Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Safety Plan Guidance

As of March 23, 2020

The United States and Canada are enduring a pandemic with significant implications for communities and workplaces. Public health agencies in both countries continue to closely monitor the situation and issue frequent updates and guidance.

Contractors can incorporate the following 3 steps to position themselves for sustainability:

1. **Update expectations to address COVID-19 risks**
2. **Develop plans to minimize exposures**
3. **Prepare for project delays and potential shutdowns**

Update Expectations to Address Risks Presented by COVID-19

A. **General/Prime Contractors**
- Provide means and methods to increase hygiene levels onsite.
- Provide COVID-19 awareness training & orientation covering relevant safety material.
- Conduct status, pre-con, and other meetings online or via conference call and prohibit large gatherings of people.

B. **Subcontractors**
- Develop a hygiene plan to supplement the General/Prime contractors plan.
- Avoid in person meetings when remote meetings are possible.
- Ensure all employees have received training on COVID-19 awareness.

C. **Project Superintendent/Project Manager/Foreman**
- Communicate that all employees must be well to come to work.
- Communicate that any employees feeling ill or exhibiting symptoms will be sent home.
- Ensure handwashing stations are well stocked.

D. **Safety Professionals**

- Communicate and implement recommendations from Center for Disease Control (CDC), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) or Canadian equivalent, World Health Organization (WHO), and other sources as they become available.
- Ensure all employees have received awareness training on COVID-19, including training on how to prevent the spread.
- Review hygiene and Non-Pharmaceutical Intervention (NPI) policies.

E. All Employees
- Report to work only when well.
- If an employee becomes ill while at work, notify the supervisor and seek medical attention.
- Adhere to hygiene practices (see below) & follow NPI policies.

Develop Plans to Minimize Site Exposures

A. "Well" Employees Only Policy
- Require sick employees to stay home – if employees are showing symptoms they should get checked out by a healthcare professional.
- Separate and send home sick employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms – e.g.: cough, shortness of breath – upon arrival to work or who become sick during the day.
- Consider financial restitution for an employee staying home.
  - i. Ensure there is not a personal financial obligation to work while ill.

B. Site Sanitation Policy
- Develop a hand washing / hand sanitizing schedule.
  - i. Upon entry to project.
  - ii. Before & after any breaks.
  - iii. Before ingesting food, eating, drinking, or smoking.
  - iv. After touching common surfaces or shared tools.
  - v. Whenever other NPIs are not effective.
- Enforce sneezing and coughing etiquette, and 6 feet (2m) social distancing.
- Provide multiple hand sanitizing stations throughout the project.
- Ensure adequate soap/sanitizer is stocked.

C. Project Housekeeping Policy
- Sanitizing of commonly touched surfaces must be completed throughout the day.

  i. Establish frequency -Ongoing for larger projects, several times per day for smaller projects.

  ii. Establish common surfaces – Doors, railings, elevators, offices, radios, stair rails, etc. to be cleaned.

  iii. Establish other common touch points – Shared tools, extension cords, portable lighting, material carts, trash hoppers, etc.

- Use of suitable disposable wipes is encouraged. A 10% bleach solution in water is an acceptable disinfectant if disposable wipes are unavailable

D. **Practice Non-Pharmaceutical Intervention (NPI)**

- Communicate and practice Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs)
- Social distancing – keep 6 feet (2m) whenever possible
  - i. Schedule fewer crews on a project
  - ii. Schedule trades to stagger work when they would normally be in the same space simultaneously
  - iii. Consider running "skeleton crews" of only essential employees
- Avoiding personal contact (handshakes, touching, etc.)
- Avoid sharing tools, extension cords, carts, or other common items
- Avoid touching eyes, nose & mouth
- Wash hands frequently
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and then throw away the tissue.
- Eliminate all non-essential interactions with sales reps, vendors, and 3rd parties

Prepare for a Pandemic that Delays or Stops Work

A. Anticipate Project Delays

- Anticipate projects being delayed due to a shortage of workers
  - i. Workers may be unavailable due to illness, caring for ill family members, school closures and the need for childcare, closure of public transportation, and other restriction.
- Anticipate projects being delayed due to a shortage of materials
  - i. Materials from China, Italy, and other areas severely affected by the virus may be unavailable
    - Look to source from other, readily available material suppliers.
- Anticipate projects being delayed due to social distancing and NPI practices
  - i. Fewer employees onsite
    - May need to coordinate multiple, staggered shifts.

  ii. Increased hygiene and necessary cleaning schedules may impact production.

