



COVID-19 Safety Plan

Whitehorse, Yukon Territory

Overview:

The purpose of this Safety Plan is to provide COVID-19 work place health and safety guidance to staff returning to work in the WCS Canada Whitehorse office located at 169 Titanium Way, Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 0E9.

This initial stage of reopening the Whitehorse office is triggered by:

- Yukon moving into Phase 2 of COVID-19 pandemic recovery
- Specific requests from staff to return to work. (WCS Canada recognizes that working from home may have impacts on work productivity and mental health and considers these factors in the planning of how offices open and prioritizing the sequence in which team members return).

At this initial stage the following employees are able to return to work in the Whitehorse office:

- Conservation Planning Biologist
- Post-Doctoral Fellow
- Conservation Zoologist
- Associate Conservation Scientist
- Research Assistant
- Associate Conservation Scientist

This Plan will be reviewed regularly and as necessary to accommodate the return to work of additional staff as COVID-19 conditions allow.

Introduction:

Ensuring a safe return to operations in the workplace is a priority for WCS Canada. We are committed to taking all necessary precautions to ensure that our staff have access to the necessary equipment, supplies, tools and guidance to support a safe return. As public health measures are adjusted, ensuring workplaces are safe will require all staff to follow guidelines on COVID19, including measures that may restrict certain activities.

The Government of Yukon has released return-to-work guidance to protect employees in non-health care workplaces to safely return to work. This COVID-19 Safety Plan, which draws directly from this territorial guidance, has been created to identify risks for transmission of the virus in the workplace and the controls needed to mitigate those risks.

Employers have a duty to provide a safe and healthy workplace:

Employers have a duty to protect the health and safety of their workers. Employers in Yukon are required to implement preventative measures to ensure workers are not exposed to conditions which could be harmful to their health and safety while working. Failure to ensure a safe workplace can lead to liability under Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Legislation, including fines and penalties, and, in serious cases, criminal prosecutions and/or civil liability for employers not covered under the applicable Workers Compensation regime.

As we continue to experience the changing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic it is critical that we take steps to evaluate and adapt this Safety Plan to ensure the correct policies and procedures are in place to meet WCS Canada's obligation to provide a safe work place. This will require the active participation of all staff returning to work in the Whitehorse office.

Symptoms of COVID-19:

- cough
- fever and/or chills
- difficulty breathing.

If someone has travelled OR has had close contact with a person with a recent travel history who was or is now symptomatic OR are a known close contact to a confirmed case of COVID-19, there is a longer list of symptoms that warrant testing for COVID-19 that can be found [here](#).

Deciding whether and when to reopen:

On 01 July 2020 the Whitehorse District Health Unit area was permitted to enter Stage 2 of Yukon's [Plan for Lifting COVID-19 Restrictions](#) allowing offices to reopen based on having an operational plan in place for reducing the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace.

In order to reopen physical workplaces, considerations need to be made around whether offices can be opened *safely*. This consists of:

- (i) assessing the workplace and determining whether the employer is able to satisfy its duty to provide a safe and healthy workplace by implementing controls to address the hazard of COVID-19, and
- (ii) implementing those controls.

Workplace controls to address the hazard of COVID-19 should align with the guidelines, mandates and orders in the respective jurisdiction.

Assessing the COVID-19 hazard in the workplace:

The first step for ensuring a safe workplace is to conduct a hazard assessment for COVID-19 transmission in the workplace, as required to comply with provincial OH&S legislation. WCS Canada has consulted with the Joint Health and Safety Committee (health and safety representatives) to seek input regarding their respective office spaces to determine where potential transmission could occur and how COVID-19 transmission can be controlled.

All decisions have been taken on a reasoned basis, taking into consideration provincial public health guidance and the employer's duty of care to its employees, and in a manner consistent with the WCS Canada's health and safety policies. Ensuring that all decisions related to workplace health and safety are properly documented and reasonable is a vital step in this process. In addition, employers in Yukon and British Columbia have a duty to post their COVID-19 return to work safety plans and/or policies both in the workplace and on their websites.

Specific considerations for a safe and healthy workplace:

The safest way to keep employees from contracting or spreading COVID-19 is to eliminate or reduce physical contact between employees. Working from home has been a critical tool for achieving physical

distancing and will continue to be encouraged. As we embark on a staged return to the Whitehorse office additional strategies will be needed, monitored and adapted as conditions evolve.

