Safety and Environment

# Safety Notice #14

## COVID-19 Outbreak

**March 26, 2020**

### What is the current situation?

On March 23, Mayor John Tory declared a state of emergency in the City of Toronto to help address the spread of COVID-19.

Toronto Public Health (TPH) has had 319 cases of COVID-19 reported in Toronto. Twenty-two of these people are hospitalized. Among cases of COVID-19 in Toronto, there has been four deaths. To date, there have been five other people diagnosed with COVID-19 who have recovered from their illness.

TPH has stated there is evidence of community spread in Toronto.

The Government of Ontario has ordered all non-essential businesses to close, effective March 24, at 11:59 p.m. The closure will be in effect for a minimum of 14 days.

### Is there another COVID-19 case at TTC?

On Tuesday, March 24 the TTC learned that a fellow employee, a subway operator, tested positive for COVID-19. This is a very recent development and the TTC is working closely with Toronto Public Health. At this time, we know that the Operator, who is based out of Wilson Division, worked part of a shift on March 16 before reporting feeling unwell and has not been at work since. We also know that none of our other employees or our customers are at an elevated risk of exposure.

Toronto Public Health has advised that:

*The virus is spread from close contact with another person for a prolonged period of time. While surfaces can be contaminated with the virus, it can only infect someone if the person touches their contaminated hand to their face or mouth. Washing hands and cleaning frequently touched surfaces is important. While no one was identified who is high risk, meaning they had prolonged contact with the staff person while at work, since COVID-19 is spreading in the community, we are asking all staff and the public to watch for symptoms and stay home if sick. Any risks from this exposure are similar to risks in the community because now COVID is spreading in the community. This is why we are asking everyone to practice physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and to stay home if sick.*

The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development was also involved to address a number of work refusals related to this situation and possible employee exposure to the COVID-19 case. They indicated that the circumstances reported by the refusing workers did not meet the conditions of a work refusal under the Occupational Health & Safety Act. No orders were issued.

## What do I do if I think I have COVID-19 symptoms or have been in close contact with someone who has it?

Find out if you should visit an assessment centre and where the nearest location is, at the following link:
https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-health-advice/covid-19-assessment-centres/

A number of dedicated assessment centres have been established across Toronto to facilitate assessment and testing.

Due to evidence of community spread of COVID-19 in Toronto, the assessment centres in the Toronto Region will be shifting their focus to people who are at risk of transmitting COVID-19 to large groups of people. Everyone else, even those with mild symptoms who have returned from travel, do not need testing, unless they get sick enough to go to an emergency department.

## When will I need to self-isolate/stay at home?

***Travellers who have returned from anywhere outside Canada, including the United States, should:***

- Self-isolate (i.e. stay at home and avoid close contact with others, including those in their home) for a total of 14 days.
- Call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 or their primary care provider's office if they experience symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, difficulty breathing).
- Call ahead prior to visiting any healthcare provider and let them know about travel history and symptoms (e.g. fever, cough, difficulty breathing) so that they can make special arrangements to see you quickly, provide testing, and ensure that they use proper infection control measures

**This self-isolation is retroactive, and applies to all employees who have travelled outside of Canada and returned to work within the last fourteen days.** For example, if you returned to Canada on Monday, March 9, 2020, you are required to now self-isolate until Monday, March 23, 2020. You can then return to work on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 as long as you do not have any symptoms. Please talk to your Supervisor or Manager for further direction.

***In addition, you will need to stay home and self-isolate if:***

- You are being assessed for COVID-19 infection by a healthcare provider.
- You have a lab-confirmed COVID-19 infection, do not require hospitalization, and a medical practitioner has indicated that you can recover at home.
- TTC has instructed you to do so.

## What is the difference between self-monitoring, self-isolation, and isolation? How do I know if I should be actively doing one of these?

See the infographic published by the Government of Canada which describes the key differences available at the following link: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/self-monitoring-self-isolation-isolation-for-covid-19.html. Also attached are information sheets from Toronto Public Health on how to self-monitor and self-isolate.

