



# **RETURNING TO WORK GUIDELINES**

***"THE NEW NORMAL"***

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# INTRODUCTION

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has caused the world to implement a plethora of measures to fight its spread. In Trinidad and Tobago all non-essential activities were suspended and the population was asked to remain at home except for certain excluded activity. These measures impacted the operations of Industrial Establishments. Many places of work were forced to scale back or stop operations while others were able to adapt remote work systems. As we prepare to re-open our places of work, employers must now develop systems to protect employees and by extension society as the risk posed by the virus is still active.

In preparing to return to work it must be understood that some of the controls introduced in response to the pandemic must remain in place until such a time that there is a vaccine. Additionally plans should include the likelihood of a resurgence of the virus and the reintroduction of restrictive measures.

The Occupational Safety and Health Authority and Agency will offer guidance and support in this return to work process.

# RISK ASSESSMENT AND MINIMISING EXPOSURE TO COVID-19 AT WORK

Precautions should always be determined by a risk assessment and appropriate control measures need to be put in place for returning workers to ensure that workplaces limit the opportunity for further viral spread.

The identification and assessment of safety and health risks inherent in the working environment under normal conditions is the starting point for managing safety and health. This assessment must take into consideration COVID-19 and its associated risks. Employers are duty bound to review and revise their risk assessments when there is a change to the work process and to consider all risks. When revising the risk assessment, attention should be given to any anomalies or situations that can cause problems and evaluations must be made to determine how these issues can impact upon the organisation becoming more resilient in the long-term. Involving workers and their representatives in the revision of the risk assessment is vital.

**It must be borne in mind that a risk assessment does not control risk. It is the actions of individuals who apply controls identified in the risk assessment that mitigate risk.**

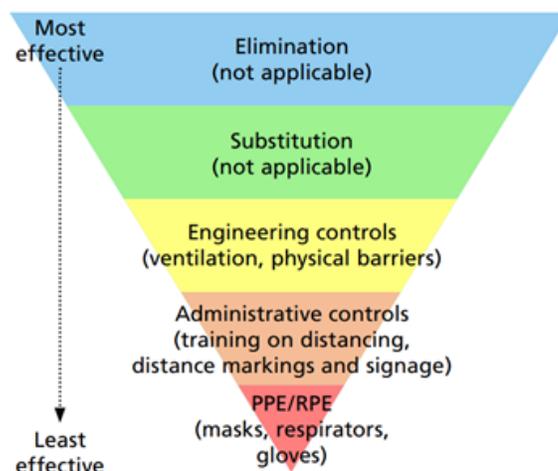
When conducting the risk assessment ensure that you obtain the most recent information on the hazard (i.e. the virus) and how it is spread. This information is available from Ministry of Health and other related Public Health Authorities.

**The likelihood of exposure should also be considered. Factors to consider are:**

- Whether employees are exposed on their commute to work
- Which employees are likely to be exposed to infected persons or surfaces at the place of work
- Do employees have medical conditions that increases their vulnerability
- Are employees exposed to possible sources of infection at home

The implementation of safe work practices to limit exposure to COVID-19 at work requires effective assessment of the risks. Through the hierarchy of controls, measures can be developed to minimise workers exposure to the virus.

Covid-19 hierarchy of control



Deciding which controls are best suited to your workplace requires a number of considerations like:

- The design of the workplace
- How will the surfaces be sanitised
- How will equipment be used
- How can work schedules be organised to minimise person to person contact; and
- Do employees have adequate information to protect themselves from infection at work
- Reduce contact between different parts of your business at the start and end of shifts.
- Stage the timing of meal breaks to reduce the number of people sharing a cafeteria, staff room, or kitchen.
- Supply soap and water or appropriate hand sanitiser at convenient places and advise workers to wash their hands frequently.
- Clean your premises frequently, especially counters, door handles, tools and other surfaces that people touch often and ensure good ventilation is provided if possible.