As we progress to reopening, the following hierarchy of controls will be used to address the identified hazards related to COVID-19 in the workplace as identified by the health and safety representative:

- Engineering controls (i.e., physical distancing and physical barriers)
- Administrative controls (i.e., adjusting policies and procedures to reduce risk)
- The use of personal protective equipment (“PPE”)

Category	Key Considerations	Implementation
<p>Limiting the number of employees and others in the workplace</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging employees to continue working from home if they are able. • Limiting the number of staff of staff in the physical workplace, this will be determined by the Program Lead taking into consideration staff circumstances as priority. • Limiting office access to employees only (with the exception of mail/delivery services). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six employees can return to the office at this stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conservation Planning Biologist ○ Post-Doctoral Fellow ○ Conservation Zoologist ○ Associate Conservation Scientist ○ Research Assistant ○ Associate Conservation Scientist • No visitors will be allowed in the office at this time
<p>Encouraging physical distancing at work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rearranging workspaces and floor plans, including increasing separation between desks, workstations, and furniture or fixtures in common spaces such as the kitchen and communal area. Examples include spacing out chairs in meeting rooms/spaces to ensure adequate physical distance. • Adjusting scheduling, such as start/end times and breaks to reduce the number of people using common spaces (such as kitchens, and bathrooms) at the same time. • Implementing signage to ensure distance is maintained, for example taping off areas around workstations, appliances, machines, photocopiers, etc. to indicate appropriate two-metre spacing, signage on the front door to avoid visitors. • Discouraging or cancelling all non-essential activities, social events and in-person meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every staff member will have a private office to work from. • Signage on front door will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employees Only ○ COVID-19 self-assessment ○ Building occupancy limit of 8 maximum • Signage in the workplace will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Handwashing and hygiene etiquette ○ A copy of this COVID-19 Safety Plan ○ Information detailing high contact surfaces that must be cleaned immediately upon using (kitchen counters, boardroom table, bathroom, shared printer, front door entryway, security panel and alike) • Only one person will use the kitchen at any one time. • Meeting room (3-person unmasked, 4-person masked max).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting a cleaning schedule, including limited use of common areas such as the kitchen; if used it should be followed by an immediate cleaning of all contacted surfaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff will remain 2 meters apart if conducting meetings around the boardroom table or any part of the office. • If physical distancing is not possible masks will be worn. • For Physical distancing measures related to shared vehicles the <i>COVID-19 Vehicle Use Guidance</i> issued by Yukon Environment is recommended.
<p>Limiting physical contact and minimizing interpersonal interactions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing all communal items that cannot be easily cleaned, such as newspapers, magazines, and candy bowls. • Reducing or eliminating the sharing of tools and equipment (such as keyboards, pens and other tools) between employees. • Avoiding the provision or sharing of food, beverages, and food related items in the workplace including coffee makers, cutlery, mugs, etc. • Using technology to minimize interactions, such as using technology to share documents. • The work vehicle will be disinfected before and after every individual use • Shared field equipment will be disinfected after every individual use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone will have their own office space at least 2 meters apart. • Staff will stay within their respective working areas. • All staff will have their own hardware and office supplies, there will be no sharing of these items. • High risk areas which will require disinfecting upon every use include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meeting room ○ Kitchen ○ Bathroom ○ Shared work vehicle ○ Shared field equipment
<p>Worker and workplace hygiene</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting regular and thorough hand-washing and good hygiene etiquette by posting signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage will be posted in the office as a reminder of safe and good hygiene etiquette.

