



COVID-19

Guidance on Tool Sharing (Hand Tools) During COVID-19

OVERVIEW

Employers and constructors have obligations to protect workers from hazards in the workplace as set out in the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations and the directives coming from the Chief Medical Officer.

RECOGNIZE HAZARDS AND ASSESS RISKS

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) typically spreads through coughing and sneezing, personal contact with an infected person, or touching an infected surface and then the mouth, nose, or eyes.

Each person touching a tool is a potential carrier. They may have picked up the virus from somewhere else, or may have early onset of the virus themselves and are not aware.

"Surfaces frequently touched with hands are most likely to be contaminated. These include doorknobs, handrails, elevator buttons, light switches, cabinet handles, faucet handles, tables, countertops, and electronics. It is not yet known how long the virus causing COVID-19 lives on surfaces, however, early evidence suggests it can live on objects and surfaces from a few hours to days." — Public Health Agency of Canada

CONTROLS

Proper hand washing helps prevent the transfer of the COVID-19 virus from surface to surface, and from the infected surface or material to the hands and then to other parts of the body—particularly the eyes, nose, and mouth. Hands that are visibly soiled or dirty should be washed with soap and water first. Sanitizing is less effective on soiled or dirty hands. Always cleanse your hands before touching your face or eating, or getting into your vehicle to go home, regardless of other precautions taken.

Cleansing the hand tools that workers will be touching will add another layer of protection. This is particularly important when tools are shared. The site's constructor should consider taking the lead and work with contractors to encourage consistent hygiene practices. The following are options to consider for minimizing exposure from using shared hand tools.

- Communicate worksite protocols for proper hygiene expected to be practiced to ensure all contractors and workers are aware of expectations.
- Plan for enough tools to be on site (as is practical) so each worker does not need to share.
- Identify commonly shared tools in some fashion, and store these in a separate toolbox.
- Provide a label with cleansing instructions at the toolboxes where hand tools are stored, and have washing supplies available for that toolbox.
- Recommend daily cleansing of unshared tools and regular cleansing of shared tools immediately after use throughout the day, and at the start of the day before use.
- Recommend use of gloves as practical.
- Personal clothing worn at work should also be treated as a potential source of exposure. Place work clothes into a bag before taking home to launder. Ideally, wash suspected clothing separately with detergent in hot water. Dry in dryer.



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Regular tool cleansing when there is no suspected case of COVID-19 can be accomplished using a soap and water solution, or a commercially available disinfecting hand towel wipe, or by a disinfecting wash. Refer to the below recommendations on how to clean and disinfect tools and equipment. Read the manufacturer's instructions to prevent possible damage to the equipment and any required personal protective equipment (PPE) for the worker. Consider escalating the cleansing protocol in both the frequency and the disinfecting method when more people are expected to touch the tool.

When a worker has been discovered to have symptoms of COVID-19, the tools and equipment that the worker recently used should be isolated from further use, cleaned, and disinfected.

Isolate tools and equipment

- Identify tools and equipment that the worker was recently using.
- Isolate these tools and equipment for cleansing and disinfecting.
- Use PPE such as gloves and coveralls to move the tools and equipment, and wash or dispose of the PPE after use.

Cleansing and disinfecting

- The employer and constructor's protocols should identify who will clean and disinfect tools and equipment.
- For the most up-to-date information regarding government guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting, visit [The Government of Canada's Webpage "COVID-19: Cleaning and Disinfecting.."](#)

How to clean and disinfect tools and equipment

1. Protect from the possible transfer of germs to yourself by wearing PPE. Wear PPE such as waterproof gloves for your hands and face shield and mask to protect your eyes, face, and mouth. Wear protective (or disposable) coveralls to protect your clothing.
2. Make sure all power is off and disconnected on power tools and equipment. Read the manufacturer's directions for cleaning to avoid possible damage from liquids and chemicals. Lock Out/Tag out as required.
3. Clean surface with soap and water to remove all visible debris and stains, and some of the germs.
4. Follow labeled instructions and safety data sheets on all containers of cleansing products you use.
5. Many disinfecting products are available to buy; however, they may be difficult to obtain under extreme demand. You can make your own by mixing a water and bleach solution. Check the bleach manufacturer's recommendation for mixing ratios. Follow manufacturer's instructions for use. **Always check for potential reactivity, as certain products, when combined, can create a poisonous gas.**
6. Remove disposable PPE and discard. Remove coveralls and place in a bag for washing. Wash contaminated clothing in hot water with detergent and dry in dryer.
7. Wash your hands after removing all PPE.

This document has been adapted, with permission, from the Infrastructure Health and Safety Association document "Guidance on cleaning and sanitizing inside your vehicle during COVID-19".



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In addition to isolating and cleansing tools and equipment, inform new contractors and new workers of the protocols, and which tools and equipment are in isolation. Store enough cleaning and disinfecting solutions on site to deal with expected demand. Also, identify a number of workers that are competent to perform disinfecting protocols. If a worker unexpectedly does not show up for work, contact the worker to learn if they are self-isolating, and if so, enact your control measures to isolate and cleanse areas that may be affected.

EVALUATE

- Verify that the controls are being followed consistently and as planned. Monitor behaviour and practices.
- Continuously monitor the necessary supplies and equipment needed to meet your control measures.
- Ensure sufficient supplies are readily available, adequate, and accessible.
- Review your process and identify any opportunities for improvements. Make revisions if new information becomes available that requires a change in process.
- Monitor your health for symptoms such as cough, fever, or difficulty breathing.

RESOURCES

Stay up to date with daily government updates on COVID-19

[Government of Newfoundland and Labrador](#)

[Government of Canada](#)

For Newfoundland and Labrador residents, anyone who suspects that they have contracted COVID-19 should stay at home and complete the [811 COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#). If you cannot access the self-assessment tool, please call 811. Do not visit your family physician's office and, unless it is a medical emergency, please do not go to your Emergency Department.

This document has been adapted, with permission, from the Infrastructure Health and Safety Association document "Guidance on tool sharing, constructor/employer procedure during COVID-19".