



Weathering the Pandemic

By Trina Pharand, CRSP, CHRL
Chair, NOCA Health and Safety Committee

Social distancing. Self-isolation. Second wave. Shorter days. Onset of winter. A focus on psychological health and safety in the workplace is becoming increasingly critical.

Workplace Safety Plan

Under the new provincial [COVID-19 response framework](#), certain businesses are now required to have a workplace COVID-19 safety plan if they're located in a community in the Protect (yellow), Restrict (orange), Control (red) or Lockdown levels.

While construction businesses are currently not required to have a safety plan, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) encourages all businesses to have a safety plan for how you will protect against COVID-19 transmission in your workplace.

The MLTSD has released a [Safety Plan Guide](#) to assist employers in developing their plan.

The [workplace safety plan template](#) includes guidance on six questions you should think through as you develop your COVID-19 workplace safety plan:

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

Workplace Safety Plan Resources:



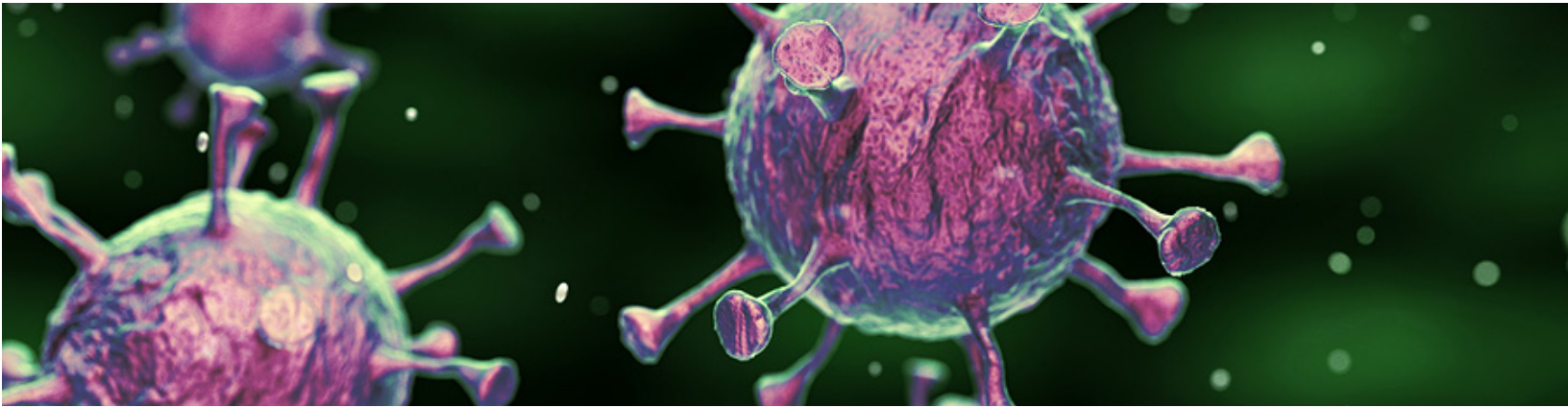
COVID-19 Response Framework



Safety Plan Guide



Workplace Safety Plan Template



Communication Plan

Having a COVID-19 workplace safety plan is a first step in communicating to your employees that you are remaining up-to-date and are able to answer their questions. This can assist in managing anxiety – anxiety thrives in the absence of information.

When developing your communication plan, consider including the following:

Communication Channels – what methods will you use to communicate to your employees? (e.g. small group meetings, posted communication materials, social media)

Key Messages – develop key messages that can be used by management and supervision while communicating with employees (e.g. messages for workers who are sick, messages related to case investigation and contact tracing, return-to-work messages, prevention practices at work and outside of work messages)

Communication Resources – verified, reputable sources of public resources and information such as [Public Health Ontario](#), the [MLTSD](#) and your local Public Health Unit

A good communication plan indicates that you care about your employees and it's important to integrate key messages related to mental health.

[Communication is connection.](#)

Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

Organizations not only have an important role to play in psychological health and safety for our employees in the workplace, but we are also uniquely positioned to support employees.

Resources such as the [Psychological Health and Safety Standard](#) launched back in January 2013, provides a set of voluntary guidelines, tools and resources intended to guide organizations in promoting mental health in the workplace.

There are also resources available through the [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) and the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#) for employers. In addition, as of November 2020, [Mental Health First Aid](#) will now be available virtually.



Trina Pharand
BSc. (Hons), CRSP, CHRL
Director, Advisory Services
705-521-8324 ext. 202
tpharand@norcat.org
[NORCAT.org/advisory](https://www.norcat.org/advisory)