

OH&S Committee Role During COVID-19



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Questions during the webinar

- 30 min followed by 30 min Q&A
- Q&A after presentation. Just raise hand to signal you would like to speak.
- If we can't get to your question, we will get back to you (if we have your contact information)

Prevention Through Education

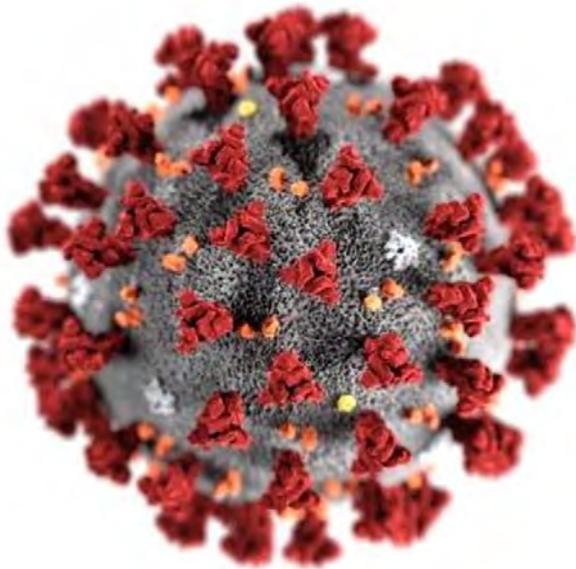
- Our mission is to provide the education and resources necessary to effectively participate in health and safety at the workplace to prevent injury, illness, disease and death.
- The BCFED Health and Safety Centre would like to acknowledge that this training is delivered on unceded First Nations territories.



Objectives

- Understand the role and responsibility joint occupational health and safety committees have during this pandemic
- Learn how to identify potential COVID-19 hazards
- Consider inspecting the workplace for potential means of exposure
- Discuss performing a risk assessment and requirements of an ECP
- Focus on investigation of incidents of exposure and potential exposures
- Review the requirements of the H&S program maintenance

COVID-19



- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found mostly in animals. In humans, they can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The disease caused by the new coronavirus has been named COVID-19.
- Virus is known as SARS-CoV 2.
- While many of the characteristics of COVID-19 are still unknown, mild to severe illness and death has been reported

Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee



- 20 or more workers
- Meet monthly
- Produce action-oriented minutes
- Provide those minutes to workplace parties
- Respond to concerns and hazards in workplace
- Participate in worker refusals if necessary

Committee during COVID-19

- Now more than ever joint occupational health and safety committees need to play a critical role in our workplaces in dealing with this unprecedented pandemic.
- The committee is a foundational component of workplace health and safety programs and its' role and responsibilities have never been more vital