	<p>and ensuring there is a steady supply of sanitization products.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring employees have access to soap and water, and/or alcohol-based sanitizer, putting hand sanitizer in prominent places around the workplace, ensuring these dispensers are regularly refilled, and placing informational posters throughout the workplace. • Developing procedures for regularly scheduled enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of the workplace during work hours, particularly high-contact items such as doors, handles, faucet handles, keyboards, and shared equipment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional supplies of hand sanitizer and soap have been placed in bathrooms and in the office space [The Research Assistant will be responsible for ensuring this supply until her departure]. • The office will be professionally cleaned every Sunday. • During work hours there will be an increased cleaning schedule that the team will agree on. • No communal use of dishes, cutlery, mugs, glasses, etc. • Removal of communal cloth hand and dish towels. Employees may use their own tea towels, dish sponges, etc. • Individual responsibility for cleaning common surfaces after each use (e.g. kettle, microwave).
<p>Preventing potentially sick employees from being at work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requiring employees to complete a daily COVID-19 pre-screening, such as a COVID-19 self-assessment questionnaire prior to attending the workplace. This assessment should also be posted on the front door to reinforce compliance. • Continue to monitor COVID-19 plans in the community where the office is located, local plans may have a significant impact on workplace operations. • Stay informed about school and public transportation disruptions, which may impact staff. • Document and communicate a response plan to all staff in the event an employee is possibly exposed to COVID-19. • All employees travelling outside of Yukon will be required to self-isolate and self-monitor for 14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team will self-screen daily before coming to the office. • The team will utilize cloth/disposable masks when social distancing is not possible and good hygiene measures. • The team will update themselves on the status of COVID-19 cases in locally in Whitehorse and for Yukon. HR will be notified if there is an increase in cases to assess if a return to working from home is required. • The team will follow the guidance below if an employee is exposed to, or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.

	<p>days (quarantine exceptions will be based on Yukon government guidance)</p>	
<p>Implementing appropriate policies</p>	<p>Developing policies and practices to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all employees are trained on all COVID-19 related policies and procedures, including up-to-date education and training on COVID-19 risk factors and protective behaviors (for example, transmission points, cleaning processes, cough etiquette and handwashing). • Ensure that policies are kept up to date and being followed, for example through regular check-ins to ensure employees are maintaining appropriate physical distance and are managing well with the usage of masks. • Respond appropriately to employee concerns or due to workplace health and safety concerns, including developing policies in advance in consultation with health and safety representatives and implementing additional policies and controls to address hazards identified by employees on an ongoing basis. • Check with vendors, suppliers and landlords on measures they have implemented to manage COVID-19 related risks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff will receive the <i>Health and Safety Guidance During COVID-19 for Employers of Office Settings</i> information package. Staff should review this information and ensure that they are adhering to the safest protocols possible. • The team will review this plan regularly and consult with HR on updates as needed and as conditions evolve (recommended monthly in conjunction with JHSC checklist also based on any trigger events that arise). • The health and safety representative (The Associate Conservation Scientist) will respond to any immediate concerns, and involve HR and/or the JHSC as needed.

<p>Evaluate policies and procedures regularly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review policies, practices and procedures regularly and assess whether they are achieving the desired outcome.• Update policies and procedures regularly as the situation and available guidance changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing evaluation and adaption of this plan as it moves onto new stages.• Adapting the plan as new guidance becomes available.
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Personal Protective Equipment for employees (face masks):

Where hazards related to COVID-19 cannot be eliminated through administrative and engineering controls, staff are strongly advised to adopt the use of PPE in the workplace, such as face masks, gloves and eye protection. Employers are required to be trained on how to use adopted PPE correctly, including the fit, use, putting it on and taking it off, maintenance, cleaning, and disposal, as well as training on the limitations of PPE.

WCS Canada considers the use of masks in the work place to be an important strategy for reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19, and the current advice from Canada's Chief Medical Officer is that individuals should wear a non-medical face mask when they are unable to maintain proper physical distance from others. WCS Canada will reimburse employees for the cost of up to two reusable masks.

Handling symptomatic/exposed employees:**Exposed Employees:**

"A potential exposure means being a household contact or having close contact within 6 feet of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. The timeframe for having contact with an individual includes the period of time of 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic" ([CDC, 2020](#)).

- A. If an Employee has been exposed to someone that has tested positive for COVID-19:
 - the employee should not enter the work place.
 - the employee should notify their supervisor and HR.
 - the employee will be required to self-isolate and self-monitor for 14 days
 - if symptoms develop the employee is encouraged to take the [Yukon Self Assessment Tool](#) and seek medical attention as necessary.

- B. If an employee discovers they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 symptoms and/or is awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test:
 - the employee should not enter the work place.
 - the employee should notify their supervisor and HR.
 - the employee will be required to self-isolate and self-monitor for 14 days or until they can confirm that the person they were exposed to has received a negative COVID-19 test.
 - if symptoms develop the employee should take the [Yukon Self Assessment Tool](#) and seek medical attention as necessary.

