are potentially more virulent and pose a greater risk of transmission, it is necessary to further reduce this risk and **require workers to wear a mask that is recognized as effective**, either a medical mask that complies with standard ASTM F2100 (level 1 is sufficient) or standard EN14683 Type IIR or a BNQ-certified mask (1922-900) indoors in the workplace at all times as an additional protective measure. **For outdoor work, a mask must be worn at all times if interactions with co-workers within 2 metres are unavoidable.**

A person does not have to wear a mask at all times if they work alone in a booth or a closed room (for example, an office with walls and a door, a truck, a passenger compartment) and when they are eating and drinking (for example, during meals and breaks).

A worker does not have to wear a mask at all times if they are outdoors and are able to maintain a distance of 2 metres from other people.

These requirements will be adapted based on the epidemiological situation and the control of transmission and will end once the 3rd wave of COVID-19 has been overcome.

A new publication is intended to add a section to the [*Occupational health and safety standards guide – COVID-19*](#) and to sector guides, where applicable. The new section is entitled “Use of a medical mask at all times in the context of the appearance of variants”.

Note that this section has prevalence with respect to any reference to the use of a medical mask in the following sections:

- Transportation
- Use of personal protective equipment specific to COVID-19
- Preventive measures during work at a COVID-19 contaminated site.



Preventive measures to be put in place to protect the workers' health

Québec employers must take the necessary measures to protect the health and ensure the safety and physical well-being of their workers. On construction sites, employers and the principal contractor share the responsibility to ensure the health and safety of workers.

Workers must take the necessary measures to ensure their health, safety and physical well-being and see that they do not endanger the health, safety or physical well-being of other persons at or near their workplace.

In the event that a workplace does not comply with government guidelines and the employer does not address the COVID-19-related risk, a CNESST inspector could demand that the workplace be closed until the employer takes corrective action. Violators may be issued a statement of offence.



Health check for workers when they arrive on the site

It is important to inform workers that they must stay at home if they have COVID-19-like symptoms.

The following questionnaire must be used on construction sites. The employer must check each worker's health when they arrive on the site every day by asking them to answer the following questions:

Block A

If the worker answers "Yes" to any of the following symptoms, they must leave work immediately.

- Do you feel feverish, do you have chills like when you have the flu or is your oral temperature 38.1°C (100.6°F) or higher?
- Do you have a recent cough or a chronic cough that has worsened recently?
- Do you have difficulty breathing or are you short of breath?
- Do you have a sore throat?
- Do you have a sudden loss of smell without nasal congestion (stuffy nose), with or without a loss of taste?
- Do you have a runny nose or nasal congestion (stuffy nose) of unknown cause?
- Do you have contact with someone who has COVID-19 or someone who returned from travelling outside the country less than 2 weeks ago or are you waiting to have a test ordered by public health authorities or have you been asked to quarantine by public health authorities?

Block B

If the worker answers "Yes" to two or more of the following symptoms, they must leave work immediately.

- Do you have stomach aches?
- Do you have any nausea or vomiting?
- Do you have diarrhea?
- Do you have a significant loss of appetite?
- Are you experiencing unusual and severe fatigue for no obvious reason?
- Do you have unusual muscle pain or aches (not related to physical exertion)?
- Do you have an unusual headache?
- Do you have a significant loss of appetite?

The worker must contact the Direction de la santé publique. (Reference document Appendix H).

Taking workers' temperature is not recommended because the result is unreliable, especially for workers who work outdoors.

The answers to these questions are confidential. The employer must take the necessary measures to ensure the confidentiality of this information is protected.

Procedure to follow when a worker exhibits symptoms on a job site or is diagnosed with COVID-19

A worker who has COVID-19-like symptoms as indicated on the [government site](#) must be isolated immediately and wear a medical mask. They may call 1-877-644-4545 to obtain the instructions to follow.

When a worker is diagnosed with COVID-19, the Direction de la santé publique usually conducts an epidemiological investigation to determine the sick person's degree of contact with other people. Depending on the result of the assessment (high or moderate risk), other workers may have to self-isolate for 10 to 14 days.

Return-to-work criteria for workers who contract COVID-19

The Direction générale de la santé publique authorizes people to be released from self-isolation once all the following criteria have been met:

- [At least 10 days has passed since the onset of symptoms or the date of specimen collection for asymptomatic workers with a positive result.](#) Note that a person who has received an isolation order under the *Public Health Act* because they were in close contact with a confirmed case must self-isolate for 14 days even if their test result is negative;
- No acute symptoms for the past 24 hours (excluding a residual cough that may persist);
- No fever for the past 48 hours (without taking antipyretics).

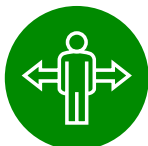
If a worker is identified as a contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case on a site, they must comply with public health guidelines. Workers must comply with a public health isolation order and may not work on another site until the isolation period is over.

However, since the healthcare system is unable to certify that the above criteria have been met, a medical certificate is not required for a return to work.