Role of Committee

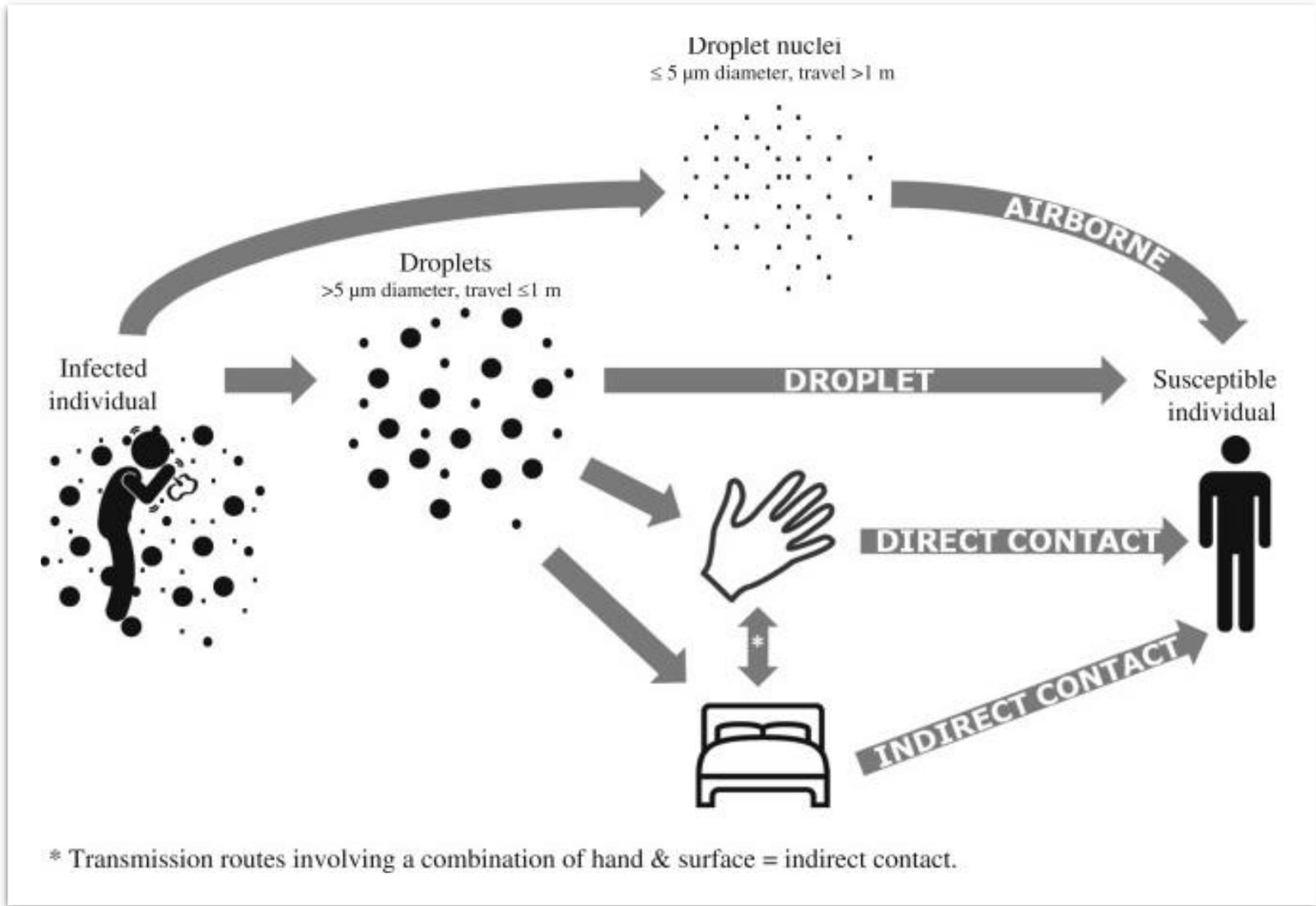
- **Respond** to concerns related to health and safety
- **Identify** circumstances and situations where workers might be exposed to COVID-19
- **Assess** the risk and potential risk of exposure
- **Participate** in the development and documentation of an Exposure Control Plan for each respective workplace as applicable
- **Participate** in regular workplace inspections
- **Participate** in incident investigations related to exposure

Modes of Transmission



Coronavirus is spread from an infected person through:

- Droplets spread when a person coughs or sneezes.
- By touch if a person has used their hands to cover their mouth or nose when they cough or sneeze.
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands.
- Airborne – sneezing or aerosolized through medical procedure.
- COVID-19 can live on some surfaces for up to 3 days



Possible Modes of Transmission

- This is a new virus and other potential modes of are being studied. Considering that all modes of transmission may not have been identified, one must follow the Precautionary Principle.
- Although not currently confirmed, research is ongoing to consider transmission through contact with:
 - Feces
 - Blood
 - Minute particles from breathing, speaking, exhaling

Inspections



- The employer must conduct inspections of the workplace at intervals that will prevent the development of unsafe working conditions, including potential exposure to COVID-19.
- These inspections must be done *collaboratively* with a worker representative and an employer representative.
- Effort is to consider potential means of exposure to the workforce.
- An inspection report should document the areas inspected and hazards identified.

