



COVID-19 SAFETY PLAN

Applicability: Ingram Street

Effective Date: January 25, 2022 - Latest Revision January 24, 2022

PURPOSE:

To establish a process to ensure the safety of staff and manageable reintroduction of the public into CVRD facilities in compliance with WorkSafeBC requirements and the *Provincial Health Order Workplace Safety – January 20, 2022*.

POLICY:

Following direction of the Ministry of Health via a Public Health Order, the CVRD is instituting COVID-19 Safety Plans at worksites as required. This policy will outline considerations that are necessary to ensure the risk to staff remains as low as possible as operations continue, balancing transmission mitigation and general safety with business needs. This document will outline protective measures with a focus on staff, understanding that measures that protect staff should also protect the public. Where relevant, sections focused on public protection will be identified and are included.

At all times, the directions and guidelines put out by the Provincial Health Officer (PHO), Island Health, the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), and WorkSafeBC, will be followed. The guidelines that are issued may change and their directions will be the guiding principles and take precedence for safety purposes, irrespective of any information contained in this document. It is understood that the COVID-19 Pandemic represents a fluid risk and adaptability in planning and response is necessary for protection of staff and the public. Changes will be communicated to staff as quickly as possible through internal emails with updates to this document to follow promptly.

CVRD planning is based on the principles of risk management and hazard control. To be effective, the CVRD recognizes that it must use the expertise of managers and staff to ensure that implemented controls and processes allow for operational needs to be met while maintaining safety. It is also understood that processes will need to adapt to the changing nature of this pandemic.

PROGRAM DETAILS

The CVRD COVID-19 Safety Plan follows the recommended sections from WorkSafeBC:

1. Assess the risks of the workplace
2. Implement controls to reduce risk
3. Develop plans and procedures
4. Communication of plans
5. Monitoring and updating plans as needed
6. Address new risks arising from restarting operations.



Recommendations and requirements from WorkSafeBC, the CDC, the PHO, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, as well as industry best practices have been brought together to direct this plan.

1. Assess the Risks of the Workplace

The CVRD will work to ensure that sources of risk are identified. Risk cannot be controlled until identified so it is necessary to understand where risk resides, such as in commonly touched surfaces, interactions with other people, etc. Risks for Ingram Street were assessed against a variety of hazards related to altered operations because of COVID-19 including biological, chemical, and physical hazards. The workplace Joint Occupational Health and Safety (JOHS) committee was provided copies of this plan for review and to provide recommendations as appropriate to improve the plan.

The predominant risk is biological risk via the COVID-19 virus itself. The virus is understood to transmit via exposure to airborne particles containing the virus, arising through proximity to a person who has the virus. In respect of this, consideration is made for the risks posed by groups of staff congregating and being in close proximity for meetings, work processes, or to access tools. These identified areas form a focus for subsequent risk mitigation actions.

