

RENOVATOR GUIDE



Ontario
Home Builders'
Association

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Operation During Covid-19

As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Ontario Home Builders' Association has developed this guide to help renovator members adapt their Health and Safety protocol and procedures.

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Renovator Guide

OPERATION DURING COVID-19

STANDARD PROTOCOLS FOR ALL CANADIAN CONSTRUCTION SITES

As described by the Canadian Construction Association (CCA), a set of [standard protocol](#) is in place to ensure construction sites maintain the health and safety of workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

When creating your protocols, we have found that the [Infrastructure Health and Safety Association \(IHSA\)](#) has valuable resources, documents and videos to support your enhanced COVID-19 health and safety policies. These tools can help educate your colleagues, partners, employees and clients.

In efforts to minimize the impact of COVID-19 and ensure businesses remain open, this document focuses on communication, on-site expectations and response measures.

It is advised to adhere to any best practices set out by [federal](#), [provincial](#) and municipal public health authorities where applicable. Posting of policies is encouraged, to promote communication and education for all employees, contractors, trades and clients. Clear signage at site entrances and access points should include workplace policies such as:

- [Covid-19 awareness notice](#)
- Best practice policies as per [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) including hand washing, physical distancing and personal protective equipment (PPE) expectations while working
- [Screening protocol, and sign-in/out sheets](#)
- How work is being scheduled including key contact info

It should be noted that this is not a legal document, and it is advised to seek legal advice where appropriate.

CLIENT COMMUNICATION

Prevention includes not only best-practices while operating on a job site, but also protocol for communication while off site dealing with clients, suppliers or trades.

Health and Safety Policies

Suggested policies to be posted and shared electronically with clients, trades and employees:

- Scheduling of meetings, site access, deliveries, including project lead contact info
- [Screening tool](#) for workers on a daily or weekly basis to ensure safety, including a homeowner declaration, or attestation of good health from homeowners
- [Illness notification policy](#)
- [Practicing proper hygiene](#), following recommended best practices for reducing the risk of transmission such as hand washing and physical distancing
- [On-site sanitation protocol](#) for all shared touch points, including washrooms, communal areas or [shared tools](#)

Client Communications

Communication with Site Supervisor or other renovation team staff should occur while practicing physical distancing. Clients are expected to sign in and complete required attestations when entering the work zone. Site access should be scheduled by appointment only, arranged with project lead. Where possible, communications are expected to be done electronically to promote physical distancing. This includes:

- Telephone or video conferencing app should be prioritized to hold meetings with site supervisor in the designated work area and homeowner in their living quarters
- Use of electronic submissions where possible to avoid handling hard copies
- Material selections, change orders, and other approvals required from clients should be done while maintaining 6' physical distancing guidelines with approvals recorded in a contactless manner such as email, text, or contractor supplied project management software or portal

Meeting expectations should be conveyed to prospective clients ahead of the scheduled date, with all parties agreeing to and completing COVID screening. When conditions prevent physical distancing, PPE should be used by all parties. Minimize the number of attendees in person, as some people may be able to attend remotely, or host outdoors while maintaining appropriate 6ft (2m) physical distancing guidelines. Maintain proper hygiene practices as laid out by public health authorities (including hand washing and avoid touching your face) and consider the use of face-coverings.

ON-SITE EXPECTATIONS

The health and safety of workers and homeowners is the priority while navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. This requires an increased focus on health and safety considerations while working on renovation-specific projects.

Site Access

Clients should be discouraged from entering the work site when work is being performed and agreed upon times for client visits should be posted or documented electronically.

Expectation that homeowners will comply with all company policies:

- Sign-In/Out
- Notify of any illness
- Submit declaration of health as requested by Contractor
- Access to work areas will be by appointment only in advance, requiring a sign-in sheet and cleaning of shared touch points
- Wear a face-covering when in areas of work

Renovator expectations:

- Provide very-clear schedules of who will be in home at what times
- Staggering schedules of trades on site can help to limit the number of people working at once
- Health screening
- Communicate in advance if there will be any work required off schedule
- Create a policy for deliveries of materials that occur when no one from company is present

Working in Occupied Spaces

A physical separation between work area/client living area should be created when possible. The workspace can be segregated by floors when possible or by using sheets of polyethylene as temporary barrier as it creates a physical barrier while still allowing for verbal communication and interactions less than 6' apart. As much as possible visits to the work zone should be completed outside of active construction hours.

Where possible, dedicate one entrance/exit for the workers. Sanitize the entrance touch points prior to entering the space to begin the scheduled work, during the scheduled work, and at the end of the scheduled work period to secure the entrance and exit.

Sanitation/Hand Washing/Face Covering

For projects lasting longer than two days, portable toilets and designated wash stations would be required or a designated/segregated washroom provided as an alternative. [Daily cleaning requirements](#) should be considered, including the use of a cleaning log. Communal areas should be cleaned regularly and logged daily. On weekends, the homeowner should be held responsible for cleaning of communal spaces.

The use of hand washing, sanitizer and proper hygiene protocol as discussed by public health organizations should be adhered to. Currently under [OHSA 213/91](#), PPE is the responsibility of the employer to enforce, however trades may be asked to be responsible for their own face covering, which is recommended for site

use. Non-touch, marked [disposal containers](#) with sealable lids should be designated for PPE as suggested by the Ministry of Labor (MOL) or Ontario Public Health.

