



PROFESSIONAL CONSTRUCTORS

# MEMO

**To:** All Staff  
**From:** Hayley Dean, HR Advisor  
**Date:** March 13, 2020  
**Re:** Addressing COVID-19 Update

---

Acres Family,

Please know, we are monitoring the evolving Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation and **your health and safety are top priorities**. To help mitigate the risk of this virus spreading within our workplace, Acres is taking action. Here's what you need to know:

## What is Coronavirus COVID-19?

A new coronavirus is the cause of an outbreak of respiratory infections, now known as COVID-19.

**The risk to construction workers is low, due to general good health of the workforce, working conditions and safety equipment such as work gloves. However, all British Columbians should be aware of the virus and how to prevent its spread.**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found mostly in animals. In humans, they can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV). The new coronavirus has been named COVID-19.

While many of the characteristics of COVID-19 are still unknown, mild to severe illness has been reported for confirmed cases.

## What Acres is Doing?

We have stepped up our cleaning routines and are deploying more cleaning products, to minimize the potential of infection within our workplace. This includes sending disinfectant wipes to the field.

We will keep you up to date on pertinent information about COVID-19 and our ongoing actions. The spread and impact of COVID-19 is an evolving situation. We will be assessing and implementing response best practices to protect your health and safety.

**Until further notice, no large gatherings will be scheduled, this includes Jeans Day. We are also considering having the next town hall on March 31<sup>st</sup> attended via live stream.**

That said, we all make decisions both inside and outside our workplace that may directly affect the possibility that the virus could enter our workplace. Following are the precautions that each of us can take to reduce the chance of infection for yourself and others:

## Precautions you can take:

Look after your overall health and be mindful of your hygiene:

- ✓ Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This should be done whenever you enter the workplace, and at reasonable intervals through the workday, particularly if you handled objects from outside the workplace;
- ✓ Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- ✓ Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or use your elbow/sleeve. Throw away any used tissues.
- ✓ Use disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizers regularly (although these are not a substitute for hand washing);
- ✓ Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using cleaning sprays/ wipes;
- ✓ Avoid handshaking
- ✓ Use your knuckles or elbows to touch light switches, elevator buttons, etc.
- ✓ Open doors with a closed fist or hip if possible
- ✓ Where possible, avoid large scale gatherings;
- ✓ Avoid visiting sick relatives or friends, if possible. If this is unavoidable, use the above precautions.

## Office/Field practices:

- ✓ Reduce the number of face-to-face meetings with clients, subtrades etc. – where possible, conduct meetings by phone or video-calling;
- ✓ If you have reason to believe a visitor, subtrade or client may have recently travelled out of Canada, please request that they refrain from attending our workplace or asking for in-person meetings for at least two weeks.

## Personal Travel:

- ✓ Avoid travel
- ✓ If you, or someone you live with, chooses to travel outside of Canada or decide to take a cruise at this time, you must disclose this to your Supervisor in advance.
- ✓ **Be aware that if you make this choice, you will be required to self-isolate upon your return, and thus you will likely need to extend your time off work by an additional minimum period of two weeks.**
- ✓ As the situation is evolving, it is possible that you could experience travel disruptions or the need to quarantine or self-isolate while travelling or upon your return.

- ✓ If you are experiencing flu-like symptoms or respiratory symptoms, stay home to recover. If you are concerned that these symptoms could be COVID-19, call the BC Public Health Authority (8-1-1) and/or your family doctor for directions, and let your Supervisor know immediately.
- ✓ If you do not have symptoms but have been in close contact with someone who has recently travelled to an affected area, or who is themselves ill, **do not come to the workplace**. Isolate yourself and contact your Supervisor or HR for guidance. Contact your family doctor or BC Public Health immediately and follow their directions for screening, diagnosis and treatment.

Employees who are unable to attend work due to their own illness or due to the illness of a family member that has resulted in directions from BC Public Health to self-isolate can apply for medical benefits through Employment Insurance.

### What are EI sick-leave benefits?

Eligible workers with no or limited paid-leave benefits through their employers can apply for up to 15 weeks of employment insurance if they cannot work for medical reasons such as cancer, a broken leg, or in this case, being quarantined in a public-health threat.

### How is the government adjusting the program for COVID-19?

Normally, a worker who qualifies for the benefits has a one-week waiting period before payments start, so if you're quarantined for two weeks you'd only get sickness benefits for one of those weeks. **For people quarantined due to COVID-19, the government is eliminating the waiting period entirely, so you can get EI benefits for an entire 14-day quarantine. The government previously waived the waiting period, which was then two weeks, during the 2003 SARS epidemic.**

### Where can I get more information?

- BC Centre for Disease Control: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-\(novel\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-(novel))
- Health Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/frequently-asked-questions.html#a4>

**Team, thank you for doing your part to keep our workplace a healthy and safe place to work.**