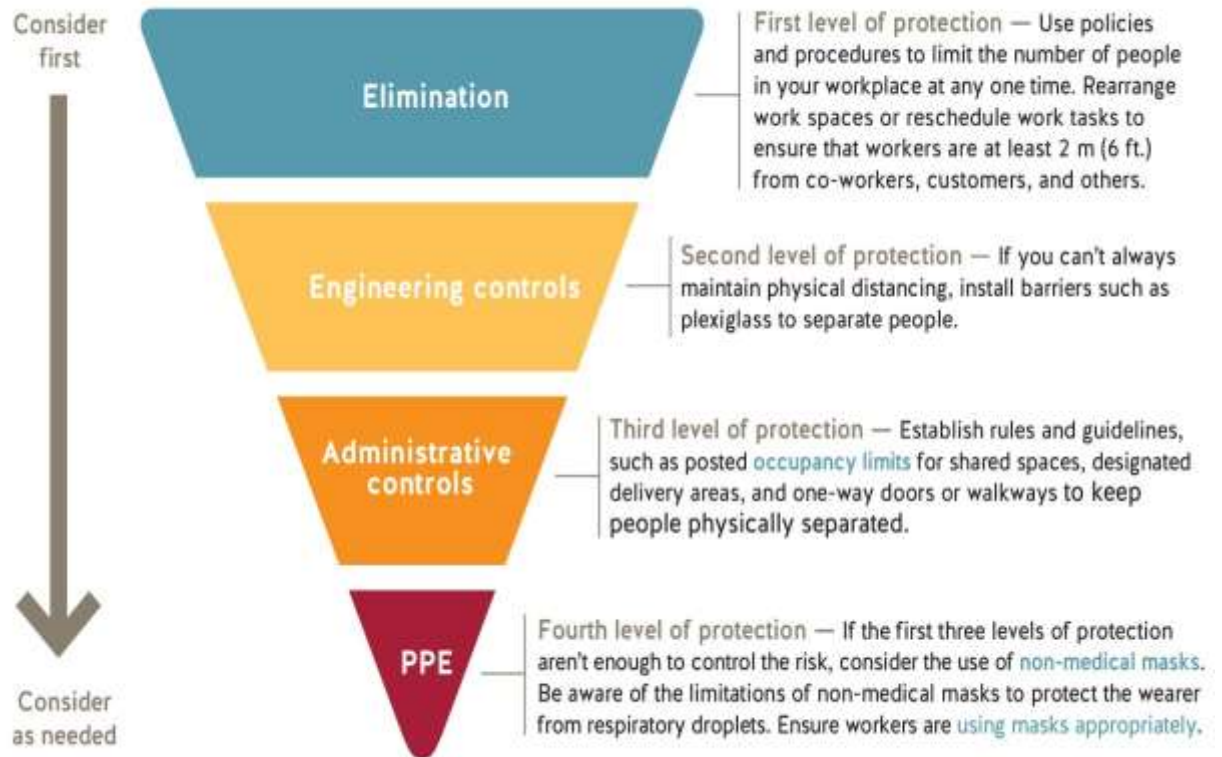
Additionally, contacting contaminated surfaces and then touching a mucus membrane such as an eye or the mouth represents a secondary but considered risk within this plan.

Any additional risks identified in the workplace arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic will be assessed and controlled as well. The CVRD recognizes that plans must remain fluid and requirements or best practices will change as further information regarding the COVID-19 virus is known.

2. Implement Controls to Reduce Risk

Controls for COVID-19 risks are structured against the Hierarchy of Controls, an Occupational Health and Safety standard for determining appropriateness of hazard and risk controls and where most effective controls are used first to create greatest level of risk mitigation.

The Hierarchy of Controls is described on the following pages:



Elimination – Remove the hazard or hazard risk from the workplace to prevent exposure from occurring

The main use of the elimination control has been through social distancing and the reduction of staff at the facility. By lowering the number of staff at a facility, the number of potential spreaders and recipients of the virus is reduced. A staff member working from home cannot contract the virus from a co-worker. With the lower overall number of people, it is easier to ensure social distancing protocols can be met.

Reduction of staff is a best practice as per the *Provincial Health Order* of December 16, 2020, however it is not an absolute requirement. However, the CVRD has operated on an internal policy of “work from home wherever practical” and this remains in effect at this time. Where operational needs persist, it is appropriate for workers to be at work-sites, but using control measures to protect themselves.

Physical / Social Distancing

Physical distancing guidelines from the province have been followed including the direction to staff to maintain a distance of 2 metres wherever possible.

The guideline of the *BC Municipal Safety Authority* of 55 square feet was used to determine occupancy for work areas and areas such as the staff lunch-room and elevator have occupancy limits to ensure distancing.



In-person meetings have been curtailed, with the use of electronic meetings for staff and the Board used to ensure business can be conducted. By not meeting in person, the chance of exposure is limited and represents a best-practice to control risk aligned with WorkSafeBC recommendations. In-person meetings may occur with prior permission of the CAO in limited situations.

Some workspaces have been re-arranged to reduce staff congregating or bottle-necking in common areas such as near printers. It is important to review work areas to ensure these changes remain effective and that work arrangements are not altered in a way that increases risk.

Vehicles

Staff are currently directed to not share company vehicles where social distancing cannot be maintained as much as possible. For situations where it cannot be avoided staff should be as separate as possible and must wear face coverings (see “Masks” section below).

