

# Guidance on Health and Safety for Exhibitions During COVID-19

## **OVERVIEW**

During the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, the exhibition industry understands that we need to do our part to keep workers, customers and the public safe and healthy, so we can stop the spread of COVID-19 and prepare to reopen our sector.

Below is a set of resources, tips and best practices to help organizers of exhibitions prevent the spread of COVID-19 and work together to reopen safely and responsibly.

Employers and workers in Ontario have certain duties and rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations. Employers should review and follow any applicable directives and guidance coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Ministry of Health.

Employers must also comply with [Orders](#) under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act that are applicable for the exhibition industry.

Learn more about the topics below by following the links:

[Workers' Rights](#)

[Employers' Responsibilities](#)

[Duties of Employers and Other Persons](#)

## **BEST PRACTICES**

Recognizing that every industry and workplace is unique, sector-specific guidance is required to ensure clear action is taken to protect against the hazards presented by exposure to COVID-19.

Practicing physical distancing (staying 2 metres away from others), minimizing contact with droplets of mucous or saliva, keeping hands, surfaces and objects clean, and preventing contact with potentially infected people – are all critically important measures. Other information on how you can protect yourself is available on [ontario.ca/coronavirus](https://ontario.ca/coronavirus).

The recommendations below have been developed to support organizers of exhibitions in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among participants (workers, volunteers, vendors, patrons and attendees).

This document and the guidance within it are subject to change and will be updated as needed.

## **RECOGNIZE HAZARDS AND ASSESS RISK**

The purpose of exhibitions is to facilitate trade and commerce within a given industry. Participants do not come to exhibitions to gather, socializing and interact with one another. They come to buy and sell products and services.

Exhibitions are marketplaces, defined as vendor stalls, behaving in a manner similar to malls, retail outlets or farmers' markets.

The commercial nature of exhibitions mean they have a very low social risk factor, allowing them to operate in a more controlled and physically distant manner than more social types of events like conventions, banquets and galas.

Keeping exhibition participants safe (workers, volunteers, vendors, patrons and attendees) involves understanding how people could come into contact with COVID-19, and then taking the steps to minimize contact.

The controls below can help minimize the risks of contact and transmission of COVID-19 at exhibitions.

## **CONTROLS**

All existing safety, sanitation, and infection control standards established by licensing agencies and public health authorities are still in effect and enforced. Already existing controls may help to reduce the risk of exposure (e.g. following practices required by the Local/Provincial Health Unit).

Exhibition participants include all workers, volunteer, vendors, patrons and attendees. To protect exhibition participants from the risk of exposure to COVID-19, consider the following options:

### **Keep Informed and Communicate**

- Encourage and facilitate participants staying up to date with [developments related to COVID-19](#), including advance communications through email, social media, etc.
- Notify participants of the steps being taken to prevent the risk of transmission, and the importance of their roles in these measures.
- Communicate, with signage throughout the exhibition site including points of entry, that it is not permitted for anyone to enter the exhibition if they have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Consider making announcements during the exhibition about safety measures and protocols.
- Ensure that illness reporting requirements are well communicated through training and signage. Workers who are sick or have signs of illness (e.g. fever, coughing, runny nose, tiredness, shortness of breath) **must self-isolate**, notify their employer and call a doctor or healthcare provider.
- Encourage workers to monitor their own symptoms at all times and ensure that they know where to find assessment tools: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>. Ask workers to use the tool at home if they have any symptoms and to follow the instructions. Ensure workers know who their workplace contact is and how to get in touch with them in case the self-assessment, public health or their health care provider suggests they self-isolate, or if they start to experience symptoms at work.
- Ensure workers with symptoms self-isolate and get tested, and check-in with them during their isolation period.
- Provide clear information and instruction to workers. Make sure they know what they need to do to protect themselves and others. Ensure they know how to follow the work and hygiene practices, including all new safety measures. Employers need to train workers on possible COVID-19 transmission points at exhibitions, what steps are being taken to protect them, and how they can protect themselves, including frequent hand washing especially before and after

each interaction, sanitizing items and surfaces more frequently, following tool disinfection procedures, and not touching their face.

