

## COVID-19 GENERAL SAFETY CHECKLIST FOR RECYCLING OPERATIONS

*This document has been adapted from ISRI's General Safety Checklist for Recycling Operations with their kind permission.*

The COVID-19 pandemic requires an assortment of modified procedures and ways of doing business to keep employees, customers and visitors safe. This also provides an opportunity to reinforce existing safety practices, in addition to adapting to new concepts, such as physical distancing.

If you already have an **Infectious Disease Response Plan**, use that document to guide you through what needs to be done in your operations to keep everyone safe, updated with the considerations contained within this guidance document. If you do not have such a Plan, document the steps you are taking in accordance with the information contained within this guidance document to provide the basics of such a Plan. All operations are different and decisions are site specific, but the following checklist provides general guidance for recycling operations:

1. **TELL ALL EMPLOYEES WHO ARE SICK TO STAY HOME.** If someone in their immediate household is sick, or they have otherwise been exposed to someone who is sick, also ask them to stay home. Designate someone within your operation for your employees to call if they are sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 been developed.
2. **Consider developing procedures for immediately isolating people who have signs and/or symptoms of COVID-19.** Priority should be to retail areas and other points of contact with the public. Move potentially infectious people to a location away from workers, customers, and other visitors. Although most worksites do not have specific isolation rooms, designated areas with closable doors may serve as isolation rooms until potentially sick people can be removed from the worksite.
3. **Consider whether any employees can work remotely.** Consider allowing any employee whose job function can be done remotely to do so, to minimize the number of people who are physically present at your operation.
4. **Practise physical distancing.** Current recommendation is that a minimum of 2 metres is maintained between people. Consider what **points of contact** exist between people in your operation and whether changes can be made to avoid contact.
  - Look for any opportunities to separate employees within your operation by a minimum of 2 metres
  - Consider staggering breaks for employees
  - Consider closing retail operations if exposure cannot be avoided
  - Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible
5. **Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces regularly.** This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
  - a. Consider what parts of your equipment (e.g., controls) and tools (e.g., handles) are exposed and need to be disinfected regularly.
  - b. If surfaces are dirty, clean them: Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
  - c. Commonly used cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19. Use only disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number

given by Health Canada that confirms it is approved for use in Canada. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.)

- d. The CDC recommends the following options for disinfecting surfaces:
    - i. Diluting your household bleach. To make a bleach solution, mix: 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per 3.8 litres/1 gallon of water  
OR
    - ii. 4 teaspoons bleach per litre of water  
Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. **NEVER MIX HOUSEHOLD BLEACH WITH AMMONIA OR ANY OTHER CLEANSER.** Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.
  - e. Alcohol solutions. Ensure solution has at least 70% alcohol.
6. **Consider how scale tickets, shipping documents and other paperwork are handled in your operations.** When paperwork, "handle with care," and immediately wash your hands following handling. If your employees use an electronic device, it should be disinfected after a customer has handled it, and the employee should immediately wash his or her hands
  7. **Ensure continued use of all Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** and make sure that face shields and protective eyewear are cleaned frequently due to the close proximity of an infection pathway (the eyes).
    - a. Provide gloves to all employees
    - b. Have all employees wearing a respirator met all provincial Occupational Health and Safety requirements for a respiratory protection program to include initial fit testing?  
The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety's respirator fact sheet is available [here](#)
  8. **Consider a review of engineering controls for possible ways to minimize potential exposures. Considerations include:**
    - a. Installing high-efficiency air filters
    - b. Increasing ventilation rates in the work environment
    - c. Installing physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards
    - d. Installing a drive-through window for customer service
  9. **Document all the steps you are taking within your operations to keep everyone safe.**  
If you are making changes to standard processes and practices within your operations to address COVID-19, document those changes and the reason for doing so
  10. **Handling Used Beverage Containers.** Unfortunately, a lot is still not known about how long COVID-19 can live on metal and plastic surfaces. While some have determined that three days is the limit, this has not been confirmed and there have been others suggesting it may be as long as a week<sup>1</sup>. Recyclers can consider the following options:
    - a) Not accepting UBCs at this time

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<sup>1</sup> As for the life of the virus on surfaces, this study from NEJM - <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2004973> and this one from the NIH - <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/new-coronavirus-stable-hours-surfaces> show that it can be stable for hours and/or days depending on the surface (copper, plastic, stainless, cardboard, etc.).

- b) Put in administrative controls where you accept and hold the material for three days or more. Again, the specific duration of time is not known at this time. In addition, employees should keep a safe distance from the customer while UBCs are being weighed; once they are properly weighed or checked in to the company system, the retail scale operator could direct the customer to a designated area where the material will be quarantined for a safe period of time
  - c) Suit up the retail worker in nitrile gloves, leather gloves, long sleeves, mask, etc. However, these items (gloves & masks) are quickly becoming scarce, which will limit this option
11. **Constantly remind employees to stay focused.** This is especially important for line workers and drivers on the road. With all that is going on now, distraction and fatigue from stress and worry is a challenge for everyone.
12. **Conserve safety supplies.** It may be difficult to find additional safety supplies in the weeks ahead, so consider talking to employees about the importance of treating all safety supplies with extra care.
13. **Protect yourself.** There is no vaccine available to protect against COVID-19. Take these everyday actions to protect your health:
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
  - Sneeze and cough into your sleeve
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
  - Avoid contact with people who are sick
  - Practise physical distancing