Planning of work to maintain physical distancing

The project manager must do everything possible to plan work in such a way as to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres between workers.

The project manager and employers must also take care to ensure that 2 metres of physical distancing is observed during the following situations: arrival at the work site, breaks, meals and departure from the work site.



Work must be scheduled in such a manner as to avoid having a large number of workers in the same place at the same time. If a team of workers is formed, it is recommended to keep the same workers on the team for the duration of the project.

It is also recommended to avoid face-to-face meetings and to use the telephone or the Internet instead.

Transportation

(see the section “Special and interim control measures in the workplace in the context of the appearance of variants under increased surveillance” for the use of masking)

By vehicle

Use of a personal vehicle is preferred to get to the workplace.

When 2 or more workers use a company vehicle, they must wear personal protective equipment (PPE), as prescribed in the section “Use of specific personal protective equipment for COVID-19”.

However, when the company vehicle is equipped with physical barriers (according to the [SAAQ criteria](#)):

- the passenger in the rear isolated from the seat does not have to wear PPE;
- the passengers in the rear isolated from the front and from each other do not have to wear PPE;

The number of people in pickup is limited to 4.

The presence of 2 workers in a pickup or service vehicle is accepted without wearing PPE, only on condition that the following measures are respected:

- Strictly apply exclusion from the work environment for people exhibiting [symptoms associated with COVID-19](#);
- Keep this same team of workers (tandem) stable for several weeks. A tandem is considered stable as of the 15th day (after two calendar weeks). As of this day, the workers can remove their PPE in the vehicle. If the team changes, the workers will have to wear PPE again for two weeks. At the end of the two weeks, they will be able to remove it;
- Maintain the same position (driver or passenger) for the duration of the project;
- Avoid sharing material and equipment (tablets, pencils, communications devices, etc.);
- Clean and disinfect the vehicle (dashboard, steering wheel, gearshift, instruments, etc.) in the case that rotation between the driver and the passenger becomes absolutely necessary and on each shift change.

The ventilation in the vehicle must have an outdoor air intake. The surfaces touched by the workers must be washed regularly. The same driver must be preferred.

On a bus

For transportation of workers by bus, it is recommended to maintain 2 metres of physical distancing.

If it is impossible to maintain this distance, reduce the occupancy rate by 50% and install physical barriers (according to the [SAAQ criteria](#)) or, failing this, the workers must wear PPE as prescribed in the section “Use of specific personal protective equipment for COVID-19”. See diagram in Appendix F.

It should be noted that the ventilation in the vehicle must have an outdoor air intake. The surfaces touched by the workers must be cleaned and disinfected regularly. The same driver must be preferred.

Elevator

For transportation of workers by elevator, it is recommended to maintain 2 metres of physical distancing.

If 2 metres of physical distancing cannot be maintained, the occupancy rate must be reduced to 50% or less of the elevator’s capacity. The occupants must wear PPE as prescribed in the section “Use of specific personal protective equipment for COVID-19”.

The workers must face the outside of the cage to avoid being within another person’s breathing area (avoid standing face to face).

The frequently touched surfaces must be cleaned and disinfected regularly: call buttons, door handles, etc.



Hygiene measures for construction sites

Presence of toilets on site

A toilet must be made available to workers from the first day of work. [For work sites with 25 workers or more, flushing toilets and sinks are required](#), in accordance with the *Safety Code for the construction industry*.

In fact, [a sink containing clean and temperate water must be placed at the disposal of workers for each flushing toilet](#). It must be maintained in good operating condition.

The following products must also be placed at the disposal of workers:

- Soap or another cleansing agent;
- A hand dryer, roller towels or disposable paper towels.

Where paper towels are used, waste paper baskets, contactless if possible, must be used for their disposal after use.

Other measures to be implemented

- A notice indicating that the water is not suitable as drinking water must be displayed so that it is visible to workers;
- For work sites with fewer than 25 workers, a chemical toilet may be used;
- Toilets must be cleaned and disinfected at least twice per work shift - half-way through and at the end;
- It is important to clean and disinfect surfaces workers likely to be touched by workers.

Presence of water for hand washing

- The employer must ensure that workers have the means to wash their hands at the construction site;
- Encouraging hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds should be a priority at the work site;
- If soap and water are not available, a hydroalcoholic solution with a concentration of at least 60% must be used for at least 20 seconds;
- Mobile cleaning units are recommended where appropriate.

All workers on site must clean their hands:


- upon arriving at and leaving the work site;
- before and after eating;
- before and after a break;
- before and after smoking;
- when they go to the toilet;
- when putting on and removing personal protective equipment.

Keeping the lunch room clean

According to the *Safety Code for the construction industry*, on any work site where there are 10 or more workers and where the work lasts more than 7 days, the employer must make a room available to the workers where they may take their meals.

It is important to clean the lunch room tables before and after each use. The table should be covered with an easily washable surface (plastic or smooth), and the lunch room and its appliances and accessories (refrigerator, microwave, chairs, handles, etc.) should be cleaned and disinfected every shift to avoid infection.

