



COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PLAN

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OVERVIEW

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to promote the health and safety of employees, contractors, patrons and visitors of the Resort Municipality of Whistler with respect to the prevention, risk of contraction and spread of communicable disease.

Preventing communicable disease involves continuing with ongoing measures introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce the risk of transmission in our workplaces. It also involves implementing additional measures when advised to do so by Public Health during periods of elevated risk. In such circumstances this Plan will be revised to reflect increased levels of risk controls.

This document is intended to be a guide to assist our employees in following policies and procedures designed to minimize the risks associated with communicable diseases.

What is Communicable Disease?

WorkSafeBC defines communicable disease as an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxic product that can be transmitted by contact with infected individuals or their bodily discharges or fluids, by contact with contaminated surfaces or objects. Examples of communicable disease that may circulate in a workplace included COVID-19 and seasonal influenza.

Communicable Diseases are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- Respiratory droplets when someone coughs or sneezes
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching something with a virus on it, then touching one's eyes, nose or mouth before washing their hands

Scope

Communicable diseases falling within the scope of this Plan are those typically caused by viruses and normally spread through direct or indirect human contact and when the risk of communicable disease in the region or workplace is elevated, as advised and directed by public health. This plan immediately replaces the COVID-19 Exposure Control Plan and will be adjusted as required by WorkSafeBC or the BC office of the Provincial Health Officer.

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Everyone - employers, supervisors, contractors, and workers - has responsibility for health and safety in the workplace. Stay home if sick, get medical guidance and follow public health recommendations and requirements.

The RMOW workplace communicable disease prevention, mitigation, and response activities are guided by this Communicable Disease Safety Plan. The RMOW will advise staff when there is a communicable disease threat affecting staff.

In the event of a communicable disease outbreak, the RMOW will work with Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, notify affected staff, take actions to protect the health and safety of staff, contractors and visitors, and provide additional guidance if necessary.

Employer Responsibilities

RMOW will:

- Monitor for and review communicable disease-related information issued by regional health officers or the Provincial Health Officer
- Implement policies to support staff who have symptoms of communicable disease
- Provide hand-hygiene facilities with appropriate supplies and use policies and signage to remind workers to wash their hands regularly and to cover coughs and sneezes
- Maintain a clean environment through routine cleaning processes appropriate for the workplace
- Ensure that building ventilation is adequate, and systems are properly maintained
- Support employees in receiving vaccinations for vaccine-preventable conditions
- Provide employees with communication and training surrounding safe work practices, including this Communicable Disease plan and encourage employees to ask questions and provide feedback to managers and supervisors.

In addition, when advised by Public Health and during a period of elevated risk, the RMOW must:

- Follow the directions from medical health officers and the regional health authority
- Follow all orders, guidance, recommendations, and notices issued by the Provincial Health Officer
- Reassess policies and practices based on updated guidance from regional or provincial health authorities.

Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervisors will:

- Ensure that employees are adequately instructed on the work procedures and preventative measures at work location
- Ensure workplace measures are being followed by workers
- Communicate with Human Resources confidentially regarding employees' concerns or illnesses.

Worker Responsibilities

Workers will:

- Report any communicable disease safety concerns, unsafe conditions or acts to their supervisor
- Wash hands frequently
- Follow cough and sneeze etiquette
- Follow established communicable disease prevention and practices and procedures as directed by the employer or supervisor
- Use Personal Protective Equipment as instructed and required
- Know the location of washing facilities, including hand sanitizing dispensing stations
- Sanitize shared work surfaces and equipment after use
- Stay at home and notify their supervisor and seek medical health guidance if they become sick with symptoms compatible with communicable disease
- Familiarize themselves with health benefits available
- Ask questions and provide feedback to their managers on the Municipality's communicable disease prevention safe work practices

Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committees

The JOHSCs will review the Communicable Disease plan on a regular basis as done with other safety programs and practices. The committee will work with respective managers and the Human Resources Health and Safety Advisor when identifying and resolving workplace safety issues.

PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTIVES

The Provincial Health Officer is the senior public health official for B.C. and is responsible for monitoring the health of the population across the province, providing independent advice to the ministers and public officials on public health issues.

The responsibilities of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) are outlined in the *Public Health Act* and include the following:

- provide independent advice to the ministers and public officials on public health issues
- monitor the health of the population of B.C. and advise on public health issues and on the need for legislation, policies and practices
- recommend actions to improve the health and wellness of the population of BC
- deliver reports that are in the public interest on the health of the population and on government's progress in achieving population health targets
- establish standards of practice for and conduct performance reviews of Medical Health Officers
- Work with the BC Centre for Disease Control and Prevention and BC's Medical Health Officers across the province to fulfill their legislated mandates on disease control and health protection

The RMOW is prepared to implement or maintain additional measures at times when the risk of communicable disease in their region or workplace is elevated, as advised and directed by public health.