Work Requiring Less than 2m Separation

The use of enhanced PPE when workers, sub-trades and suppliers are unable to follow physical distancing guidelines is suggested. When possible, limit the number of workers on site by restricting where workers can work while staggering work start and finish times. In situations where maintaining a 6ft (2m) distance between workers is not possible the use of temporary barriers such as poly or another non-porous material should be considered. If the work is deemed essential, appropriate PPE should be utilized to protect all workers from infection. Upon completion of the task PPE should be properly sanitized or discarded as required.

Working Within Condo Suites and Common Elements

Additional considerations when working in condo suites or common elements include:

- Adhere to the condominium board or facility rules while working, including any prescribed PPE.
- Store used and dispose of PPE as regulated by MOL, local health department, municipality, and/or provinces guidelines
- Use of service elevators and corridors when available, preferably without mixing companies/building staff/residents
- No more than two workers in an elevator at any given time
- Ensure delivery plans are scheduled in advance and inform condominium management
- Use loading docks when available
- Work with the condo management to create a designated staging area
- In the case of complete water shutoff or a lack of an authorized washroom within a suite, the contractor must make sure there is an adequate washroom facility that is approved and provided by the condominium

Confined Spaces

For low-rise residential renovations this would include trenching, working in trenches and working in crawl spaces. Follow the prescribed MOL and OBC regulations, while limiting the number of people working within these spaces so that 2m (6ft) distancing can be maintained. Limit the entry and exit to one person at a time and consider additional PPE requirements. The use of a separate sign in/out document for those working in these spaces should be utilized.

RESPONSE MEASURES

The inclusion of clear detection and response measures should be demonstrated to protect against COVID-19 and reduce the risk of infection and site shut down. This risk extends to subcontractors, suppliers and deliveries, inspectors and homeowners, and should be considered in the development of a response plan.

Additional guidance can be found on the [Government of Ontario's Resources to Prevent COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) web page.

Response Plan

Renovators should consider a response plan for individuals and clients who have been potentially exposed to the virus. This would include those who may be exhibiting symptoms identified by public health authorities. Should either instance occur, the expectations are:

- Contact health authorities for direction
- Notify supervisor/HR, homeowner
- Self-isolate
- Quarantine as required
- Return to work only when approved

Individuals who begin to display flu-like symptoms on site are instructed to avoid touching anything, take extra care to contain coughs and sneezes, and return home immediately to undergo self-isolation as directed by the local health authority.

All areas on site potentially infected by a confirmed or probable case are barricaded to keep individuals two meters away until the area is properly cleaned and disinfected.

CONTRACTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

This information is not meant to replace the advice of a lawyer. All companies have different requirements and require specific advice. For the following scenarios, potential considerations and suggestions on how best to respond to the situation are provided.

Where the existing contract is in place and work is continuing

1. Experiencing minor to negligible delays:
 - a. Review any delay provisions in the current contract and seeking legal advice if required
 - b. Keep lines of communication open with Client
 - c. Plan ahead of schedule and keep entire team in the loop
 - d. Outline the COVID-19 Health and Safety protocols you are putting in place to move forward with the contractual work, along with outlining and documenting the client expectations during the COVID-19 State of Emergency
 - e. Document any potential Building Department or potential delays that are related to COVID-19 State of Emergency that are not currently covered by the existing contract
2. Experiencing significant delays but project ongoing:
 - a. Review any delay provisions in the current contract and seeking legal advice if required
 - b. Keep lines of communication open with Client

- c. Plan to setup meeting with Clients after advice from lawyer is received to discuss options on how to move forward
- d. Outline the COVID-19 Health and Safety protocols you are putting in place to move forward with the contractual work, along with outlining and documenting the client expectations during the COVID-19 State of Emergency
- e. Document any potential Building Department or potential delays that are related to COVID-19 State of Emergency that are not currently covered by the existing contract

Where the existing contract is in place and work has ceased due to COVID-19

3. Client has decided to delay work:
 - a. Review any delay provisions in the current contract and seeking legal advice if required
 - b. Keep lines of communication open with Client
 - c. Plan to setup meeting with Clients after advice from lawyer is received to discuss options on how to move forward
 - d. Outline the COVID-19 Health and Safety protocols you are putting in place to move forward with the contractual work, along with outlining and documenting the client expectations during the COVID-19 State of Emergency
 - e. Document any potential Building Department or potential delays that are related to COVID-19 State of Emergency that are not currently covered by the existing contract
 - f. Set out a plan for restart for the Client that is acceptable
 - g. If Client has determined that they project cannot proceed due to concerns related to COVID-19 and has asked you to leave the project
 - i. Seek immediate advice from your lawyer
 - ii. Advise subtrades and project team of issue and possible outcomes

New contract negotiation

4. Review contract with your lawyer to possibly include the following:
 - a. Force Majeure Clause – a clause which temporarily excuses a party from performing its contractual obligations where an unexpected event impacts performance
 - b. Delay Clause – a clause which can be used to extend the time to perform the contract with or without compensation
 - c. Termination Clause – a clause which includes a default notice provision where a party may terminate the contract if the work is suspended or delayed for a certain number of days
 - d. Dispute Resolution Clause – this clause allows for disputes to be resolved out of court by mediation or arbitration

REFERENCE SUMMARY

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2. IHSA Website
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4. Provincial Construction Site Health and Safety During COVID-19 Website
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 - Practicing Proper Hygiene
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<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/910213>
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<https://www.ontario.ca/page/resources-prevent-covid-19-workplace>