B. **Develop a Disaster Plan That Includes Pandemic Preparedness**

- Be aware of and review federal, regional, and local health department pandemic plans, and integrate into your plan.
- Prepare and plan for operations with a reduced workforce.
- Identify business-essential positions and people required to sustain business-necessary functions and operations. Prepare to cross-train or develop ways to function in the absence of these positions.
- Develop a sick leave policy that does not penalize sick employees, thereby encouraging those who are sick to stay home. Recognize that employees with ill family members may need to stay home to care for them.
- Plan for downsizing services but also anticipate any scenario which may require a surge in your services.
- Recognize that, in the course of normal daily life, all employees will have non-occupational risk factors at home and in community settings.
- Provide employees and projects with easy access to infection control supplies.
- Develop policies and practices that distance employees from each other, customers and the general public.
- Identify a team to serve as a communication source so that employees and customers can have accurate information during the crisis.
- Work with employees & their union(s) to address leave, pay, transportation, childcare, absence & other human resource issues.
- Provide training, education and informational material about business-essential job functions and employee health and safety.
- Work with your insurance companies and state/provincial and local health agencies to provide information to employees and customers about medical care in the event of a pandemic.
- Developing emergency communications plans. Maintain a forum for answering employees' concerns. Develop internet-based communications if feasible.
- For office staff, communicate to employees what options may be available to them for working from home.
- Work with your employees to designate a person(s), website, bulletin board, or other means of communicating important pandemic flu information.
- Ensure employee personal contact information is current so that company wide communications are received by all.

C. Prepare for Project Shutdown

- Begin planning for the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) (Governing body, Mayor, President, etc.) to issue a "Stay at Home" or "Quarantine" order.
- Establish a plan to secure the site during the shutdown.
    i. Implement physical security measures, including:
        - Physical "board up" of buildings.
        - Installation of lighting & fencing around property perimeter.
        - Locking & securing all entrance points.
    ii. Implement administrative security measures, including:
        - Camera/video surveillance systems (monitored off-site, or with alert/alarm capability).
        - Where real-time video monitoring is not available, schedule visits to observe the site (drive/walk around) to ensure it is still secure.
        - Increased signage (no trespassing, emergency contact, etc.)
    iii. Ensure temporary building encapsulation is in place or that project is water-tight and that water level/flow alarms are online and remotely accessible.
    iv. Consider "winterization procedures" where frozen bursting of pipes is a concern.
    v. Consider disconnecting water supplies or installing remote flow alarms where sprinkler protection is active.
    vi. Eliminate any ignition sources that may create fire exposures:
        - Unplug/disconnect temporary heating appliances.
        - De-energize any non-essential electrical connections.
        - Prohibit hot work for 24 hours prior to shut-down.
    vii. Document site conditions upon departure:
        - Generate photo log of all areas.
        - Inventory any valuable materials or equipment left onsite
- Communicate with your employees and subcontractors:
    i. Share anticipated restart dates.
    ii. Review ramp-up schedule and coordinate vendors and material deliveries.
    iii. If transferring workforce to another region/project, formalize the procedure and expectations for employees.
    iv. Formalize schedule for tools and equipment to be removed from the jobsite.
        - All valuable equipment should be relocated to a secure place.

- Equipment that must be left onsite should be immobilized or secured.
- Communicate date/time when tools and equipment left onsite will be "locked in" and no longer be accessible.
- Communicate to all owners on projects for which the owner is providing insurance asking them for the following:
  i. Confirm in writing any requirements that need to be met to maintain full coverage while a site has ceased construction activity.
  ii. Provide full copies of the insurance policies.
     - May already have this, but should confirm.
  i. Confirm contact details of the owner representative, their broker and any others for the purpose of reporting claims while insurers and brokers may be working remotely.

Additional Resources:

- The World Heath Organization (WHO) has developed programs to train incident managers and other stakeholders in preventing the spread of the virus.
  o Information on these can be found at: WHO-On-line Training.
- More information about pandemic planning as well as protecting employees and their families can be found at: www.pandemicflu.gov.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website has multiple topics, including "what you should know", "Situation Updates", and information for communities and travel guidance.
- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has guidance on Control and Prevention measures an employer can undertake.
- The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) has guidance on Control and Prevention measures an employer can undertake.

Summary:

Following recognized practices to avoid exposures common to any respiratory virus will help to keep this threat in check. Proper planning can help protect both your employees and your business.

Please contact your NHIS Service Team if you have any questions, need assistance, or would like additional information and resources.

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