## What measures can I take to keep me and my family safe?

It is important to know that we all have the possibility of exposure to the virus and do not know exactly where it is or where it may be. Each and every one of us has the tools necessary to prevent the spread of infection, and a responsibility to use them.

This includes continuing to practice good infection prevention and control practices to help protect against getting sick and spreading illness these practices include:

- Washing your hands frequently with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Covering your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough.
- Sneezing or coughing into your sleeve or arm if you do not have a tissue.
- Staying home if you are sick.
- If you have travelled outside of Canada, self-isolate for 14 days from the day you arrived home.
- If neighbours or family members need supplies, then help them, but practice social distancing.
- If you need to take public transit to access health or necessary goods or services, practice physical distancing.

Every opportunity to avoid interactions with others helps to prevent the spread of this disease.

### What is Physical Distancing?

According to TPH, physical distancing means limiting the number of people you come into close contact with and includes the following:

- Go outside for essential trips only such as groceries, work and exercise.
- Keep a distance of 2 metres (6 feet) from others.
- Cancel all group gatherings.
- No parties or playdates with other children.
- Do not visit friends or family in long-term care homes, retirement homes or other care settings.
- Avoid crowded parks and playgrounds.
- Greet others with a wave, a bow or a nod (in place of handshakes or hugs).
- Sanitize or wash your hands when entering and exiting buildings.
- No more than three people per elevator and use an elbow to press buttons if you can.
- When taking public transit, avoid prolonged close contact with others. Travel during non-peak hours and take shorter trips rather than one long trip.
- Work from home, if feasible.
- Facilitate virtual meetings (video or teleconferencing).

According to TPH, physical distancing is **not**:

- Having friends over for dinner or coffee.
- Arranging playdates for your kids.
- Visiting friends and family in long-term care homes, or hospital.
- Stopping at a grocery store to stock up after travel, including travel to the United States.
- Playing soccer, or basketball with friends
- Going out for a group walk or run

When it comes to the workplace, physical distancing can also include the following:

- Stop handshaking as a greeting
- Hold meetings via video conferencing or phone call
- Defer large meetings
- Hold essential meetings outside in the open air if possible
- Re-arranging workstations so that the space between employees is maximized
- Take lunch at your desk or outside rather than in the lunch room
- Staggering employee start and end times to minimize employee overlap
- Staggering employee breaks and lunch times to minimize employee overlap
- Utilizing satellite reporting locations to minimize the congregation of large groups at the beginning and end of shifts
- Reducing lunch room furniture and spacing existing furniture out so that employees can maintain at least 2 metres distance from each other while eating
- Rotating on-site employees to minimize the number of staff on-site at the same time
- Minimizing how many employees travel in fleet vehicles (2 maximum, 1 person per bench.) For vehicles with no back seat, only 1 person should be in the vehicle.

## Where do I get reliable information?

Inaccurate information continues to spread and it is creating an unnecessary stigma against members of our community. Discrimination is not acceptable. Employees are reminded that the Respect and Dignity in the Workplace Policy still applies during these stressful times. It is imperative that people check credible, evidence-based sources to get the facts when seeking information.

The TTC Safety and Environment Department continues to post a number of information / resource documents on their home page. See the link on the TTC Intranet Homepage or the Safety and Environment Department website:
http://intranet.int.ttc.ca/ceo/safety/Pages/Coronavirus-Outbreak-Updates.aspx

All employees have access to COVID-19 resources on any device at ttc.ca/EmployeeHealth.

More information about coronavirus is also available from Toronto Public Health at:

https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/diseases-medications-vaccines/coronavirus/

Health Canada has also prepared “Frequently Asked Questions” at: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/frequently-asked-questions.html

## Questions?

A TTC email has been set up for COVID-19 questions at COVID-19.Info@ttc.ca. You can also ccontact the Occupational Hygiene and Environment Section.

If you think you have COVID-19 symptoms or have been in close contact with someone who has it, find out if you should visit an assessment centre and where the nearest location is, as mentioned above.

If you have any questions related to your personal health, please contact your family doctor or Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000. Toronto Public Health has also set up a coronavirus hotline that provides the public with a place to get information, ask questions about this virus and connect with a health professional at 416-338-7600.

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