**Below are some examples of mitigating measures that can be employed:**

- Conduct only essential work for the time being. It may be possible to postpone some work until the risk is lower. If possible, deliver services remotely e.g. via phone or video conferencing, instead of in person. Ensure that only workers who are essential to the job are present at the workplace and minimise the presence of third parties.
- Reduce, as far as is reasonably practicable, physical contact between workers during meetings or breaks. Eliminate, and if not possible, limit physical interaction with and between customers. For example, through online or phone orders, contactless delivery or managed entry (while also avoiding crowding outside), and physical distancing both inside and outside the premises.
- When delivering goods, do so through pick-up or delivery outside the premises. Advise drivers on good hygiene in the cabin and provide them with appropriate sanitation gel or wipes.
- Provide workers with tissue and waste bins lined with a plastic bag so that they can be disposed of in manner which eliminates contact with the contents.
- If you have identified a risk of infection despite having applied all appropriate safety measures, then provide all necessary PPE. It is important to train workers in the correct use of PPE, ensuring that they follow the Ministry of Health guidance on the use of facemasks and gloves.
- Place posters that encourage staying at home when sick; cough and sneeze etiquette; and hand hygiene at the entrance to the workplace and in other areas where they will be visible.

# RESUMING WORK AFTER A PERIOD OF CLOSURE

If your workplace has been closed for a period for reasons related to COVID-19, make a plan for when work resumes that takes into account of safety and health.

## **You should consider the following in your plan:**

- Update your risk assessment as described above and refer to COVID-19 guidance from the Ministry of Health.
  - Alter the layout of the workplace and the organisation of work that will reduce COVID-19 transmission.
  - Consider the resumption of operations in stages to allow acclimatization to the new working arrangements.
  - Be sure to inform workers about the changes and provide them with such information, instruction and training, as is necessary, before the resumption of operations.
- Consider the implementation of a support system for workers who may be suffering from anxiety or stress. This could range from managers inquiring about workers' well-being more often; facilitating exchanges or buddying between colleagues; changes in work organisation and work tasks; and referring stressed employees to an employee assistance programme. Be aware that workers may have gone through traumatic events such as the serious illness or death of a relative or friend, or may be experiencing financial difficulties.
  - Workers may have concerns about an increased risk of infection at the workplace and may not want to return. It is important to understand their concerns, provide as much information about the measures implemented and the support available to them.

Pay special attention to workers who are at high risk and be prepared to protect the most vulnerable, including older people and those with chronic conditions (including hypertension, lung or heart problems, diabetes, or who are undergoing cancer treatment or some other immunosuppression) and pregnant workers. Pay attention also to workers with close family members who are at high risk.

The most significant adjustment when returning to work may be changes to the culture of the organisation. This will include adjustment of attitudes and behaviours. Employers may need to consider training as a strategy to reintroduce the employees to their workplace and to develop the types of behaviours required. The training should highlight the personal benefits that employees will derive from changes in attitude and behaviour.

# RETURNING TO WORK AFTER RECOVERING FROM COVID-19

During the course of the pandemic persons may have become infected with the COVID-19 virus. Places of work should have a policy in place to reintegrate employees who may have been absent due to illness.

**The following are some steps to consider when planning for an employee's return to work:**

- Develop (if one is not in existence) a return to workplace policy. The policy should have input from management, worker representatives and human resources.
- Remain in contact with the employee throughout his or her ailment and when he or she is preparing to return to work.
- Develop a plan for the recovered worker to return to work – this will include a risk assessment specific to that worker and his or her environment which will include introducing controls to limit any risks identified.
- Monitor the employee when he or she returns and review the plan where necessary.

## WORKING FROM HOME

**Workers should be encouraged to work from home and continue to work from home if the nature of their job allows it. For most of these workers, their home working environment is likely to be deficient in varying ways in comparison to their workplace. The extent to which the home environment can be modified will vary according to the situation of the worker and the time and resources available for the modification.**

**Advice on staying safe and healthy while working from home is available from OSHA's guidance document on 'Working from Home'. You should also read our brochures, 'A Guide to Risk Assessment' and 'Prevention of Occupational Diseases'.**

# HELPFUL LINKS WITH GUIDELINES ON RETURNING TO WORK BY ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

## TRANSPORTATION AND STORAGE

### Canada

#### ***Protecting Yourself and Others (Transportation)***

<https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/transportation.pdf>

#### ***Protecting Yourself and Others (Airline and Ground Crews)***

[https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/airline\\_ground\\_crews.pdf](https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/airline_ground_crews.pdf)

