



COVID-19 Business Resources

Managing Personnel During a Pandemic

"...be the best you can be with what you have."

- Rick Hansen

We can do this. With the 2017 wildfires fresh in our minds, businesses of the Cariboo-Chilcotin are uniquely positioned to handle the COVID-19 crisis. We know we can get through this #CaribooStrong.

As we saw during the wildfires, our greatest strength as employers will be our tendency towards **compassion, resilience, and pragmatism**. The hope is that this reference guide will help you manage as an employer during the difficult days ahead.

We recommend you visit the [BC Economic Development Association's website](#) for an exhaustive COVID-19 business resource guide as well as the [COVID-19 Small Business Help Centre](#) from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. The CFIB hotline (1-888-234-2232) is temporarily open for all Canadians but be prepared for long wait times.

3

things you can do **TODAY** to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 to your staff

1

Advise any team members feeling ill to stay home.
Consider waiving sick note requirements to ease burden on the health care system.

2

Implement measures to cut down on interaction times.
Think of telecommuting, video conferencing or at-home delivery services.

3

Follow and comply with instructions from authorities.
The pandemic situation is evolving daily, so it is important to stay informed.



The Government of Canada's Economic Response Plan

The government's plan provides comprehensive support for businesses, taxpayers, and workers, including those that do not qualify for EI.

Details of Canada's Economic Response Plan can be found [HERE](#).
Check this link often for updates!

Employees in quarantine or ordered to self-isolate will be paid beginning the first week of their EI claim and will NOT be required to undergo the one-week waiting period. The dedicated number for quarantined Canadians seeking EI sickness benefits is 1-833-381-2725.

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Labour Law in Unprecedented Times



What laws should you keep in mind?

You are obligated as an employer to take reasonable measures to provide a safe and healthy workplace.

During these unprecedented times, what is deemed reasonable would vary depending on the nature of your business. Most local businesses have increased surface cleaning, personal hygiene messaging, and workstation spacing. For more information, the [WHO](#) has an excellent guide.

Right to Refuse Work

In BC, an employee can refuse work if they believe there is a reasonable risk to their health or safety. If invoked, you must follow [Guideline G3.12 of BC's OHS legislation](#).

Human Rights Law

In the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#) and the [BC Human Rights Code](#), employers have a duty to accommodate employees with physical disabilities, including sickness.

Employment Standards

There are currently no allowances under the [BC Employment Standards Act](#) for paid or unpaid sick leave, but the government is asking all employers to exercise leniency during this crisis. Also note: Section 59 prohibits employers from reducing an employee's vacation benefits if paid sick leave is offered, and Section 52.11 allows unpaid leave to provide care to a critically ill family member.

Privacy Legislation

BC's Information and Privacy Commissioner has released a [statement](#) on COVID-19 including contact info for businesses with questions. Privacy laws in the workplace are meant to find a balance between an employee's privacy and the overall safety of the workplace. In this regard, we are now in uncharted waters, but this [article](#) by Bennett Jones LLP in JD Supra provides sound guidance.

More COVID-19 Info

For more information on employer rights and responsibilities, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has a very helpful [COVID-19 guide](#) on their website.



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Telecommuting for Public Health

Managing Remote Teams: 11 Tips from the Pros

- Become a proficient coordinator.** While setting up priorities, deliverables, and progress reporting is important in every position, efficient coordination is especially vital for a remote team. Establish roles and responsibilities, project plans, measureables, and regular check-ins to keep everyone on track.
- Encourage a suitable workspace.** Advise your staff that a dedicated space (ideally with a door that closes) is helpful to reduce distraction, but noise cancelling headphones can work in a pinch! It's important for employees to set up family rules about what's an important interruption and what isn't.
- Encourage a set schedule.** Some believe that working from home enables slacking, but remote workers often ignore work/life balance, missing breaks or working late. Encourage staff to adopt and stick to a set schedule - for their own sake - and send an occasional note reminding them to take a rest.
- Be flexible for childcare.** It is likely that children will be at home during the pandemic, so allow employees to adjust their working hours in coordination with spouse or childcare. In return, you can ask for a schedule of expected working hours, and notification when they must deviate from this schedule.
- Create a team atmosphere.** Working from home can create feelings of isolation. Many organizations combat this by holding weekly telephone or video conferences. Use these meetings to share advice and set goals, but also allow time for personal discussion which helps boost morale.
- Allow an adjustment period.** Those who are new to remote working often find it's not as easy as they thought. "Most of us have been conditioned to work and focus because of outside constraints." (H.V. MacArthur, Forbes) Office hours, meetings, and managers keep us on task, and it can be tough to adapt.
- Build an environment of trust.** Trust is critical within virtual working environments, and it requires work. Without the social cues, body language, and tone of voice that in-person interactions provide, teams risk misunderstandings and conflict. Effective, frequent communication should be your number one priority.
- Communicate like pros.** Provide communication guidance to the team. Old fashioned phone calls are great for check-ins, video conferencing tools are best when problem-solving is required, and online chat communication is a game changer for remote workers, allowing them to stay connected and accountable.
- Embrace new technology.** Consider a team collaboration tool which allows employees to log in at the start of their work day signalling their availability to chat, but also indicate if they're "busy" or taking a break. And if you need more, there's an app for it: document sharing, reporting, accountability, project management, and more.
- Support technology needs.** If a personal cell phone is required, offer a subsidy in return for a professional voicemail greeting. Same for internet, hardware, and software requirements. Ensure the team email access, and if work is sensitive, ensure data security is considered.
- Encourage uptake of the perks.** There are many benefits of at-home work. In addition to eliminating the daily commute, many remote workers also utilize their break times to get ahead at home such as taking a 15-minute morning break for yoga, throwing in some laundry at lunch, and using the afternoon break to prep for supper.

Sources: ["Guidelines for Working Remotely"](#) Tamarack Institute
["How to work from home"](#) by Kim Lyons, The Verge, 03-11-2020
["The Art Of Working Remotely: How To Ensure Productivity"](#) by H.V. MacArthur, Forbes, 03-12-2020
["Why Remote Work Thrives in Some Companies and Fails in Others"](#) by Sean Graber, HBR, 03-20-2015