Depending on how the site is set up, there are several ways to ensure that workers can maintain a social distance of **2 metres** between each other during meals, such as adding trailers, scheduling more than one meal period so workers are not all in the trailer at the same time.



It is also important to leave some space between work clothes hung up in the trailer, and tools, equipment and supplies must not be stored in the lunch room.

Tool cleaning

It is recommended that workers do not share tools with each other. If they must, the tools must be disinfected whenever they change hands.

At the end of each shift, it is important to clean and disinfect shared tools and work equipment.

Wearing gloves is not a required means of protection against COVID-19.

According to Direction de la santé publique, the virus does not penetrate the skin. It is therefore recommended to follow general hygiene practices such as not putting your hands or gloves in your face and washing your hands regularly.

To remove your gloves without becoming infected, it is recommended to follow [the procedure](#) provided by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux.

Preventive measures when working in a COVID-19-contaminated area

(see the section “Special and interim control measures in the workplace in the context of the appearance of variants under increased surveillance” for the use of masking)

When carrying out work (plumbing, electricity, etc.) at a contaminated site, a physical distance of at least 2 metres must be maintained with a contaminated person and it is suggested that the PPE recommended in the section “Use of personal protective equipment specific to COVID-19” be worn.

It is important to wash your hands and tools when you leave the site.

If a more stringent protection protocol is in place (e.g., in a hospital), it must be followed.

Collective protective equipment to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19

When working indoors, a supply of fresh air is recommended. Fresh air can be supplied by natural ventilation by opening the windows or by mechanical ventilation. Note that the airflow from mechanical ventilation must not be directed directly toward workers.

Use of personal protective equipment specific to COVID-19

(see the section “Special and interim control measures in the workplace in the context of the appearance of variants under increased surveillance” for the use of masking)

It is not recommended for construction workers to wear specific personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect themselves against COVID-19 when 2-metre physical distancing is respected. It is also strongly recommended not to wear a mask at all times when this is not required, because this increases the risks associated with excessive handling of the mask.

If everyone who works within 2 metres of another person wears a medical mask, and if they do not have any interactions with customers, protective eyewear is not required.

A visor alone does not provide sufficient protection. However, where a rigorous risk analysis shows that wearing a mask poses a risk to the worker's health or safety, wearing a visor alone that covers the face down to the chin may be an exceptional solution that can be used as a last resort.

Use of an SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus) necessary to guard against other risks complies with the above-mentioned requirements for wearing a mask.

The best thing to do is to wash your hands often, avoid touching your face and maintain distancing.

Although wearing a face covering (homemade mask), particularly recommended in public spaces, on the bus and métro, can contribute to reduce the spread of COVID-19 among the population, supplementing other public health measures, it is not recommended on construction sites. A face covering is not personal protective equipment. Without certification, it does not offer a sufficient degree of protection to protect workers' health and safety and can even be a source of health problems if it is improperly used.

Solutions to counter COVID-19-related stress, anxiety and depression

The whole COVID-19 situation has been a rather strange and unusual development. It is normal for people to be afraid, stressed, anxious or depressed.

The best way to get better is to be well informed, to take care of yourself and to seek help when needed.

Here are some useful phone numbers to call if you need help:

- Construire en santé Program: 1-800-807-2433
- Info-Social psychosocial telephone counselling service: 811
- Centre prévention du suicide: 1-866-277-3553



Reminder of basic hygiene measures recommended by the Direction de la santé publique

- Wash your hands often with warm running water and soap for at least 20 seconds;
- Use a hydroalcoholic solution with an alcohol concentration of at least 60% if soap and water are not available;
- Always follow proper hygiene when coughing or sneezing;
 - Cover your mouth and nose with your arm to reduce the spread of germs,
 - If you use a paper tissue, throw it away as soon as possible and then wash your hands;
- If you have symptoms, stay at home and call this toll-free number if necessary: 1-877-644-4545;
- Avoid direct contact for greetings (e.g., handshakes). Use other methods instead;
- Apply physical distancing.

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1. This association has voiced concerns about the lack of specific protective measures for work performed with no minimum distance of 2 metres and about the absence of enforcement measures such as fines for offenders.

Useful links

APPENDIX A : Document from the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ): [Interim Recommendations for Workers on Construction Sites](#)

APPENDIX B: Document from the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux: [Stress, Anxiety and Depression Associated With the Coronavirus COVID-19 Disease](#)

APPENDIX C: Document from the CNESST: [Daily Checklist – COVID-19](#)

APPENDIX D: CNESST poster: [Preventive Measures for Workers' Health](#)

APPENDIX E: Poster from the Gouvernement du Québec: [Port du masque](#) (Wearing a mask)

APPENDIX F: [Recommendations for Group Transportation of Workers](#)

APPENDIX H : Document from the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ), October 1 version: [Questionnaire des symptômes COVID-19](#) (COVID-19 Symptom-based Screening Questionnaire)

Original version in French

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