Staff should also sanitize a vehicle before and after use. Spray bottles of sanitizer are available and if missing from a vehicle, please request a replacement from your manager or the Safety Officer.

Handling Paper and Documents

There are no mandated restrictions to handling of documents, but research has been reviewed to develop CVRD best practices.

Studies indicate the risk of transmission from paper documents is low. However, to minimize risk, electronic documents are an effective method of reducing handling and should be used where possible.

Mail presents a **very low** risk of exposure according to the Federal Government and WorkSafeBC due to the travel time to be received and the protocols in place at processing centres. As such, there are no restrictions on receipt of mailed items by staff.

Dropped-off and Delivered Items from the Public

Some documents may be dropped off by the public for delivery to staff.

For cash and other single-use items (forms to be processed and then filed), the documents can be handled right away, subject to proper hand hygiene practices (washing hands after handling).

For documents that may be used for an extended period of time (such as planning documents), hand hygiene protocols and surface cleaning should occur after handling.

There is no need to delay, hold out of service, or otherwise “quarantine” documents and deliveries receipt at the CVRD before being handled. Any residual risk of surface contamination is slow and addressed through hand hygiene activities.

Engineering – *Physical changes or equipment that reduce risk, usually by creating a physical barrier that prevents exposure*

In work areas where staff may work in proximity to each other, barriers have been implemented between work areas. These barriers protect from virus spread by physically limiting the area the virus could spread to.



Barriers have been installed in areas where the public will interact with staff. These barriers act to ensure staff can communicate and conduct business, but the risk from an airborne exposure is significantly reduced.

Administrative – Rules, guidelines, procedures, and signage that will help people to take appropriate actions to keep themselves safe

Signage has been put in place to remind staff and the public about the requirement to not enter facilities if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or are otherwise proscribed because of PHO guidelines, such as from travel outside of the country.

Markers have been placed on the floor to direct the public where to stand to ensure social distancing can be maintained. Room limits are in place from some common areas, such as the lunch room.

In-person meetings have been curtailed.

Work-from-home provisions are in place for positions where work can be conducted out of the main office, subject to bona fide occupational needs.

Signage has been increased to encourage regular hand washing as a means of protecting others.

The Intranet (Grapevine) has been updated with rules, procedures, and best practices to keep staff safe.

Increased Surface Cleaning Protocols

An increased cleaning regime with dedicated staff routinely cleaning common areas and high-touch surfaces. The current cleaning cycle exceeds the recommended twice daily minimum from WSBC. This is done due to the high viral load that can occur on surfaces such as doorknobs, copy machine controls, etc. While transmission risk remains low, steps are being taken to reduce the viral load and risks accordingly.

Additional hand sanitizer has been provided for staff use where hand-washing is not a viable option. Additional sanitizer is available from the Safety Officer.

PPE – Personal Protective Equipment is to be used when other, more effective, methods of protection are not available. These should be considered the last line of defense to protect workers and should not be the primary protective measure.

Staff have been provided with gloves when engaging in cleaning activities or when engaged in limited duration activities where item handling is required and they experience concerns about touching items.

Masks are to be worn inside except at personal workstations as outlined below.

Masks

Per *Ministerial Order Face Coverings – December 3, 2021*, staff are required to wear face-coverings (i.e. masks) in public areas of CVRD facilities or when in vehicles with second people when single-occupancy is not feasible. Masks are provided to staff to use to ensure compliance with this requirement. Staff without masks may not attend work at CVRD sites until a mask is obtained. Masks are not required when working outside and social distancing can be maintained.



Masks are also not required in personal work areas (i.e. offices) where physical distancing and barriers are in place to protect workers.

Vaccinations

The CVRD does not have a vaccine mandate in place. Review of worker risks and available workplace controls have been deemed sufficient to provide for worker safety without mandating vaccinations for staff. This topic is regularly reviewed by Senior Management to ensure ongoing worker safety.

The CVRD does encourage staff to obtain primary and secondary doses of COVID-19 vaccines through available public health channels. Booster doses, are encouraged as well for all staff as soon as available to each individual. Vaccines help improve the overall safety of the workplace and assist workers in reducing the time required to be off work if ill.