- Follow all municipal and [local public health warnings](#), directions and recommendations related to COVID-19. Consider regular times to check in with public health updates and retrain/revise practices as needed.
- Share information in all languages spoken by your participants, if possible. Provide information in ways that are easy to understand, like graphics and pictures, and use government resources.
- Communicate that anyone with symptoms of COVID-19; with a history of international travel in the last 14 days; or with close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days must remain at home and get tested.
- Communicate that all international travellers must quarantine for 14 days upon entering Canada. International travellers must plan ahead to ensure they can complete their quarantine prior to attending an exhibition.
- Consider options for virtual attendance for individuals who are at increased risk for more serious illness if contracting COVID-19, such as the elderly or people who have pre-existing health conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, COPD, cancer, dementia, stroke, liver cirrhosis, cardiovascular diseases, chronic kidney disease, and immunodeficiencies.
- Post COVID-19 signage around all entrances and throughout the exhibition hall stating:
  - physical distancing requirements (2 metres)
  - entry prohibited for sick or isolating attendees
  - hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
  - measures and protocols in place
  - number to call to report any concerns (ie. exhibition organiser)
  - mandatory masks as required
- Communicate in advance to all participants the various measures and protocols to follow and implement during the exhibition.

### **Eliminate or Minimize Exposure**

#### ***Physical Distancing***

- Manage entry and exit points, to and from the exterior of the building. In case of an emergency, all emergency exits must be accessible.
- Manage number of workers during set up and tear down.
- Ensure the delivery and pick-up of material is managed according to a pre-set move-in and move-out schedule.
- Communicate that all workers practice appropriate physical distancing (2 metres). If a situation occurs where it is impossible for workers to maintain physical distancing, a mask should be mandated and worn. In this case, employers will provide workers with masks. For municipalities where masks are required indoors, they should be worn at all times by workers.
- Limit the number of participants during exhibition days in order to enable physical distancing (2 metres). Some suggested strategies include:
  - Restricting the number of people based on total gross area
  - single entry and exit to exhibition to control and calculate attendee capacity in real time
  - implementing advance online registration and ticketing

- implementing designated time slots for patrons
- using directional arrows on the floor, to create a logical flow of traffic, reducing crossover between patrons
- Remove or restrict seating in waiting areas.
- Create a process to ensure participants stay separate while waiting to enter the exhibition (e.g. floor markings, outdoor distancing, etc.).
- Ensure that any information booths, service counters, registration areas, box offices, restaurants / food service areas etc. are equipped with transparent partitions.
- Introduce barriers, demarcate floors and plan for additional staff to administer physical distancing where line-ups might occur.
- Design floor plan with aisle widths and booth layouts to allow participants to practice appropriate physical distancing (2 metres).
- Manage restaurant seating and layout (where applicable) to enable appropriate physical distancing (2 metres).
- Manage seating in conference spaces (where applicable) to allow participants to practice appropriate physical distancing (2 metres).
- Post the maximum capacity of each elevator, to enable physical distancing (2 metres).

### ***Disinfection and Sanitizing***

- Use appropriate cleaning and disinfectant solutions, approved by [Health Canada](#), for all cleaning and disinfecting procedures.
- Conduct a thorough cleaning and disinfecting of exhibition site, prior to move-in, before the exhibition opens and at the end of each exhibition day.
- Implement enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols with special attention to high-touch surfaces and areas including door handles, restrooms, waste receptacles, counters, seating areas, food preparation areas, pay stations, bank machines, ramps, escalators, elevators, tools, machinery, equipment, phones, computers, surface counters etc.
- Display / publish cleaning and disinfecting protocols and measures.
- Increase the collection and removal of waste receptacles.
- Clean and disinfect audio-visual equipment after each use, according to the manufacturer's instructions to avoid damage.
- Communicate to vendors their responsibility to clean and disinfect their booths regularly throughout the exhibition.

### ***Hand Hygiene***

- Ensure all hand-washing facilities are available and in good working order.
- Install hand sanitizing stations (with at least 60% alcohol content) and/or hand washing stations, at key locations throughout the exhibition site, including but not limited to entrances, restrooms, food and beverage locations etc., and encourage regular usage by participants.
- Strongly encourage hand sanitizing and/or washing when entering venue.
- To avoid droplet dispersion, encourage proper cough and sneeze etiquette through the use of posted reminders and other communications.

### ***Personal Protective Equipment***

- Ensure that key workers are provided with and trained on the safe use of personal protective equipment which may include masks, eye protection and gloves.
- Continuous masking of all workers should be considered where physical distancing cannot be maintained between workers and between workers and vendors/patrons.
- Strongly encourage participants to use personal protective equipment, including masks, when on-site at the exhibition.
- In municipalities where masks are mandatory, enforce their use by all participants.
- Manage the safe disposal of used PPE.

