

PROTECTING WORKERS

from COVID-19

SECURITY GUARDS



What hazards do security guards face in this pandemic?

The COVID-19 pandemic increases hazards for security guards including: exposure to the coronavirus itself, potential for more frustrated people, extra duties such as controlling who gets into a location, store or hospital, as well as new cleaning responsibilities using sanitizing and disinfecting chemicals – sometimes incorrectly and without attention to their hazards.

How should security guards be protected during the pandemic?

Employers are required by law to provide healthy and safe workplaces. This includes finding ways to prevent exposure to COVID-19. All workplaces should have a pandemic plan developed with the workplace health and safety committee which includes both workers and employers.

1. Increase physical distance for everyone

The distance between anyone in the workplace should be 2 metres/6.5 feet from others, especially for more than a few minutes in a closed space. **This can be achieved by:**

- ✓ staggered times for workers to arrive, take breaks, leave, etc.
- ✓ dedicated work areas, tools and equipment for each person.
- ✓ policies and procedures to control and monitor numbers of people entering a building or site
- ✓ protocols in non-healthcare settings about turning away people who may be ill, and in healthcare settings about the role of guards around those who may be sick
- ✓ visual clues about distances (e.g., tape, paint, cones) for line-ups (inside and outside), on the floor around reception desks, or other spaces where guards sit or stand
- ✓ designated delivery areas and entrances
- ✓ touchless devices to verify identification, accept deliveries, etc.
- ✓ fewer people at trainings and meetings or use technology for online meetings
- ✓ extra spaces (inside and/or out) for breaks, with spaced-apart seats in break and meeting areas

HOW COVID-19 IS SPREAD



The virus gets into the air when people with it sneeze, cough, shout, sing, and/or talk loudly. Sometimes it just takes sick people breathing in our direction. The longer and closer we are to someone infected with the virus, the greater the possibility we will get it.

There are two main ways to pick-up the virus. The most common is inhaling infected particles in the air. The other is touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth. The virus can stay in the air and on surfaces from a few hours to several days, depending on air movements and the material.

To avoid contact between people, methods include:

- ✓ plexiglass at reception desks, delivery windows
- ✓ technology such as walk-through metal detectors instead of hand-held wands, or electronic delivery documents that can be viewed on a tablet or other device
- ✓ ask people to sign in with their own pen

If guards must handle ID to verify identification, they should use nitrile gloves. After each person, they should use alcohol-based hand sanitizer on the gloves, check gloves regularly and replace often.

Signs should explain the increased distance and reduced contact rules. Other signs should clearly state that no form of violence/abuse will be tolerated.

2. Clean more and sanitize and disinfect as needed – *with safer products*

Increased cleaning can reduce the spread of the virus. People with proper training, equipment, and protection should clean dirty and high-touch spots frequently.

CLEANING, SANITIZING & DISINFECTING



What are the differences?

CLEANING: Physically removes dirt and germs on surfaces or objects using soap/detergent, water and friction. **This must be done before sanitizing and disinfecting.**

SANITIZING*: Reduces germs on surfaces to levels considered safe for public health.

DISINFECTING*: Destroys almost all germs when used on a surface as label directs. Some affect only viruses, others only bacteria, and some get rid of both.

*Products must be registered with Health Canada or the US EPA and should be approved to kill coronavirus.

For more information read "Safer Cleaning Practices for the Workplace" at mflohc.mb.ca/covid-19

3. Have the right personal protective equipment (PPE)

Personal protective equipment is essential in a pandemic. The employer must supply it and make sure it is right for the job and fits the worker.

The PPE workers need depends on the setting. Examples include:

- ✓ good nitrile gloves and surgical masks (to protect others) when social distancing is not possible
- ✓ coveralls and eye coverings for guards who clean, and a respirator if using toxic disinfectants
- ✓ N95 respirator and coverings for clothes should be provided for guards likely to be near sick people



Disposable gloves should be changed frequently:

- ✓ workers should wash hands before and after changing gloves
- ✓ remove gloves before eating, using the bathroom, touching the face or smoking
- ✓ soiled gloves must be replaced, and any used gloves should go in a lined waste container
- ✓ training should be provided on how to properly put on and take off gloves

Due to potential for increased aggression during the pandemic, employers should also provide slash vests for guards.