Staff who have questions or concerns regarding obtaining vaccination, or with concerns about vaccinations in the workplace can contact the Safety Officer. Staff are also encouraged to reach out if they are experiencing any barrier to obtaining a vaccine and would like assistance.

3. Develop Plans and Procedures

The primary approach of the CVRD has been to reduce the risk from staff by ensuring staff can work-from-home where feasible for their job duties. Staff working from home are provided direction and guidance in-line with WSBC requirements for safely working remotely under separate work-from-home program and policies. For those that are required to work at a facility, staff are directed to self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and follow the direction of the PHO in self-isolating if required.

Staff are directed to not attend any CVRD facility if they are experiencing any symptoms that could be related to COVID-19 or any other illness. Staff are directed to assess via the BC Assessment Tool, contact 8-1-1, and are encouraged to coordinate testing when symptoms are present. Staff cannot return until symptom free and a period prescribed by current Provincial Health guidelines has elapsed when testing positive. It is understood timing may differ based on symptoms, vaccination status, etc. and will apply to each case.

Staff who test negative for COVID-19 or for whom a test is not recommended can return once symptom-free for a period of 24 hours, or under the direction of medical staff.

Any other person that has been directed to isolate by the PHO or designate cannot attend a CVRD site until cleared.

Staff that develop symptoms or feel ill are directed to advise their supervisor. They will be provided a mask if required, information on coordinating testing via 8-1-1, and directed home. Areas that staff member has been working in will be provided a thorough, immediate cleaning.



Staff are required to complete a daily health check when attending CVRD facilities. If attending more than one facility in a given day, complete a form at each site. These forms are required under the *Provincial Health Order* of January 20, 2022.

Further to the *Provincial Health Order* of January 20, 2022, staff are reminded to maintain social distance as much as possible, and to wear a face covering for the brief periods where it cannot be avoided. Electronic meetings, phone-calls, and emails all serve to reduce the need to meet and congregate. Not holding in-person meetings also assist with this. Staff must also not congregate in areas like break areas or the elevator – signage has been posted to assist with this.

The CVRD has not currently restricted in-person visits from the public to conduct necessary business. The public will be encouraged however to conduct business over the phone or via other remote means where staff are happy to assist.

Business that require an in-person interaction is arranged in advance, on a case-by-case basis, with appropriate increased controls put in place. With reduced on-site staff and necessary controls, some business cannot be conducted without these preparations.

As it is understood that reduced staffing and COVID-19 related requirements may create tensions between staff and the public, training on “dealing with difficult customers” is available as needed for front-line staff.

4. Communication of Plans

Plans will be communicated via the staff intranet, emails, posted signage, and directions from managers and supervisors. This includes the COVID-19 Safety Plan as well as related documents regarding work-from-home, illness policies, and any other relevant policy or program.

Work areas and staff are monitored by supervisors to ensure compliance with requirements, particularly regarding social distancing and monitoring for illness.

Signage is clearly displayed in public areas to ensure the public is aware of any requirements for interacting safely with staff and for the controls that are in place.

5. Monitoring and Updating Plans as Needed

The COVID-19 Safety Plan has been developed to be forward-looking with the goal of safely increasing in-person service delivery levels while maintaining the safety of staff and the public.

Risks and Provincial Health Orders are regularly monitored by the CVRD Safety Officer and in consultation with Senior Management and Safety Committee members where feasible, adjustments to plans may be implemented as appropriate to ensure operations while maintaining safety. The CAO retains responsibility and authority to make decisions as deemed appropriate in relation to COVID-19 safety requirements. The CVRD has, and will continue to, adopted a conservative approach to COVID-19 response to ensure staff safety remains the priority.



6. Addressing New Risks That Arise

New risks may arise from the requirements of safely working during the pandemic. As issues are identified, they will be addressed to ensure continued safety and communicated to staff.

Staff are encouraged to discuss concerns with the Safety Officer, their Manager, or a Health and Safety Committee Representative for review and action.

Identified concerns will be investigated and addressed according to the hierarchy of controls and operational requirements and follow up will be conducted to close any communication loops.