



CANADIAN
MANUFACTURERS
& EXPORTERS



MADE SAFE™

COVID-19: EMPLOYEE POSITIVE TEST RESULTS

PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES

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EMPLOYEE COVID-19 POSITIVE TEST RESULT:

PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES FOR MANUFACTURING OPERATIONS



The health and safety of employees is paramount during COVID-19. Business continuity remains a critical concern, but employee wellness remains the most important issue facing manufacturers in these challenging circumstances. For leaders, one question looms larger than all others as we prepare to weather the crisis: what do we do when one of our people tests positive?

CME and our health and safety experts at Made Safe have prepared the following recommendations to guide manufacturers through the necessary steps and operational decisions that follow a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. It is important to note that the employee should advise their employer immediately upon first suspicion that they may be infected. This action will minimize the spread and impact at its very earliest stage and puts next measures in place from investigation, to benefit plans and payments and more. It is important for manufacturers in every jurisdiction to understand the steps to take in order to get tested.

Manufacturers may choose to take additional precautions to assist their employees in seeing early signs and symptoms (such as temperature monitoring or other daily self-assessments). Many Canadian provinces have introduced online self assessment tools, including [Manitoba, BC](#) and [Ontario](#). Any indication of infection, as outlined by regional health authorities, should trigger an immediate ban from entering the workplace, followed by the steps below.

HEALTHY & SAFETY GUIDELINES STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURES FOLLOWING A COVID-19 DIAGNOSIS

1. EMPLOYEE SELF-QUARANTINE

Health officials will direct any infected employee to stay home for a minimum of 14 days, during which time they must self-quarantine. Any person who has been tested for COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) must be in self-isolation while awaiting the test results. Remind any employees who have been tested that they should not be in the workplace and note that a negative test result during a mandatory quarantine period does not bypass the remainder of the 14 day waiting period.

- Employers should encourage their employees to contact a qualified health care provider, as determined by their local public health authority, to ensure that a 14-day self-quarantine is sufficient, depending on the particular facts and circumstances. Currently, information indicates that to be cleared of the virus, two additional tests must be conducted at least 24 hours apart and come back negative. It is unclear if all provinces have the capacity at this time to conduct the additional testing, so the all-clear from the health care provider is critical and should be provided to the employer before a return is approved. Multiple studies have been conducted on how long a person is infectious with SARS-CoV-2 and the results are mixed with some patients being observed to be producing new viruses for **6-12 days after the symptoms have stopped**, fully **14 days after the last symptom**.
- Employers who are able to offer support to their employee during quarantine should do so, including work from home provisions if this is an option. Employee Assistance Plans and regular touchpoints with the employee's manager, as in any short-term disability claim, can be helpful for the employee's mental health and readiness to return to the workforce. Be mindful that not all employees will have

IMPORTANT NOTE: This information is intended as best practice guidance, not as medical or legal advice. Information about the Coronavirus changes rapidly. Always refer to a public health authority for medical advice, and consult legal counsel regarding legislative concerns.

a support system in place. Some province's have also introduced services to match community volunteers with impacted citizens who may need additional supports should they be unable to leave their homes for basic tasks such as grocery shopping. [Manitoba's Help Next Door](#) is one such app.

- The Government of Canada has waived the one-week waiting period for Employment Insurance (EI) for workers who are in quarantine or are sick due to COVID-19. To assist your worker in applying for EI, follow this link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/notices/coronavirus.html>

2. RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality matters. Ensure that your infected employee understands that they will not be identified by name to their co-workers as having contracted the virus, in compliance with the various pieces of legislation that covers personal health privacy information across Canada.

- While you are required to take steps to investigate who else your infected employee may have come in contact with, keep in mind that this is a medical diagnosis and should be treated as confidential medical information. Legislation allows for fines as a result of releasing confidential medical information, but the financial impact is secondary to creating a climate of candor and trust. If your employee's diagnosis is released to their co-workers, it is unlikely that other infected employees will be willing to disclose their positive test results to the company, resulting in greater risk to workers and the company itself.

3. INVESTIGATION

Work with the affected employee to determine when they tested positive. That date will determine—at a minimum—the two potential 14-day windows for you to be concerned with:

- The first 14-day window is the time period where your employee may have been infected and able to transmit the virus, but not yet experiencing symptoms. Employees who had contact with the infected employee in the 14 days prior to their positive test result should be sent home to prevent the spread of the virus. Any person who had contact should be considered as potentially having contracted the virus and sent home as described in step #5. **This underscores why social distancing is critical in your facility. Appropriate social distancing measures may mean the difference between five workers sent home and 15. Statistics suggest that the average infected person will transmit the virus to two others, allowing for an exponential increase. Social distancing limits the spread and may be the difference between a limited versus full shutdown, from which it will be difficult for the operation to recover.**
- The second 14-day window dictates how long your employee will need to stay away from the workplace. The length of this leave will depend on current recommendations from Health Canada and/or a medical professional: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/symptoms.html>

4. DISINFECTION

Work with the affected employee to make a list of all areas they have physically been over the last three days. The three-day window is important as COVID-19 as [current research](#) shows that the virus that causes COVID-19 can live for up to three days on plastic and stainless steel surfaces.