Public Health's specific guidance for a particular communicable disease will be followed where their information differs from this document.

WORKSAFEBC DIRECTIVES

WorkSafeBC is a provincial agency dedicated to promoting safe and healthy workplaces across BC.

WorkSafeBC helps businesses meet their obligations under the Workers Compensation Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. All employers in British Columbia have an obligation under the Act to ensure the health and safety of workers and other parties at their workplace.

To assist employers in the fundamental components of communicable disease prevention, WorkSafeBC has developed [Communicable disease prevention: A guide for employers](#). This guide describes a four-step process to help employers reduce the risk of communicable disease in their workplace, which involves:

1. understanding the level of risk in the workplace,
2. implement measures, practices and policies to reduce the risk,
3. communicating measures, policies and protocols to all employees, and
4. Monitoring and updating the communicable disease plan to reflect changing risk levels and work practices.

Employees should know and understand their workplace health and safety responsibilities — and those of others. Workers have three key rights:

- the right to know about hazards in the workplace

- the right to participate in health and safety activities in the workplace
- the right to refuse unsafe work

PREVENTION

Preventing communicable disease involves taking ongoing measures to reduce the risk of communicable disease transmission in the workplace. There are many of methods that can be applied to control communicable disease. The primary sources of prevention include hand and surface hygiene, sanitation, isolation and immunization. Vaccines and/or acquired immunity can provide some protection against certain communicable disease.

Everyone at the RMOW can limit the spread of a communicable disease before it has the potential to cause serious illness/disease by implementing the following individual measures:

- Daily individual self-check for symptoms prior to entering the workplace
- Not working when sick with flu like or communicable disease like symptoms, and contacting a medical professional or 8-1-1 for guidance
- Frequently washing hands with soap and hot water for 20 sec or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available
- Avoiding touching one's eyes, nose, mouth with un-sanitized hands
- Using proper respiratory/cough sneeze etiquette
- Avoiding close contact with people displaying symptoms of respiratory illnesses
- Routinely cleaning and disinfecting work surfaces or high traffic touch points
- Practicing a healthy lifestyle; exercising, eating a balanced diet, and getting sufficient sleep
- Avoiding public places when sick to prevent the spread of communicable disease
- Getting tested when someone experiences symptoms of communicable disease
 - If confirmed positive, cooperating with contact tracing so others may be advised to self-monitor/self-isolate
- Maintaining appropriate immunizations and vaccinations

Public Health will provide guidance to the RMOW around the level of risk in our workplace and explain what appropriate protocols be put into practice should a new wave or COVID-19 or some other communicable disease take hold. Some of the risk control measures may be the same or similar to those from the COVID-19 pandemic and may include:

- Promoting physical distancing, including work from home if possible
- Use of physical barriers
- Wearing Masks indoors or when physical distancing cannot be maintained
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection
- Employee transportation protocols

1.0 RECOGNIZE HAZARDS AND ASSESSING RISKS

There are many routine situations where employees will have contact with customers, co-workers, and the physical environment itself (surfaces, doors, equipment etc.). During times of outbreaks, if not controlled adequately, these encounters could give rise to contact with communicable diseases.

Recognizing the signs and symptoms of a communicable disease and understanding the modes of transmission is the first step in reducing the incidence of disease associated with communicable

diseases. Common characteristics associated at the onset of most communicable diseases typically include fever and other flu-like symptoms: achiness, upset stomach, fatigue, fever and headaches.

All departments must recognize the risks in their workplace and take steps to control them. Controls will include adhering to current public health orders, if applicable, public health advice, as well as implementing best practices to keep employees and customers safe.

Please follow Canada Public Health Guidelines when travelling abroad.

Risk Controls

When a risk has been identified, the principles used to eliminate or reduce the risk are based on the Occupational Health and Safety hierarchies.

The hierarchy of controls (in order of their effectiveness):

Elimination or substitution: the employer will fully consider eliminating or postponing work tasks that may create a risk of exposure. Changes will be made to eliminate or reduce contact with others

Engineering controls: Physical barriers between people will be introduced where practicable

Administrative controls: the employer will introduce policies and procedures that minimize exposure

Personal protective equipment (PPE): This last form of protection should only be considered after careful consideration of the previous control measures. The use of gloves and face masks may be considered where none of the above controls are possible or are not fully effective. If gloves and masks are used, proper usage guidelines should be followed.

When selecting a safeguard or a combination of safeguards, always start at the top of the hierarchy to control the hazards. Choose a less effective safeguard only when more effective solutions are impracticable and continuously monitor to ensure they are providing the best level of protection to workers.