### **Other Control Measures**

- Promote contactless payments wherever possible. If cash payments are accepted, hands should be sanitized immediately after the transaction
- Develop strategies to minimize the handling of objects between participants. If an item is shared between attendees, ensure it is cleaned and disinfected between use, and ensure attendee sanitizes or washes their hands before and after handling the shared item.
- Encourage a no-contact policy (e.g. no shaking hands or exchanging business cards, discourage handouts), advance registration / ticketing, no badges / holders, contactless payment etc ...).
- Operate all food service areas as outlined by public health regulations and existing occupational health and safety requirements. Operators should also follow the [Workplace Safety & Prevention Services Guidance on Health and Safety for Restaurant Servers, Cooks and Dishwashers during COVID-19](#). Some key measures include, but are no limited to:
  - Providing all food and beverage workers with appropriate PPE (masks, gloves, shields).
  - Managing deliveries by ensuring all drivers wash their hands before entering the venue and again before entering the kitchen (portable sinks, with hot and cold running water, hand soap and paper towel to be installed at loading docks and kitchen entrances).
  - Ensuring physical distancing in the kitchen is maintained at all times.
  - Washing all products thoroughly before preparation.
  - Providing hand sanitizing stations at the entrance to all restaurant areas and food and beverage point of sale areas within the exhibition venue.
  - Frequently sanitizing all high touch surfaces in the kitchen and in all restaurant areas and food and beverage point of sale areas, within the exhibition venue.
  - Maintaining a check list and sign off log including opening & closing cleaning procedures, restocking, frequent handwashing and pf levels of sanitizer.
  - Conducting worker training sessions for all employees, temporary staff and subcontractors to review enhanced safety and sanitation guidelines, as well as following all proper hygiene requirements including proper handwashing and continual assurance of cleanliness requirements.
  - Conducting pre-shift meetings with workers to review safety and sanitation guidelines and logging on these meetings on a daily basis by the department.
  - Discontinuing condiment stations in favour of individual packets of various condiments.
  - Providing disposable pre-wrapped cutlery kits.
  - Using signage, floor markers and decals to enable 2-metre physical distancing in areas where queues might form in restaurant areas and food and beverage point of sale areas.

- Promoting cashless payments for all restaurant purchases and food and beverage purchases. When cash is accepted immediately disinfect hands after handling cash.
- Ensuring cashiers do not handle food and/or beverage under any circumstances.
- Managing restaurant seating and layout (where applicable) to enable appropriate physical distancing (2 metres).
- Implement appropriate measures for restrooms which may include:
  - managing line-ups at the entrance points to each restroom
  - publishing the maximum capacity for each restroom
  - putting every other urinal or toilet “out of service”
  - maintaining restroom doors in the open position
  - install hand sanitizing stations at entrance/exit of restrooms
- Consider suspending coat check services, to avoid queuing and the unnecessary handling of personal objects, or implement enhanced measures to adapt coat check operations.
- Ensure ventilation, temperature, humidity and air purification controls inside the venue meet the standards set out in public health regulations.
- Manage procedure to address concerns and questions from participants.
- Consider contact tracing when a government application becomes available.

### **Contingency Planning**

- Communicate clearly in advance of the exhibition and outside the entrance to the exhibition venue, that individuals who are sick or have signs of illness (e.g. fever, coughing, runny nose, tiredness, shortness of breath) **must not enter the premises and must self-isolate**. Use all available methods of communication, both in advance and during the exhibition, including exhibitor correspondence, exhibition website, mobile apps, push notifications, signage etc.)
- Communicate in advance and during the exhibition that participants must monitor their own symptoms at all times. Ensure they know where to find the assessment tools online: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment>.
- Instruct participants to use the assessment tool in advance, prior to arriving at the exhibition, and if they have any symptoms, to follow the assessment tool instructions.
- If and when it becomes available, communicate the availability of a government contact tracing application to participants.
- Instruct participants if they become symptomatic or ill while visiting the exhibition, to follow the same protocols that apply to all public spaces - ie. leave immediately, self isolate and consult a health care professional.
- If a venue or exhibition organizer is made aware of a participant who has tested positive for COVID-19, they will inform Public Health immediately and the established protocols set by Public Health will be followed. Once informed of a positive COVID-19 test, venue should conduct a thorough deep cleaning overnight, according to Municipal Public Health standards.

### **EVALUATION**

It is essential to regularly look at all preventative measures on an ongoing basis, and adjust them if they are not working well enough or causing other issues.

Regular check-ins and adjustments should be an integral part of any COVID-19 infection prevention plan.