

Ontario Ministry of Labour Releases Guidance on Safety at Work

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July 17, 2020

The Ontario Ministry of Labour has recently released a guide to developing a workplace safety plan that specifically addresses risks presented by COVID-19. The guide includes a template document that employers can download and use as a starting point for creating a safety plan that is specific to their workplace. A link to the downloadable Word document provided by the Ministry can be found [here](#).

Alberta has provided other resources for employers in that province, which can be found [here](#). British Columbia has also issued a compendium of resources for employers, which includes template posters employers can use to address COVID-19 safety issues at work. A link to those resources is available [here](#).

The Ontario guide includes some general information about how COVID-19 is spread and highlights safety measures that are now widely known and have been adopted by most workplaces and public spaces. The guide makes it clear that the Ministry's view on face coverings is that while they may be advisable and helpful in containing the spread of COVID-19, they are not a replacement for physical distancing in the workplace.

The guide suggests that employers should ask themselves six questions as they go through the process of preparing their COVID-19 safety plan:

1. How will you ensure that all workers know how to keep themselves safe from exposure to COVID-19?
2. How will you screen for COVID-19?
3. How will you control the risk of transmission in your workplace?
4. What will you do if there is a potential case of, or suspected exposure to, COVID-19 in your workplace?
5. How will you manage any new risks caused by changes to the way you operate your business?
6. How will you make sure your plan is working?

The guide also reminds readers that the Ministry has issued sector-specific guidelines and provides a link to those resources, as well as other COVID-19 health and safety resources. The information and recommendations in the Ministry's guide may not be ground-breaking but they do provide a helpful structure for any employer who is starting from scratch with its COVID-19 health and safety policies. And although the guide makes it clear that health and safety inspectors will always be guided by the *Occupational Health &*

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Safety Act and its regulations when assessing whether or not any employer has met its obligation to provide its employees with a safe workplace, we suspect that employers who adhere to this guideline and make a good faith effort to use the workbook provided by the Ministry will have a better chance of convincing an inspector that their COVID-19 safety plan is satisfactory.

As always, the Cassels employment team is here to assist if you have any questions about whether or not the Ontario guidelines are appropriate for your workplace and, if so, how to best customize them to minimize your risk and provide your employees with a safe and productive workplace.

This publication is a general summary of the law. It does not replace legal advice tailored to your specific circumstances.