

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services

Guidance on Health and Safety for the Golf Course Sector during COVID-19

OVERVIEW

This is not a legal document and employers are advised to seek legal advice.

Employers and supervisors have obligations to protect workers from hazards in the workplace as set out in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its regulations. In addition, a person responsible for a place of business has obligations under the *Emergency Measures and Civil Protection Act* (EMCPA) to operate in compliance with the advice, recommendations and instructions of public health officials.

Workers should raise any concerns to their:

- supervisor
- joint health and safety committee
- health and safety representative

This will help ensure the employer has taken all reasonable precautions.

Ontario is currently in the midst of a global pandemic. While the COVID-19 situation is changing rapidly, the legislation and regulations used to govern Ontario's workplaces are not.

Under the OHSA, employers have a duty to take every precaution reasonable to protect the health and safety of all workers. Workers have the right to refuse unsafe work. If health and safety concerns are not resolved internally, a worker can file a complaint with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skill Development's Health and Safety Contact Centre at 1-877-202-0008.

BEST PRACTICES

We know that every workplace is unique. That makes it so important that every workplace assess functions carried out by their workforce to ensure they take action to protect against the hazards presented by COVID-19.

Things like practicing physical distancing (staying 2 metres away from others), proper hand hygiene, keeping surfaces and objects clean, and preventing contact with potentially infected people – these are all critically important measures. Other information on how you can protect yourself is available on ontario.ca/coronavirus.

We have provided some protection advice below for your consideration. Please keep in mind that introducing any new protective measures should be done as part of a full review of other workplace hazards – not just COVID 19 alone. Employers should consult with Joint Health and Safety Committees/Health and Safety Representatives in the workplace on measures to protect workers in the workplace. We want to ensure we enhance our safety, not cause other issues.

Some workplaces already have some existing controls in place that may help reduce the risk of exposure to workers as well, so regular 'check-ins' on how controls are helping is highly recommended.

RECOGNIZE HAZARD/ASSESS RISKS

COVID-19 can travel in respiratory droplets that are released into the environment by laughing, coughing, sneezing, close contact with an infected person or touching contaminated items and then touching your face. For golf course workers, we recognize that you will have contact with customers and co-workers, as well as contact with surfaces, such as money, credit cards, carts, golf equipment, machinery and products as you work. You could potentially come in contact with droplets from these interactions.

Take a look at where you might minimize those risks within your workplace. Consult public health information to learn the symptoms of COVID-19 infection. Recognize and report these hazards and use appropriate controls. Ensure that you inform your employer if you have symptoms and stay home.

We understand – so it's important to see where you can possibly minimize those risks within your workplace. Take a look at the controls below to see how they may assist you.

CONTROLS

To protect yourself and golf course workers from exposure to COVID-19 here are some options:

- Proper handwashing is key. Use [good hand washing technique](#) and avoid touching your face. Extra handwashing is a good idea for everyone – and when that's not possible, a hand sanitizer with minimum alcohol content of 60% should be used frequently. Disinfect your hands after interacting with co-workers or completing tasks. Be sure to keep an adequate supply of soap, paper towels, etc.
- Everyone should be trained on possible COVID-19 transmission points in the workplace, what steps are being taken to protect them, and how they can protect themselves, including good handwashing technique and proper hand hygiene, sanitizing practices and not touching their face.
- Employers can screen golf workers regularly for health issues. If anyone develop symptoms of COVID-19, implement procedures for reporting the illness and keeping the worker away from others. For further guidance on screening procedures, consult the [Ministry of Health](#).
- People who are sick or have signs of illness (e.g. fever, coughing, sneezing, runny nose, tiredness, shortness of breath) **should self-isolate**, notify their employer and call a doctor or healthcare provider*.
- Screen golfers prior to entry onto the course for signs of illness and restrict entry if illness is detected.
- Are there tasks you can minimize or eliminate? For example, can non-essential projects be eliminated or postponed?
- Can you control the number of people you interact with at one time? Minimize or eliminate exposures from payment transactions by having golfers book tee times and pre-pay online or use credit, debit or e-transfer, if possible
- Ensure physical distancing is observed by employees and golfers, with a minimum of 2 metres maintained between individuals. Consider the following measures:
 - Establish clear visuals to show where golfers may park, pay, and proceed safely to first tee etc. while maintaining physical distancing (more than 2 metres) between individuals at all times.
 - Manage traffic flow and physical distancing with barriers and floor markings.
 - Stagger tee times to avoid congestion.
 - Practice physical distancing (staying 2 metres away from others) during job activities; encourage golfers to practice physical distancing during play.
 - Assign staff to ensure customers are following physical distancing protocols, especially in areas likely to be congested.
 - Consider multiple trips when transporting workers or consider the use of a second vehicle.
 - Consider installing barriers or partitions between yourself and other co-workers within vehicles (for example – gators)
 - Practice physical distancing in break areas considering having visuals like signs to mark 2 metres between seats.
 - Limit the number of people in a workspace and reconfigure workspace to ensure 2 metres physical distance between individuals.
 - Control how many customers enter the pro shop etc. at one time (monitor entry/exit). Consider restricting pro shop or other retail operations to on-line shopping only with curbside pickup or delivery. Refer to [additional guidelines](#) for cashiers, curbside pickup and delivery services, and retail sector.

