



Services de santé du

TIMISKAMING

Health Unit

Enhancing your health in so many ways.

April 23, 2021

Dear business owner/operator,

In the past week, we have seen a surge in new cases linked to workplace exposure. It has become clear that the current precautions that are in place are not enough to protect workers from the new COVID-19 variants of concern. Under the current stay-at-home order, all employees who can work from home must do so. If workers must attend in-person, we are asking you to [update your safety plan](#). While all components of the plan are important, we strongly suggest you improve ventilation and upgrade PPE. **We no longer consider plexiglass barriers protective in poorly-ventilated areas and no longer consider masks alone to be sufficient PPE.** If a worker is exposed to COVID-19 and has insufficient protection, they are at a greater risk of getting COVID-19. They will be considered a high-risk contact and required to self-isolate for 14 days.

Ventilation recommendations

The risk of COVID-19 transmission is higher in enclosed and crowded spaces. You should ensure that air-handling (HVAC) systems are maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions and consider standards, such as those from [the CSA](#) and American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE).

Additional steps you can take:

- use portable air cleaners
- keep windows and doors open as much as possible, including in colder weather
- adjust HVAC systems to increase the amount of fresh air and reduce recirculation
- continue ventilation and air exchange after regular business hours
- use available outdoor space whenever possible (for example, for meetings, breaks, client interactions such as curbside pick-up)
- consider going beyond minimum standards if possible.

If fans are needed for temperature control make sure you are using them [as safely as possible](#).

PPE recommendations

While PPE is the last line of defense when protecting your workers, it is time to shift from cloth face coverings to appropriate PPE. The Reopening Ontario Act requires workers who are within 2 meters of an unmasked individual to wear PPE that consists of **a mask and eye protection**. Use the required PPE for all workers who must be within 2 meters of another person and for workers who spend prolonged periods of time with other staff in poorly-ventilated areas. A list of PPE vendors can be found on the province's [PPE Supplier Directory](#).

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What is PPE?

- Face masks: A NIOSH- or ASTM-certified mask is considered PPE. Health Canada has also approved some foreign masks, including select KN95 masks, for use as PPE. Cloth masks are not considered PPE, since they do not offer enough protection.
- Eye protection: Face shields, goggles, and CSA-approved safety glasses are considered eye protection. Prescription eyewear is not considered eye protection.
- Workers who cannot wear PPE must be protected using other methods such as enhanced distancing greater than 2 meters, barriers in well-ventilated areas, or working from home.

If you have any questions, please refer to the links above or contact the Timiskaming Health Unit at 1-866-747-4305.

Sincerely,



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