- Close these areas off using plastic sheeting, if feasible, and ventilate the area to the outside. Operate as if there was a hazardous chemical spill that you are trying to contain in this area and exhaust out of your facility. Quarantining the area is important prior to beginning your cleaning operation.
- If closing off the exposed areas is not possible then the facility should close until the areas in which worker was present are disinfected. Follow these guidelines when disinfecting hard surfaces in your facility: <https://cme-mec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CME-Made-Safe-COVID-19-H-S-Safety-Tips-Disinfection-High-Touch-Areas-FINAL-WEB.pdf>
- If possible, contact a professional cleaning service to disinfect the impacted areas. Identifying and vetting a cleaning company prior to needing services will make scheduling and executing the process faster.

- Ensure that the products that your cleaning service intend to use are effective on the coronavirus family of viruses. Misinformation abounds. For clarity, follow the [list of disinfectant proven against the COVID-19 virus](#) (SARS-CoV-2) from Health Canada.

5. CONTACT TRACING

Once an employee receives a positive COVID-19 test result, public health authorities will work diligently to trace their movements, identify anyone with whom they may have come into close contact and will notify those individuals directly. Manufacturers should support and comply with any requests of the public health official(s), and conduct a complementary investigation of their own. Work with your employee to make a list of each person with whom they have been within six feet of in the workplace at any point during the previous 14 days. This may include others outside of your organization, including suppliers and vendors if you have not yet restricted visitor access.

- You will need to contact each of these individuals to let them know that they have been in contact with a person who is infected with COVID-19 and that they should consult with their physician or public health authority, the latter of whom will reach out to them directly.
- Each of the people must also be advised to stay away from the workplace for the next 14 days. Assistance with filing for immediate EI coverage can be found here <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/notices/coronavirus.html>
- Each person should also be advised to self-quarantine. If the company has the ability and a program in place to assist the person with getting the essential supplies necessary offer that assistance.
- Be aware that you may have employees who become uncomfortable working in an area, office or facility where someone who tested positively for the virus worked, out of fear of also contracting the virus. When an employee refuse to work in these areas, they are exercising their right to refuse dangerous work (in good faith). While the right to refuse work is generally under provincial legislation, most jurisdictions follow similar guidelines. Manitoba's guidance on how to respond can be found here: https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/workplaces-right-to-refuse-dangerous-work.pdf

6. COMMUNICATION

Communicating with your team throughout this process will be key, long before you begin operations again.

- As a matter of best practice, ensure that you are communicating openly and transparently throughout the process while still respecting medical confidentiality. This includes not only individual communication with affected employees, but proactive all-employee communications outlining your business continuity plan for next steps following a positive diagnosis, the steps the organization has taken towards disinfecting impacted units, any additional health and safety measures to be implemented and even links to supports, including counselling resources or an employee EAP. Communicate with empathy and authority. Be mindful that misinformation abounds and direct employees to sources like Health Canada and the provincial health authority for news and information.
- As you prepare to ramp back up again, it will be important to let your people know that they will be expected to come back to work with advance notice so that they can make the necessary arrangements in their personal lives.
- Inform your suppliers that your order levels will be returning to pre-positive test levels so that they can get prepared to provide materials and services at the necessary levels.
- Communicate what steps were taken to disinfect the facility to your team, along with what to do if they are have concerns. Ensuring that they are aware of what's been done to protect them will help manage their concerns.
- Be prepared to provide support through your Employee Assistance Program.

REDUCE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 BEST PRACTICES

To help reduce the spread of communicable diseases and viruses, including COVID-19, prevention is the best medicine. Post and encourage workers to follow these guidelines, and create a culture and business processes that support compliance:

- Encourage employees to NOT come to work if they are feeling unwell (e.g., coughing, sneezing, fever or runny nose);
- Review sick-leave policies to encourage employees to stay home when ill, to reduce transmission to other coworkers and clients;
- Review requirements for medical (sick) notes, to reduce burden on the health care system and additional exposure to ill individuals;
- Provide clean handwashing facilities and alcohol-based hand cleansers in multiple locations throughout the building (e.g., entrances, boardrooms and break rooms);
- Post signage in the workplace in multiple languages, encouraging proper cough etiquette and hand hygiene. Share Health MB has [cough etiquette signage](#) available for download in 32 languages common to Canada;
- Regularly clean workstations and objects with disinfectants that are touched frequently, such as doorknobs, handles, elevator buttons and railings. Increase the frequency of cleaning workstations and worksites in line with current COVID-19 risk levels for your jurisdiction;
- Provide boxes of tissues and encouraging their use;
- Remind staff to avoid sharing cups, glasses, dishes or cutlery, and ensuring cups, glasses, dishes, and cutlery are thoroughly cleaned using soap and warm water after each use, or placed in the dishwasher for cleaning;
- Remove magazines, papers and other objects that cannot be cleaned from common rooms, such as cafeterias, kitchens, break rooms and waiting areas; and
- Ensure ventilation systems are working properly, including opening windows as weather permits.



ACCESS TO EXPERTS CME AND MADE SAFE ARE HERE TO HELP

Our team is dedicated to helping manufacturers through the COVID-19 pandemic; with resources that run the gamut from national advocacy to local shop floor solutions.

Contact our team of health and safety experts for manufacturing-specific insights and supports:

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