

## Work-Isolation for Essential Workers Identified as Asymptomatic Close Contacts

### IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

We recognize that there are situations where employees may be needed so that critical services can continue. Permitting workers in isolation to return to work should only be done as a last resort and only when:

- The worker is an asymptomatic close contact of an individual that tested positive for COVID-19. It is **not** permitted for workers isolating because they tested positive;
- The service **must** be essential to the health and safety of the population; and,
- The worker's role in providing the service **must** be essential.

The decision to permit an individual in isolation to work should not be taken lightly. This is a harm reduction approach, but it is not without risk. Employers should be aware that bringing workers in isolation back into the workplace presents a risk to other employees and patrons, and could impact the ongoing operations of the business.

**By following the guidance below, you acknowledge the risks of proceeding.**

### Essential workers permitted to follow these protocols include:

1. Workers essential to the transportation of essential goods.
2. Workers essential to the critical infrastructure and services in transportation (i.e., air, sea, rail and road).
3. Workers essential to critical infrastructure and services in mining, agriculture, fishing and aquaculture, hydroelectric, oil and gas sectors, and trades (i.e., commercial construction).
4. Workers essential for providing municipal services that impact public safety, such as snow clearing and garbage collection.
5. Truck drivers and crew on any plane, helicopter, train, or marine vessel, including fish harvesting vessels.
6. Emergency first responders including police, military, paramedics, firefighters and emergency dispatchers.

7. Health care workers employed by regional health authorities who are essential to the provision of critical health care.
  - Employees must contact their program leadership to determine if they are essential. When an employee is deemed essential, consultation with OHS is required prior to the start of work-isolation.
8. Private health care workers (e.g. physicians in private offices, dentists, pharmacists, chiropractors, psychologists, physiotherapists, etc.).
9. Workers essential to the health and welfare of animals, where no other business can provide the service.

### **Employer Responsibilities**

In weighing the risks and benefits of permitting a close contact of a case to work-isolate, employers should consider:

- Is the employee willing to come into the workplace while isolating?
- Is the service essential to the health and safety of the population?
- Can another employee that is not isolating perform the service?
- Can another operator or business provide the service?
- Can the employee conduct the work in an isolated environment where they do not have any contact with others (such as a snowplow operator or a forestry worker)?
- Can the employee perform their job remotely?
- Can the employee perform the work away from others? If not, what are the impacts on the workforce and the continuity of services if other employees test positive?
- You must inform employees of this approach and the risks. Consider how employees will respond to this decision. How will you reduce the potential risks for other employees (e.g., personal protective equipment, maintaining physical distancing, and other controls)?

### **Employee Responsibilities**

- Self-isolate at all times when not working. Go directly to and from work and do not enter any establishments on the way.
- Wear a mask at all times in any common area at work. If the mask has to be removed for any reason, it must not be done in the presence of others.
- Maintain physical distancing of two metres from others during work, unless it is essential to the service to work closely with others.
- Personal spaces at work should be cleaned when finished use.
- Follow all workplace infection prevention and control measures.
- Ensure you follow public health direction and complete PCR tests 72 hours and 7 days after exposure.

- If you become symptomatic, notify your supervisor immediately and return to isolation.
- If provided to you, complete a rapid COVID-19 self-test once a day for 10 days following the exposure. Complete the first test the day after your exposure. If you test positive, isolate immediately and book a PCR test to confirm your result.

December 31, 2021