Symptomatic Employees:

- A. If an Employee develops symptoms while **outside** the office:
 - the employee should not enter the work place.
 - the employee should notify their supervisor and HR.
 - the employee should take the [Yukon Self Assessment Tool](#) and seek medical attention as necessary.
 - the employee will be required to self-isolate and self-monitor for 14-days unless they receive a negative COVID-19 test.

- All other employees that work in the office will be asked to work remotely for 3 days to reduce potential exposure from touch surfaces, or until the symptomatic employee reports a negative COVID-19 test.

B. If an Employee develops symptoms *inside* the office:

- Immediately the employee will be asked to sanitize their hands, provided with a mask and asked to isolate from the rest of the office staff (sanitizer and masks are available to the left of the fridge)
- The employee will be asked to go straight home. Public transport should be avoided.
- If the employee is too ill to get home, another employee in the office will call 911 and advise that the symptomatic employee may have COVID-19.
- Once at home the employee should take the Yukon Self Assessment Tool and follow any resulting guidance.
- Once the employee has safely left the office, all other employees in the office will be asked to return home.
- The office will then be closed for 3 days to reduce potential exposure from touch surfaces, or until the symptomatic employee reports a negative COVID-19 test (whichever is sooner)

If, for any of the above reasons, an employee needs to leave the office and work from home they should take all needed equipment and materials with them. If an employee is at home and requires equipment or materials from the office, arrangements will be made to deliver the needed equipment and materials to them in COVID-19 safe manner.

If an exposed or symptomatic employee receives a positive COVID-19 test they should immediately notify their supervisor and HR. Any employee that may have been exposed will be notified. The office will be closed until a deep clean has been conducted and HR has advised that it is safe to return.

A symptomatic employee or an employee that has tested positive for COVID-19 may request to return to the office only after they have been symptom free for 5 days and/or have received a negative COVID-19 test.

Information sharing, reporting and contact tracing:

- To support contact tracing, local public health units should be contacted for guidance on next steps. They will provide instructions and complete external contact tracing if needed.
- In order to support contact tracing, having a system in place to identify which staff have had interactions with an affected worker will be needed. Accordingly, the affected worker will be asked by HR to which employees they have been in contact with and when.
- Public health may require other employee(s) that have had close contact with the affected employee to self-isolate for 14 days.
- WCS Canada will not disclose the personal health information of any employee relating to COVID-19 without:
 - i. Speaking to the affected employee and gaining consent to disclose their identity;
 - ii. Receiving direct instructions from the local public health unit to move ahead with contact tracing notifications.

If HR is unable to reach the employee to acquire consent to disclose, we are obliged to comply with public health direction and begin internal contact tracing measures; we will ensure the identity of the affected employee remains confidential until the employee advises otherwise.

Reporting

If there is a confirmed COVID-19 case in the workplace that has potentially resulted from employment related exposure, WCS Canada is obligated to file a report with the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board as soon as possible.

Accommodating employee requests *not* to return:

WCS Canada recognizes that employees may want to remain working from home for a variety of reasons when their office begins a staged return to work. At this time a return to the work place is voluntary. However, as we approach or reach the stage of a full office reopening some employees may want to request to remain working from home, including for the following reasons:

- **Being in a COVID-19 high risk category.** Certain individuals may be at greater risk of having more severe complications if they become infected with COVID-19. According to the Government of Canada, individuals at higher risk include older adults, people with weakened immune systems, and people with medical conditions including heart disease, hypertension, lung disease, diabetes and cancer. Employees that are in a high risk category should self identify to their supervisor and HR. To protect the privacy of employees **no** personal details or sensitive medical information is required when self identifying as an employee in a high risk category.
- **Employees caring for a sick family member or children.** In this situation the employee may want to continue to work at home, request to work reduced hours (see WCS Canada's Temporary Emergency Leave policy) or take a leave from work.
- **Employees are uncomfortable with returning to the work place.** An employee may not feel comfortable returning to their office based on safety concerns. This may include using public transport to travel to work.

Updating this COVID-19 Safety Plan:

We anticipate that the Whitehorse office will gradually move from this initial stage of opening to full operations. To facilitate this progression, it is recommended that this Safety Plan be revised monthly as part of the monthly office Health and Safety Committee check, or when a trigger event occurs, such as:

- New guidance public health guidance is issued by Yukon or the local municipality.
- Reopening of schools and/or daycares.
- Additional WCS Canada Employees request to return to the office.