

## Introduction

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that can cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. A new coronavirus named “COVID-19” (previously known as 2019-nCoV) has been identified – one that was not previously found in humans. Respiratory infections caused by COVID-19 first appeared in Wuhan City, China in December 2019. The outbreak was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the WHO on January 30, 2020.

Although COVID-19 originated from Wuhan, China, it has spread to many countries, including to Canada. A number of cases in British Columbia are being closely managed.

***The risk to British Columbians remains low.***

## Symptoms

Common symptoms for COVID-19 are:

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing

At this time, the available information suggests the incubation period is up to 14 days. The incubation period is the time from when a person is first exposed until symptoms appear.

## Transmission

Coronavirus is spread from an infected person through

- Droplets spread when a person coughs or sneezes
- Close personal contact such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands

## Prevention

The most important thing you can do to prevent infection is to wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face. To help reduce your risk of infection:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Using soap and water is the single most effective way of reducing the spread of infection
- If a sink is not available, alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) can be used to clean your hands as long as they are not visibly soiled. If they are visibly soiled, use a wipe and then ABHR to effectively clean them
- Do not touch your face, eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands
- Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or the crease of your elbow when you sneeze or cough. Dispose of tissues in appropriate waste bins, then wash your hands immediately afterwards.

- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces
- Do not share food, drinks, utensils, etc.

## Preparedness

### Monitoring and Consultation

The Interior Health Authority has coordinated an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) that, as of March 10, 2020, is in its 8<sup>th</sup> week of operations. Representatives from the District of Lake Country take part in a weekly regional conference call hosted by Interior Health, to discuss changes in the status of the virus, recommendations and resources available.

The District of Lake Country will rely on the direction and communications from the Interior Health Authority and other regional and national health associations to help guide our actions and communications with our staff and stakeholders. This information will be closely monitored, and updates will be provided to our staff regularly.

Currently, Interior Health Authority advises that BC is following a “containment” strategy. Containment requires people to self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms (cough, fever and difficulty breathing). As well, individuals travelling from affected areas should follow the specific instructions for that area that are outlined by the Public Health Authority of Canada (PHAC). This may include self-monitoring, self-quarantine or other steps.

The Government of Canada has active travel health notices for COVID-19. Each country or area may have different levels of risk. These risk levels may change as the COVID-19 event evolves globally. Some of the countries that as of March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 include advisories are:

- [China](#)
- [France](#)
- [Germany](#)
- [Hong Kong](#)
- [Iran](#)
- [Italy](#)
- [Japan](#)
- [Singapore](#)
- [South Korea](#)
- [Spain](#)
- The PHAC is recommending that Canadians avoid all cruise ship travel

### Procedures for exposed workers

If you have symptoms such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing and have travelled outside Canada or have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19, avoid contact with others. Do not come in to work, even if your symptoms are mild. See a health care provider as soon as possible.

Any exposure incident at the District of Lake Country will be reported to the local public health authority without delay.

### Employee Safety

- Steps have been taken to provide employees with personal hygiene items such as disinfecting wipes, and hand sanitizer.
- Employees have been instructed to wipe down commonly used and shared items at least twice per day.
- Additional hand sanitizer stations have been installed in eight new locations at Municipal Hall.
- Procedures and guidelines are in place for first responders who may come in contact with exposed or symptomatic individuals.

### Communication

- Communications about COVID-19 are updated on Jostle and Supervisors have been asked to share the information with all their employees.
- Employees are instructed to wash their hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Posters have been posted to remind employees of proper respiratory and hand hygiene.
- Workers are reminded to stay at home if they are sick or if they have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19.
- At this time, standard sick leave procedures apply. Alternative policy directives may be considered should conditions change significantly.

### Planning

- Directors have been asked to identify essential services in their areas that must be maintained, along with minimum staffing requirements, tools and equipment and other resources in the event of a prolonged or mass business interruption.
- Supervisors have been asked to identify skills and training that their employees have that may be of value to the organization in a situation where staffing minimums are not able to be maintained otherwise.
- Remote working capabilities for essential and non-essential services are being evaluated and a plan will be put in place should the need present itself.

### Resources

[Healthlink BC](#)

[Interior Health Authority](#)

***Please direct any questions or concerns to Sarah Goodwin, OH&S Specialist.***