INDUSTRY NOTICE

A Safe Restart for the Commercial Passenger Bus Industry during COVID-19
June 2, 2020

Your company may have developed a COVID Safety Plan for your business in recent weeks. If not, now is the time to develop one.

This Industry Notice builds off the previous notice Best Practices for the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry during COVID-19 and complements BC’s Restart Plan, a phased approach to restart B.C.’s economy in the midst of the pandemic. Following the May long weekend, the Province entered the second of four phases. The province was able to enter phase two due to the combined and successful efforts of British Columbians to flatten the curve of this virus.

Establishing a New Normal

Phase two is not a return to normal; individuals and businesses must do their part to maintain important safety measures and establish a “new normal” as we await further directions from the Provincial Health Officer (PHO). Companies must demonstrate they can operate safety while getting back on their feet.

COVID Safety Plan for Workers

WorkSafeBC is here to help and is the primary source of information for employers on ensuring a safe work environment for workers.

➢ For Industry Associations: WorkSafeBC will work with you to ensure the direction and guidance you provide your members meets the requirements set out by the PHO
➢ For Employers and workers: WorkSafeBC will work with you through education materials, consultation and workplace inspections

To get started, visit these WorkSafeBC web pages:

➢ COVID-19 and returning to safe operation
➢ Transportation and COVID-19 safety

These pages include access to a COVID Safety Plan template with step by step instructions and checklists of items to consider.

COVID Safety Plan for Passengers

There is no requirement for our sector to create a specific COVID Safety Plan for Passengers, but as this is your business, the inclusion of passengers in your safety plan is advised.
Each member of our bus sector has different goals and needs:

- Some serve passengers seeking access to essential services; others depend on tourism
- Some operate routes solely within B.C.; others cross provincial, or international borders
- Some offer seasonal services only
- Operators use a variety of bus sizes with varying capacity levels
- Profit margins are different for each operator

Due to these complexities, there is no “one-size fits all” approach. We are unable to tell you how many passengers should be in your buses. It also depends on the nature of the passengers: are they from the same household? Physical distancing is not required for members of the same household, so each trip you run will be unique to the passengers on board.

You must decide how many passengers are allowed in your buses based on an assessment of your business. We can refer you to the Orders you must consider as you create or revise your Safety Plan for passengers, and provide you with guiding principles.

**Orders of the Provincial Health Officer**

The PHO has issued a number of Orders and these must be followed for affected sectors. The PHO may issue more Orders still, or adjust Orders already issued.

The Order [Workplace Safety Plans](#) was published on May 14, 2020. This Order is relevant to all employers and requires that a COVID-19 Safety Plan be posted to your website (if you have one). You must also provide a copy of your plan to a health officer/WorkSafe BC officer if asked.

Currently there is only one order in relation to the transportation sector, entitled [Traveller and Employers](#). This Order is relevant to:

- All persons entering Canada through B.C.
- All persons coming to B.C. after entering Canada after April 8, 2020
- Employers or Travellers who are essential workers
- Travellers who are essential workers who are permitted to work by their employers

If this Order is applicable to your business, you must follow it until the PHO suspends the Order.

Additionally, the Order published May 14, 2020 entitled [Mass Gatherings](#) (where 50 or more people are not allowed to gather) is still in effect, and may be relevant to bus services.
Guiding Principles

The PHO has advised of controls for employers to consider in order to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 including:

- Physical distancing measures – measures to reduce the density of people
- Engineering controls – physical barriers (like plexiglass), or increased ventilation
- Administrative controls – clear rules and guidelines
- Personal protective equipment – e.g. use of non-medical masks

Each business must assess the risks that exist for them and consider how to implement these controls. Those controls should be considered in the following order of priority:

The protocols you create for your business should involve multiple controls to provide protection for your passengers. At this point, none of these controls are official Orders, and businesses are able to create custom solutions that allow you to re-open your business while maintaining a safe environment for all.

For information on COVID-19, visit the [BC Centre for Disease Control](https://www.bccdc.ca) website.

Thank you,
Passenger Transportation Branch