Goal of Workplace Inspections

- **Identify** where transmission may take place
- **Determine** if workers and supervisors understand the modes of transmission and the need for effective control measures
- **Determine** if workers and supervisors are following safe work procedures and are compliant with any control measures documented in the ECP
- **Identify** any psychosocial or chemical considerations related to working during the pandemic
- **Give** consideration as to how risk factors may change when more workers return to work (potential risk factors)

COVID-19 Inspection Checklist (refer to checklist handout)

- ✓ Potential exposure based on task?
- ✓ Contact with public?
- ✓ Objects and surfaces commonly touched and enhanced cleaning and hand wash stations?
- ✓ Disinfectants available for cleaning?
- ✓ Availability and proper use of PPE?
- ✓ Worker and supervisor understanding of modes of transmission?
- ✓ Worker and supervisor understanding of control measures implemented in the Exposure Control Plan?
- ✓ Do workers know how and to whom to report possible exposures?



A **thing or condition** that may expose a person to a risk of injury or occupational disease.

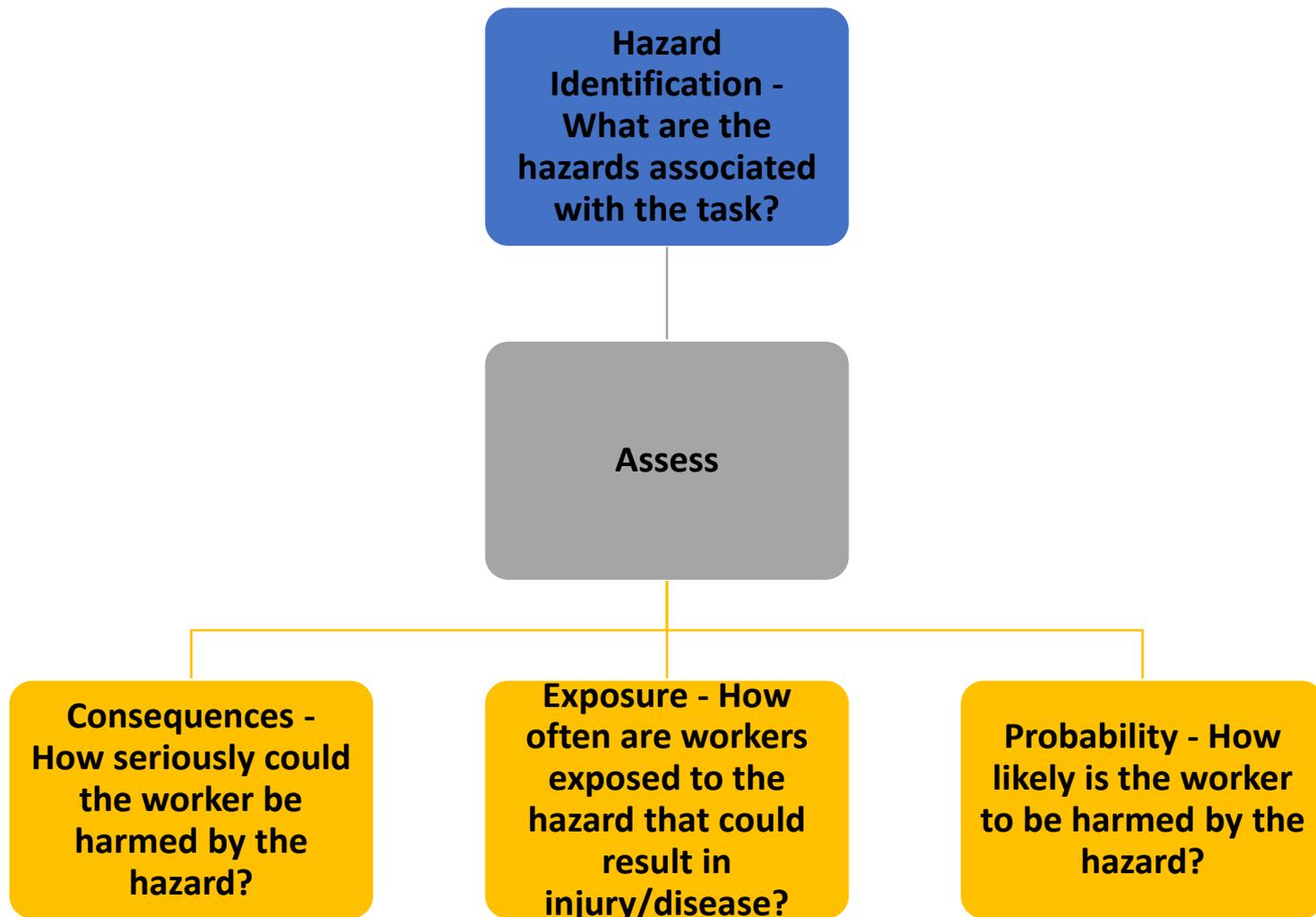
The **likelihood** that a hazard will result in injury or occupational disease.