#### ***Protecting Yourself and Others (Home Delivery and Couriers)***

[https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/home\\_delivery\\_couriers.pdf](https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/home_delivery_couriers.pdf)

### United Kingdom

#### ***Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in other people's homes***

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes>

#### ***Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in or from a vehicle***

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/vehicles>

#### ***Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer transport guidance for operators***

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators>

#### ***Guidance for shipping and sea ports on coronavirus (COVID-19)***

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-shipping-and-sea-ports-guidance>

### USA

#### ***COVID-19 Guidance for Rideshare, Taxi, and Car Service Workers***

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA4021.pdf>

### Italy

#### ***Coronavirus, from Mit guidelines on safety in transport and logistics***

<http://www.mit.gov.it/comunicazione/news/coronavirus-trasporti-logistica-logistica-e-trasporti/coronavirus-da-mit-linee>

## **HUMAN HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK ACTIVITIES**

### **Canada**

#### ***Protecting Yourself and Others (Emergency and Patient Intake)***

[https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/emergency\\_patient\\_intake.pdf](https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/emergency_patient_intake.pdf)

### **Italy**

#### ***Covid-19 and protection of health workers - second edition***

<https://www.inail.it/cs/internet/comunicazione/pubblicazioni/catalogo-generale/pubbl-covid-19-operatori-sanitari-seconda-versione.html>

## **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEFENCE; COMPULSORY SOCIAL SECURITY (ESSENTIAL SERVICES)**

### **Canada**

#### ***Protecting Yourself and Others (First Responders)***

[https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/first\\_responders.pdf](https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/first_responders.pdf)

#### ***Protecting Yourself and Others (Correctional Facilities)***

[https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/correctional\\_facilities.pdf](https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/correctional_facilities.pdf)

### **United Kingdom**

#### ***Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in offices and contact centres***

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>

## **AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHING**

### **Canada**

#### ***Protecting Yourself and Others (Agriculture)***

<https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/agriculture.pdf>

## **WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE; REPAIR OF MOTOR VEHICLES AND MOTORCYCLES**

### **Canada**

#### ***Protecting Yourself and Others (Retail)***

<https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/retail.pdf>

### **United Kingdom**

#### ***Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in food businesses***

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

#### ***Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in shops and branches***

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches>

## **ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICE ACTIVITIES**

### **Canada**

#### ***Protecting Yourself and Others (Restaurants and Food Services)***

[https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/food\\_service.pdf](https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/food_service.pdf)

### **United Kingdom**

#### ***Working safely during (COVID-19) in restaurants offering takeaway or delivery***

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/restaurants-offering-takeaway-or-delivery>

### **USA**

#### ***COVID-19 Guidance for Restaurants & Beverage Vendors Offering Takeout or Curbside Pickup***

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA4017.pdf>

### **Italy**

#### ***Technical document on the hypothesis of remodelling of the measures to contain SARS-CoV-2 contagion in the restaurant sector***

<https://www.inail.it/cs/internet/comunicazione/pubblicazioni/catalogo-generale/pubbl-doc-tecnico-ipotesi-rimod-misure-cont-ristorazione-covid-2.html>

## **PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES**

### **United Kingdom**

***Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) for indoor labs and research facilities and similar environments.***

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/labs-and-research-facilities>

## **MANUFACTURING**

### **Canada**

***Protecting Yourself and Others (Manufacturing)***

<https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/manufacturing.pdf>

### **United Kingdom**

***Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) for factories, plants and warehouses.***

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/factories-plants-and-warehouses>

### **USA**

***COVID-19 Guidance for the Manufacturing Industry Workforce***

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA4002.pdf>

## **MINING AND QUARRYING**

### **Canada**

***Protecting Yourself and Others (Mining)***

<https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/mining.pdf>

## **ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION**

### **Italy**

**Technical document on risk analysis and containment measures of SARS-CoV-2 contagion in recreational bathing and beach activities**

<https://www.inail.it/cs/internet/comunicazione/pubblicazioni/catalogo-generale/pubbl-doc-tecnico-att-ricr-balneazione-spiaggia-covid-2.html>

## **EDUCATION**

### **Canada**

#### ***Protecting Yourself and Others (Daycares)***

[https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/day\\_cares.pdf](https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/day_cares.pdf)

### **United Kingdom**

#### ***Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for educational settings***

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

#### ***Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings***

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>