2.0 REDUCING THE RISK

Illness

Stay home when sick

When an employee experiences cold, flu or gastrointestinal symptoms of illness, they should stay home and follow public health recommendations or those of their medical health provider.

An important way to reduce the spread of communicable diseases is to keep sick people away from those who are not sick. The RMOW will review and communicate with employees our sick leave practices before flu season and any time when there is a risk of a communicable disease.

Becoming sick at work

Employees who have symptoms upon arrival to work or become ill during the day should promptly separate themselves from other employees, inform their supervisors and go home. Employees should seek medical attention and only return to the workplace once they have recovered.

Employees are advised to stay home if they are sick until at least 24 hours after their fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines, or after symptoms have improved.

Sick Leave Benefits

Employees are required to stay home if they are feeling ill. All full time, part time, temporary and term employees are entitled to sick leave for illness or injury absences in accordance with the sick leave provisions in their applicable Collective Agreement or Employee Handbook. All employees who are not entitled to sick leave under their Collective Agreement or Employee Handbook are currently entitled to three paid sick days per year under the BC Employment Standards Act when diagnosed with Covid-19, waiting for COVID-19 test results, self-isolating or self-monitoring in accordance with public health orders and guidelines or are directed to stay home by the RMOW because of exposure risks.

Hygiene/Cleaning

Personal Hygiene

Depending on the communicable disease, it's possible for people to become infected if they touch contaminated surfaces and then touch their nose, mouth, or eyes. The most reliable way to prevent infection from surfaces is [hand washing](#).

Washing hands often and practicing good hand hygiene will reduce the chances of getting or spreading germs.

Hands are to be washed immediately:

- Before leaving a work area
- After handling materials that may be contaminated
- Before eating, drinking, smoking, touching one's face

Washing hands with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is most effective. This is because soap actively destroys the surface of the some viruses and a soapy lather really reduces the number of germs left on skin.

Alcohol-based hand rubs can be used to disinfect hands when soap and water are not available.

Hand sanitizer stations are located throughout work areas for employees and visitors to use.

Hand washing signs are displayed throughout the workplace for employee and visitors reference.

Other things to consider:

- Cover mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or the elbow crease when sneezing or coughing instead of coughing or sneezing into hands
- Use tissues to contain secretions, and dispose of them promptly in a waste container
- Turn the head away from others when coughing or sneezing
- Do not share food, drinks, unwashed utensils, etc.
- Avoid unnecessary contact
- Consider physical distancing

Facility, Vehicle and Equipment Hygiene

Routine cleaning and disinfecting keeps our workplace health and safe for employees, contractors, patrons and visitors. Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces can reduce the risk of infection.

Communicable disease safety measures include:

- Cleaning and disinfection of high touch points
- Frequent hand washing
- Proving contractors, patrons and visitor hand hygiene options

This guidance only applies to cleaning and disinfection practices to prevent the spread of communicable disease exposures. It does not apply to any cleaning or disinfection needed to prevent the spread of other germs that are not contagious.

When to Clean and When to Disinfect

Cleaning with products containing soap or detergent reduces germs on surfaces by removing contaminants and decreases risk of infection from surfaces.

When confirmed or suspected communicable disease cases are low, [cleaning once a day is usually enough](#) to sufficiently remove germs that may be on surfaces and help maintain a healthy facility.

Disinfecting kills any remaining germs on surfaces, which further reduces any risk of spreading infection.

High touch points in public areas will be cleaned once throughout the day.

Shared workstations, equipment and vehicles will be cleaned between users.

Shared spaces will be cleaned twice daily or disinfect in addition to cleaning if the space is a high traffic area or if certain conditions apply that can increase the risk of infection from touching surfaces:

- [BC COVID Dashboard](#) in our community;
- Infrequent use of other prevention measures, such as hand hygiene; or
- The space is occupied by people at increased risk for severe illness.

If there has been a sick person in the facility within the last 24 hours, clean AND disinfect the space.

Determine What Needs to Be Cleaned

Consider the [type of surface](#) and how often the surface is touched. Generally, the more people who touch a surface, the higher the risk. Prioritize cleaning high-touch surfaces at least once a day.

Consider the Resources and Equipment Needed

Ensure the availability of cleaning products and the personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate for the cleaners and disinfectants used (as recommended on the product label, product information sheets or Safety Data Sheet).

Clean High-Touch Surfaces

During periods of communicable disease events, high-touch surfaces are to be cleaned at least **twice** a day or as often as determined is necessary. Examples of high-touch surfaces include: pens, counters, tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, stair rails, elevator buttons, desk surfaces, chair handles, keyboards, phones, toilets, faucets, and sinks.