Risk Assessment

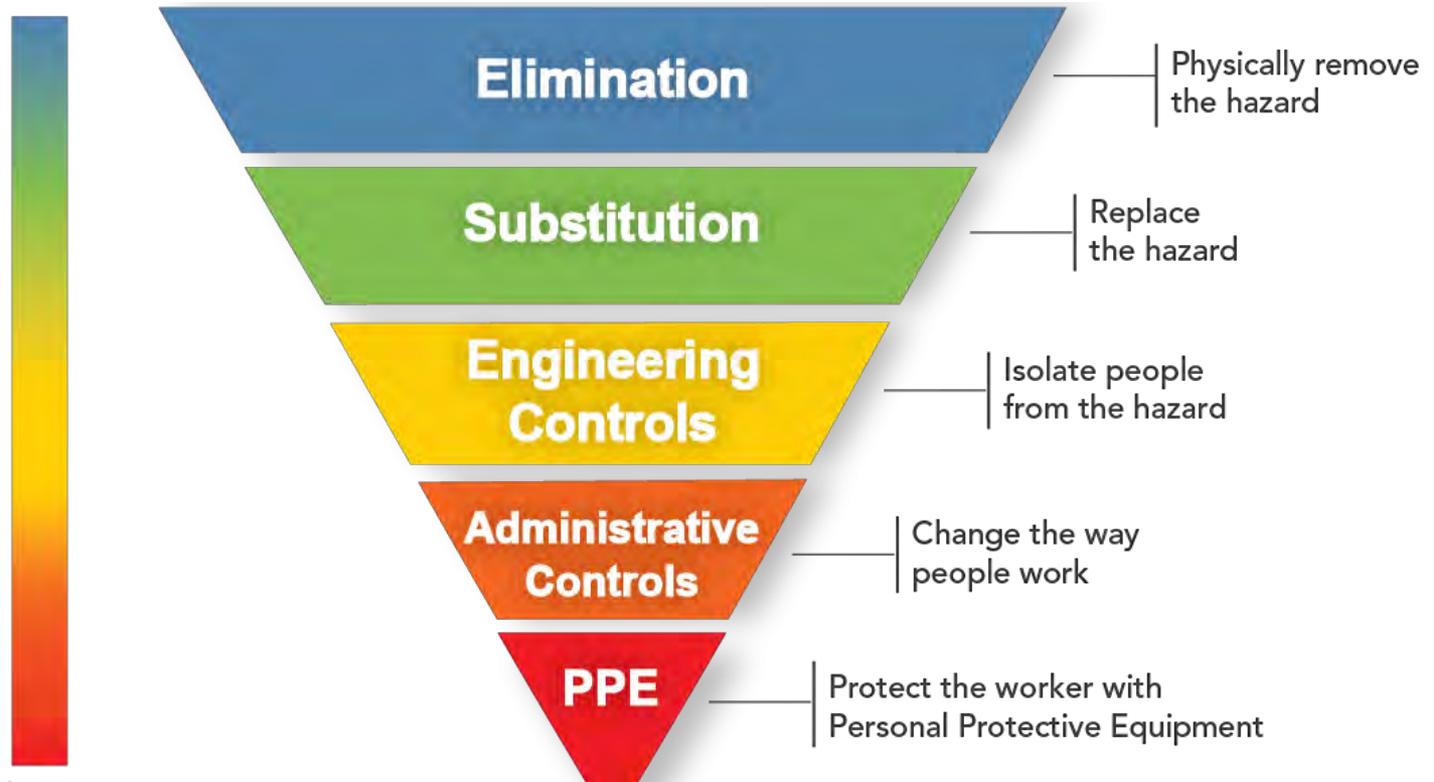
- Risk = Consequence x Exposure x Probability
- The joint occupational health and safety committee must participate in conducting a risk assessment
- Consideration of exposure and probability must be given to identified hazards