If there's a problem with any PPE or other protections, report it immediately to a supervisor.

4. Frequent hand washing

One of the best ways to remove the virus is washing hands with soap and water. All workers need easy access to bathrooms with warm running water, and enough supplies of soap and paper towels to wash hands:

- ✓ when they arrive and leave work
- ✓ before and after eating or taking breaks before putting on and after taking off PPE (especially masks and gloves)
- ✓ after close contact with people, surfaces, equipment or tools
- ✓ after blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing

When that's not possible, hand sanitizers (60-80% ethanol/ethyl alcohol or 60-75% isopropyl alcohol/isopropanol) must be available. Touchless dispensers are best. If the product doesn't include hand lotion, workers need separate water-based hand lotion – without fragrances – to avoid chapping/dry skin.

Hand sanitizer and gloves do not replace good handwashing practices.



5. Cleaning work clothes, equipment

Employers should provide more than one properly-fitted uniform for workers to ensure they can be washed after each shift. Many guards clean their own uniforms. When taking off work clothes:

- ✓ handle as little as possible, with no shaking
- ✓ put wet items into a leak-proof container
- ✓ if there is a known or suspected virus, wear appropriate PPE, including gloves, gowns, face covering.
- ✓ wash clothes in the warmest water possible with regular detergent and dry thoroughly.

Keys, radios and equipment should be cleaned with microfibre cloths. Disinfect them after close contact with someone known or suspected of having COVID-19.



6. Clear job descriptions and hazard assessments for extra duties

In this pandemic, one of the most difficult things guards face is the addition of extra duties, often without negotiating changes. All work should be in line with job descriptions. Workers should notify their employers right away about new requests on job sites to discuss hazard assessments, information, training and protection

7. Keep sick people out of the workplace

Workplace policies need to be updated to ensure:

- ✓ there are no incentives or pressures to come to work
- ✓ paid, flexible leave/benefits
- ✓ workers who are more likely to get sick, or are pregnant, can stay home without losing pay or seniority
- ✓ there is no retaliation or penalty for reporting symptoms, or taking sick leave

Other important workplace practices

- ✓ Ventilation systems should be set to take in all fresh air. Recirculated air should go through high-efficiency (HEPA) filters. Intakes and returns need to be cleaned daily and filters changed regularly
- ✓ Worksites need to include security guard workers in briefings or conversations about situations and procedures related to the pandemic. They also need to be clear with other staff about the guard's duties and limits.
- ✓ Allow extra time for workers to do their jobs and take necessary precautions
- ✓ Allow at least 12 hours off between shifts, for travel, rest and sleep
- ✓ Provide hand-washing and rest breaks to sit down during a worker's shift
- ✓ Provide procedures to de-escalate, report and deal with all types of violence (verbal abuse, harassment, bullying, racism, assaults)
- ✓ Provide information to workers about mental health resources available to them



INFORMATION AND TRAINING ARE ESSENTIAL

Employers must give all workers and supervisors information and training about possible job hazards, including special hazards of COVID-19. During the pandemic this includes:

- ✓ the workplace pandemic plan
- ✓ signs and symptoms of the virus, along with reporting symptoms and taking sick leave
- ✓ hand-washing and sanitizers
- ✓ new or changed tasks and procedures (e.g., cleaning, disinfecting), with related hazards and protections
- ✓ PPE – its purpose, limitations, safely putting on and taking off available community mental health resources
- ✓ procedures to de-escalate, report and deal with all types of violence
- ✓ available community mental health resources

Information – including posters – should be easy to understand and provided in the workers' languages.



For additional resources and up-to-date information on Coronavirus (COVID-19) visit:
mflohc.mb.ca/covid-19

FUNDING PROVIDED BY:

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