Protect Oneself and Other Cleaning Staff

- Ensure cleaning staff are trained on proper use of cleaning and disinfecting products
- Read the instructions on the product label, product information or Safety Data Sheet to determine what safety precautions are necessary while using the product. This could include PPE (such as gloves, glasses, or goggles), additional ventilation, first aid procedures, or other precautions
- [Wash hands](#) with soap and hot water for 20 seconds after cleaning. Be sure to wash hands immediately after removing gloves
 - If hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water

- If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Wash with soap and water as soon as possible
- Special considerations should be made for people with asthma. Some cleaning and disinfection products can trigger asthma.

Disinfect Safely When Needed

If regular disinfection is needed

- If the disinfectant product label does not specify that it can be used for both cleaning and disinfection, clean visibly dirty surfaces with soap or detergent before disinfection
- Use a disinfectant product that is effective against the communicable disease
- **Always follow the directions on the label** to ensure safe and effective use of the product. The label will include safety information and application instructions including dilution ratios. Keep disinfectants out of the reach of children. Many products recommend keeping the surface wet with a disinfectant for a certain period (see “contact time” on the product label).

Ventilation

For all activities that take place indoors, basic principles of good indoor air quality include supplying outdoor air to replenish indoor air by removing and diluting contaminants that naturally accumulate in indoor settings, especially in well-sealed buildings.

Facility Construction Management (FCM) maintains RMOW facilities and their respective ventilation systems. HVAC systems are on a preventative maintenance schedule including regular filter changes and inspection of critical components.

FCM will make sure the system is properly balanced, which means verifying that the system meets its design conditions for air flow, temperature, pressure drop, noise and vibration.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, fresh air into facilities was increased wherever possible. In the event wildfire smoke presents a hazard to workplaces, systems will be adjusted to reduce fresh air to mitigate the introduction of smoky air and to filter the indoor air.

During periods of communicable disease events, the RMOW will take guidance from public health to determine if facility and/or vehicle occupancy limits are appropriate as part of the mitigation plan. Employees may return to working remotely for a period of time.

3.0 COMMUNICATION

When appropriate, communications to employees with respect to the prevention of communicable diseases will be:

- discussed with them by their supervisor or manager at regular meetings
- emailed to them via message from Human Resources
- posted on the Health and Safety page of SharePoint
- posted on safety boards in the workplace

Communicable disease prevention signage will be posted throughout the workplace including the following:



Plan Updates

This Plan will be updated as guidance is given by Public Health or WorkSafeBC. Versions will be shared with each Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee for review and input prior to being finalized and communicated to employees.

Employees are responsible to read and understand such communications. If an employee needs clarification, they are to speak with their supervisor and/or their Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee representative.

Information may be discussed during regular meetings. Supervisors and Managers will remind employees of the safety protocols put in place to prevent the transmission of communicable diseases and a reminder to not come to work when sick.

In the event that the RMOW is notified of an exposure to a communicable disease in the workplace, all employees potentially affected by that notification will be provided with appropriate information and directions according to the guidance of the local health authority. In all cases, the RMOW will comply with all privacy laws and will provide information to the best of its ability, in compliance with the directions of the local health authority.

4.0 VACCINATIONS AND RMOW EMPLOYEES

The RMOW will support Public Health messaging for vaccinations against pandemic or communicable diseases and may collaborate with Public Health to offer vaccination clinics in public facilities.

The RMOW recognizes the public health benefits of vaccination programs to reduce illness, disability and death from community acquired diseases. Employees are encouraged to participate in public health vaccination programs.

The RMOW recognizes every employee's right to determine their own health choices and will not mandate employees to be vaccinated nor discriminate against employees who choose not to vaccinate.

Reasons to get vaccinated

1. Vaccine-preventable diseases are still out there

The viruses and bacteria that cause illness and death still exist and can be passed on to those who are not protected by vaccines.

2. Vaccines are as important to one's overall health as diet and exercise

Like eating healthy foods, exercising, and getting regular check-ups, vaccines play a vital role in keeping a person healthy. Vaccines are one of the most convenient and safest preventive care measures available.

3. Vaccines are safe

Potential side effects associated with vaccines are uncommon and much less severe than the diseases they prevent.

4. Vaccines will not bring about the diseases they are designed to prevent

Vaccines contain either killed or weakened viruses, making it impossible to get the disease from the vaccine.

5. Vaccines protect everyone

The more people in a community who are vaccinated, the harder it is for a disease to spread. If a person infected with a disease comes in contact only with people who are immune (have been vaccinated), the disease will have little opportunity to spread.

6. Young and healthy people can get very sick, too

Vaccine-preventable diseases can strike anyone. Getting vaccinated can help a person stay that way.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- BC CDC Communicable Disease Control Manual

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/communicable-disease-control-manual>

- HealthlinkBC Disease Prevention

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/services-and-resources/healthlinkbc-files/category/disease-prevention>