Risk Assessment



Understanding the 'Hierarchy of Controls'

Most Effective



Least Effective

Reevaluation

- After implementing control measures it is necessary to reevaluate that the risk has been eliminated or minimized
- Sometimes the introduction of control measures can bring forth new unexpected hazards



Exposure Control Plan/Safety Plan

- An ECP is a document that explains how workers will be protected hazardous exposures
- COVID-19 is a new virus requiring an ECP
- In developing the ECP, consideration will be given to potential exposure to COVID-19 in work areas, job functions and job tasks as applicable
- All workers and the supervisors must be trained in the modes of transmission for the virus and the control measures implemented, as documented in the ECP

Investigations

- Like any other workplace incident, an incident investigation must be conducted when a worker seeks medical aid or if there is a potential for serious injury
- 48 hours to conduct preliminary investigation
- 30 days to complete full investigation
- Timetable for recommendations
- Conducted jointly with employer and worker representatives

Investigation Checklist (refer to checklist handout)

- ✓ Did the employer have an Exposure Control Plan?
- ✓ Was the task or job duty where the worker was exposed, included in the RA that is part of the ECP?
- ✓ Was the work task a high-risk task that could have been eliminated or reduced to a lower level of risk?
- ✓ Were workers and supervisors trained in the modes of transmission and in the control measures outlined in the ECP (review the training records)?
- ✓ Were there adequate facilities for washing hands and or is hand sanitizer available to workers?
- ✓ Was an enhanced cleaning program being followed?
- ✓ Was the cleaning product a product confirmed to kill the virus – see the Health Canada site?

Investigation Checklist (refer to checklist handout)

- ✓ Was there adequate PPE and were workers trained in the use of the PPE?
- ✓ In work environments requiring respirators (N95) were workers fit tested and trained in donning and doffing?
- ✓ Were regular workplace inspections conducted considering the physical and psychosocial risk factors associated with COVID-19?
- ✓ Had workers been directed to stay off work if they or a family member are ill?
- ✓ Were there any previous reports of safety concerns related to COVID-19?
- ✓ Was the employer compliant with all orders issued by the PHO, the Emergency Program Act and/or the Quarantine Act?

Recommendations

- Very important step in an investigation
- Need to prevent recurrence
- Not about fault or blame
- Follow-up to ensure effectiveness and be sure that the control did not introduce a new risk factor

Safety Program Maintenance

- COVID-19 is a new virus, research including modes of transmission and control measures to prevent transmission is ongoing provincially, nationally and internationally.
- Employers must ensure that the risk assessment and the exposure control plan developed in response to the risk assessment remains current and aligns with any new information provided through the BCCDC or the Provincial Health Officer.

Program Maintenance and Review

The late Dr. Maya Angelou said:

*“Do the best you can until you know better.
Then when you know better, do better.”*

Additional Webinars

- OH&S Committee Role During COVID-19
- OH&S Rights and Responsibilities
- Conducting a Risk Assessment / Exposure Control Plan (ECP) for COVID-19
- Mental Health during COVID-19 - Building Psychologically Healthy Workplaces

References

- [http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19 Poster 002 English.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19%20Poster%20002%20English.pdf)
- <http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/>
- <https://reflectionsipc.com/2020/03/12/considering-the-role-of-environmental-contamination-in-the-spread-of-covid-19/>



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