- Consider job rotation. For example, reduce the number of workers completing a task and establish a rotation to share the workload.
- For vehicles and equipment, like golf carts
 - Limit golf cart use to one cart per golfer; and consider providing sanitizing wipes for customers
 - Ensure you have a procedure in place to thoroughly disinfect golf carts between each use.
 - For enclosed vehicles, use the climate control system or open windows to improve fresh air intake/air circulation. Increased airflow can reduce contaminant build up.
 - Try to limit the number of workers using golf course equipment. If possible, assign each worker to their own piece of equipment, (e.g. fairway mowers, leaf blower, turf sprayers etc.).
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- For your customers:
 - To eliminate transmission via surfaces such as flag poles and cups, leave the flag in place and elevate the cup at each hole so that the ball does not drop into the hole. Play is concluded when the ball makes contact with the cup.¹
 - Remove water fountains and/or ball washers. If equipment cannot be physically removed, take it out of service to prevent use.
 - Provide a safe place for customers to dispose of used sanitizing wipes and personal protective equipment (PPE).
 - Provide hand sanitizer for customers to use upon entry as well as sanitizing wipes to use on carts and hand held baskets. Provide portable hand washing stations where possible.
- Increase the cleaning frequency of your workspace – on everything from vehicle door handles to commonly touched surfaces like cell phones, keys, golf course equipment, powered hand tools, steering wheels, and radio controls. Be sure to follow safe practices regarding cleaning times and cleaning agent. Public Health Ontario offers more information on [cleaning and disinfection](#) protocols.
- Provide customer facing staff with hand sanitizer for their use only when receiving deliveries, interacting with the golfers etc.
- For advice regarding food service at a golf course please refer to [additional guidelines](#) for Food Retail sector, Restaurant Servers, Cooks and Dishwashers.
- Keep up with the best. Consider regular times to check in with public health updates and retrain/revise practices as needed.
- Ensure that measures you decide on are well communicated to golfers and customers before arrival, onsite and throughout play.

As a last resort, consider Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), which is effective only if it's appropriate for the situation following a risk assessment and when workers wear it correctly. Ensure PPE training includes the fit, use, care, putting on and taking off, maintenance, cleaning and limitations of the PPE as per manufacturer's instructions.

Some examples of PPE that may be suited to golf course workers would include:

Gloves – can help limit contact with equipment, surfaces etc. Be sure to set up practices for proper use and removal, as well as disposal for changing when soiled. It's also important to consider other hazards that may be present in the workplace before introducing gloves. In some cases, gloves can be an 'entanglement' hazard and should not be worn.

¹ Re-Open Saskatchewan: A plan to re-open the provincial economy, Updated May 1, 2020, page 37, "Golf Course Guidelines"
<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/re-open-saskatchewan-plan/re-open-saskatchewan>

Goggles or face shield – can help with barriers and separation too. They should be assigned to workers and not shared and can be used regularly if kept clean. Ensure the goggle or face shield use does not result in workers touching their faces more often because of heat or discomfort.

Respiratory protection is not the first line of defense against COVID-19. Please continue to monitor Public Health Ontario for respiratory protection advice.

EVALUATION

COVID-19 has presented challenges workplaces have never encountered before. Keep in mind that any adjustments made today may need readjusting tomorrow. Look at preventative measures on an ongoing basis, and adjust them if they are not working well enough or causing other issues. For example, are people doing what they've been asked to do? If not, what is preventing them from doing so? Can you make adjustments and improve?

*For anyone who thinks they may have been exposed to or are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, please start by visiting the Ministry of Health's website and taking a self-assessment: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/#q0>. Please do not visit an assessment centre unless you have been referred by a health care professional. Do not call 911 unless it is an emergency.

For additional information, refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada's website on COVID-19: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html?topic=tilelink>

RESOURCES

Stay updated with daily government updates on COVID-19:

[Government of Ontario](#)

[Government of Canada](#)

[Public Health Ontario](#)

For more information visit www.wsps.ca/COVID19

NOTE: This document is intended for informational purposes only to provide an overview of the potential hazards posed in the workplace due to COVID-19. It is not intended as medical advice, to provide a comprehensive risk assessment for all workplaces, or to replace any legislated workplace safety obligations. Due to the ongoing evolution of the situation in Ontario and around the world, this document may be used as a guide for Employers in addition to guidance delivered by public health authorities such as the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), [Ontario Ministry of Health](#), [Public Health Ontario](#) and the [Centres for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).⁷ Any use which is made of this document by any Employer, or any reliance on or decisions to be made based on it, are the responsibility of the Employer. WSPS and its partners, officers, directors, employees, agents, representatives, suppliers and service providers accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions in content or for damages of any kind or nature suffered by any Employer or any third party as a result of use of or reliance on this communication.