

Members please note the following is a Government of Alberta document that we are posting for information only. AUPE has expressed concern that worksite hazard assessments will be conducted solely by management and exclude workers' involvement to the Public Service Commissioner's office. We will update you when we receive their response.

Government of Alberta

Re-entry to the Workplace FAQs (updated June 25, 2020)

Answers to frequently asked questions regarding re-entry to the workplace.

Timeline

When do I need to stop working remotely and return to my workplace?

- The timing of your workplace re-entry depends on your department's plan. Departments will identify types of work and positions that will start to transition back to the workplace. You will receive specifics from your supervisor.

Personal Safety

How do I know that my workplace is safe, including workstation and common areas of my building?

- Each department is developing a return to the workplace plan that focuses on the health and safety of employees by following the Chief Medical Officer of Health's advice and protocols around physical distancing within the workplace, individual responsibilities on awareness for symptoms, hand hygiene, cleaning, and ongoing communication between supervisors and staff.
- Before employees return to the workplace, the manager will update the worksite hazard assessment to identify and control any hazards (related to COVID-19).
- Employee safety will be achieved by ensuring:
 - adequate supplies of hand-sanitizer and disinfectant wipes, and other PPE identified in the work site hazard assessment, such as masks, required for certain positions because physical distancing cannot be maintained
 - clean workspaces – this is a joint responsibility and employees are responsible for cleaning cubicles and office equipment and surfaces after use
 - physical distancing guidelines are followed
 - communication cues in place, for example signs, decals, and tape markings on the floor, as needed

I'm a manager, how do I make sure the workplace is safe for my staff?

- The Government of Alberta Return to the Workplace Manager Guide provides information and outlines steps to protect employees and clients from COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Wellness, Health and Safety (WHS) consultants are assigned to each department to assist managers in fulfilling their obligations under the Government of Alberta

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) program.

What if my family member or I am personally at high risk? Can I continue to work from home?

- If you state that you have a pre-existing health condition that aligns to those identified by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, please discuss options for continuing work with your manager.
- While we are still learning about COVID-19, serious illness appears to develop more often in people who are older or have pre-existing conditions, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes.

Will staff be required to complete a self-assessment before starting work each day? Are there criteria to consider for when this practice might be appropriate?

- All workers returning to the workplace are expected to assess their health as it relates to COVID-19 symptoms daily. If symptoms are suspected, employees can complete the AHS Self Assessment form found at alberta.ca and connect with 811.
- There are workplaces in the Government of Alberta in a small number of departments that are using a more formal health assessment process attached to a pandemic plan and other specific procedures designed specifically for the business area. Please confirm with your supervisor (or contact your Wellness, Health and Safety consultant if you require further assistance).

How will I know that my work colleagues are not sick?

- Managers are expected to check in frequently with their team to ensure that they are feeling well and to provide guidance on the completion of the [self-assessment tool](#) or call [Health Link 811](#).

Will I be required to wear a mask at work?

- Employees will only be required to wear a mask at work if a hazard assessment determines it is a requirement. Voluntary use of a mask is acceptable.
- Each worksite and plan will take into consideration factors such as pod design and ability to physically distance from others.

If my worksite requires masks, can I opt not to wear one if I am claustrophobic and cannot breathe in a mask?

- Masks are not required in most GoA workplaces; however, they may be required as per your work site's hazard assessment. You are encouraged to discuss any concerns with your manager.

What amount of hand sanitizer is safe to use before it potentially starts to affect employees' hands/skin?

- As per Chief Medical Officer of Health, everyone should be practicing regular hand washing with soap. Hand sanitizers are personal care products considered safe for users under normal and reasonably foreseeable use. There is a remote possibility of allergies to alcohol products, in that case, the employee may wear gloves and regularly wash hands with soap.

Workplace Safety

If my building now has 300 people in it, does this not violate the mass gathering rule?

- Buildings that are not otherwise restricted or ordered to close can have more than 50 people onsite at an indoor location. Staff working on different floors are not considered to be part of the same gathering.
- Government of Alberta owned or leased workspace for Alberta Public Service employees follow the direction and advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and take precautions as required. Department plans will ensure physical distancing can be met.

How can I physically distance in an elevator?

- Each building will have rules around physical distancing in elevators and signs in the lobby will support the physical distancing while waiting for the elevator and once in the elevator.
- You should be prepared for delays and more time needed at the beginning of the workday, lunch break, travel throughout, and end of your workday to allow for minimal numbers of people in elevators.

How will physical distancing work with cubicles and narrow hallways?

- Departments will follow building restrictions in accordance with the Chief Medical Officer of Health. Floor markings, signage, Plexiglas where warranted and other supports will provide hazard controls.
- Employees with standing features on their desk in a cubicle environment are asked not to use that feature during the re-entry.
- Employees are encouraged to continue using instant messaging, phone, email and meet virtually using online tools like Webex for conversations to maintain physical distance.

Are we required to attend meetings in boardrooms?

- In the initial re-entry, managers are asked to continue virtual meetings. If in-person attendance is required, the meeting location is to have cleaners, disinfectants, and hand sanitizers and the room's tables, chairs, and electronic equipment must be wiped down before and after the meeting. The space must allow for physical distancing of 2 meters per person, and begin with a health and safety briefing.

What should a receptionist or employee do if a visitor refuses to use hand sanitizer?

- This will be addressed on a case-by-case basis and direction should be led by the employee's supervisor or manager.

Are worksites expected to arrange a deep clean before bringing staff back to the office?

- All facilities will be cleaned in advance of a formal return to the workplace date (this will follow the COVID cleaning protocol and focus on common areas and shared use space).
- Cleaning supplies will also be provided by Infrastructure on this first day for individuals to wipe down personal work spaces and areas.

Will I be provided with cleaning supplies to clean my desk daily? Who cleans the photocopier?

- Employees share the responsibility of ensuring their workspace, common areas, and equipment such as photocopiers are clean after use. Employees will have access to cleaning and disinfecting supplies to clean items such as desks, chairs, keyboards, and monitors.

Will common areas like kitchens and washrooms be modified to ensure a safe environment?

- All employees share the responsibility of keeping their work areas and communal areas clear. Use of communal equipment, such as drinking fountains and coffee machines, will be restricted and items such as disposable or reusable cups, stir sticks, cutlery or paper products will be removed. Use of kettles, microwaves, fridges, vending machines, and water coolers, will also be limited.
- Ideally, employees should be bring and store their own food and supplies. Communal food items such as coffee, tea, milk, cream and sugar will be removed.

Transit

I take public transit to work. I am uncomfortable taking the bus. Will the GoA provide me with parking?

- Employees are responsible for their own transportation to and from work and securing parking arrangements.

Child Care

I have been asked to return to the worksite but do not have adequate childcare, am I still required to return?

- Employees can access licensed daycare and out-of-school programs that have opened as part of Alberta's relaunch strategy.
- If you have ongoing childcare concerns please speak to your manager to discuss options.

- Employees have a number of leave entitlements available including vacation days, personal days, banked time, management supplement time or sick leave if applicable. Leave without pay is also an option for COVID-19 related needs and jobs are protected.

Resources

Where can I find more information about dealing with COVID-19 in the workplace?

- Resources are available for employees on the [Mental Health and Addiction Supports](#) page in MyAPS
- Resources for managers and supervisors are available in the Manager Information section.
- [YouTube](#)