

	Communicable Disease Plan Policy #2005
	Authority: CAO
	Date Adopted: January 7, 2022
	Last Amended: February 14, 2022

Preventing communicable disease involves taking ongoing measures to reduce the risk of transmission in the workplace. It also involves implementing additional measures when advised to do so by Public Health authorities during periods of elevated risk such as communicable disease events.

The District recognizes the risks and challenges that communicable diseases present and has implemented measures to create and maintain a safe workplace and require all to participate in and adhere to the required measures.

Purpose:

This Plan is designed to protect the health and safety of District of North Saanich employees, visitors, and contractors by providing appropriate information that is required to prevent communicable disease. The Plan is based on information from the Provincial Health Officer, the BC Ministry of Health, and WorkSafeBC.

Scope:

This Plan applies to all unionized and exempt employees as well as volunteers.

The District has multiple workplaces including municipal hall, two fire halls, public works, utilities and parks yards; and green waste drop-off.

Principles:

1. STAYING INFORMED:

Employees are encouraged to stay up-to-date and informed on the pandemic and follow public health advice, as information may change from time to time. Links can be found in the References section at the end of this document.

2. SELF MONITORING:

- (a) Employees with communicable disease symptoms must stay home if they have cold or flu symptoms, or other gastrointestinal (vomiting or diarrhea) symptoms and not come to work for at least twenty-four (24) hours, or longer if symptoms have not resolved.

(b) Employees may return to regular work activities if:

- i. Your fever (temperature above 37.8°) is gone without the use of fever-reducing medications (i.e., Tylenol, Advil, etc.), and
- ii. There is improvement in symptoms consistent with the communicable disease as identified on the BC Centre for Disease Control website. Coughing may go on for several weeks, but a cough alone does not mean you need to continue to stay home.

(c) Sick Leave Benefits

Employees are required to stay home if they are feeling sick. All employees are entitled to sick leave pay for absences related to illness in accordance with the Collective Agreement. If employees are in positions that can work from home, they may request to do so.

3. PERSONAL HYGIENE:

- a) Employees must practice proper “hand hygiene” techniques often, as it is the single-most effective way of reducing the spread of infection.
- b) Touching your face, including eyes, nose or mouth should be avoided and hands washed or sanitized following such touching.
- c) All staff are expected to observe respiratory etiquette (cough into your elbow, avoid “speaking moistly”, etc.) to minimize airborne transmission.

4. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE):

- a) Facial masks are mandatory in all shared spaces, but not at an employee’s work station. The District provides each employee with non-medical masks, and the employee is responsible for washing of the mask. Masks must be worn at a minimum according to guidelines from the BC Medical Health Officer and WorkSafeBC.
- b) Gloves are provided to staff where necessary for the activity (e.g., handling of cash, documents, or other materials/equipment at higher risk of contamination).
- c) Frequent hand washing is mandatory even when wearing gloves. While gloves may provide protection for your hands, they do not prevent the transfer of communicable diseases to other surfaces.
- d) No employee shall be discouraged from wearing PPE should they feel more comfortable doing so.

5. ENHANCED CLEANING/DISINFECTING:

- a) Janitorial services will be enhanced for Municipal Hall and Fire Halls 1 and 2. Employees must clean and/or disinfect common areas and other high touch surfaces throughout the workday.

- b) Employees should ensure regularly touched surfaces are disinfected frequently within their own workspace(s).
- c) Common areas should be disinfected by wiping down by the user after each use.

6. SHARED WORKSPACES/EQUIPMENT:

- a) Employees are discouraged from sharing equipment (i.e. pens, phones, other tools).
- b) The need to share workspaces and equipment will be minimized.
- c) When it is necessary to use a common workstation or piece of equipment, such as photocopiers or cash registers, the surface should be disinfected before and after use. If you are in doubt about the cleanliness of an area or item, employees are encouraged to disinfect the area or item before and after use to reduce the risk of contamination.
- d) In the event of a potential communicable disease case in a shared workspace, workstation or with a person using shared equipment, the station/equipment should not be used until a *deep clean* can be performed which is to be delegated by the employee's supervisor. Employees affected by the deep clean will be accommodated to ensure safety during the cleaning period, which will be delegated by your supervisor.

7. USE OF MUNICIPAL VEHICLES:

- a) Employees who use municipal vehicles must ensure that high contact surfaces within the vehicle are routinely disinfected.
- b) Use of vehicles will be limited to a maximum of **two** employees.
- c) Workers will try to keep as much distance as possible while in the vehicle. Non-medical masks must be worn when not alone.
- d) The District will provide non-medical masks to each employee who is required to share vehicles. Each employee is responsible for washing their own masks.

8. STRESS/ANXIETY/MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS:

Practice self-care. Emotional stress, anxiety or concern is natural due to uncertainty during communicable disease events. Anyone who feels they are experiencing negative mental health implications should seek assistance as soon as possible.

Please remember that all employees have access to the Employee & Family Assistance Program for counselling services. Details of the program can be found on the employee portal.

Employees can also access many informative resources for exercise and mental health on the Blue Cross website at <https://www.mygoodhealth.ca/default.aspx>

A reminder: you can also access up to \$300 for exercise programs or equipment through the DNS Health & Wellness initiative, which can be found on the employee portal.

9. PHYSICAL DISTANCING DURING COMMUNICABLE DISEASE EVENTS:

- a) Physical distancing reduces the potential of communicable diseases being transmitted through airborne droplets. There is a possibility that even non-symptomatic carriers of a communicable disease may transmit the virus in this manner, so physical distancing should be observed whenever possible, even in cases where people do not display symptoms of that communicable disease.
- b) Access to District workplaces should be limited and alternative methods, such as video or conference calls, be used for conducting business to prevent close personal contact.
- c) Lunchrooms, break rooms, meeting rooms, reception and common areas will be arranged to follow physical distancing practices. However, employees are discouraged from using these areas whenever possible. The lunchroom, upstairs file room and printer room will have occupancy limits posted based on maintaining physical distancing.
- d) Communal interior doorways will be left open through the workday to reduce contact with the door handles.
- e) Narrow hallways will be marked for one-way travel to avoid people passing too close to each other.
- f) Should a task require close personal contact, appropriate PPE and additional mitigation measures should be considered and discussed with your manager.
- g) Only essential business travel should be considered.
- h) If there are cases where physical distancing cannot be maintained in a shared workspace, a more comprehensive risk assessment should be undertaken. Consideration should be given to the type of task(s), and whether there are alternatives.

10. PROMOTION OF EMPLOYEE VACCINATIONS:

- a) The District requires employees to be vaccinated under Policy 4001.7: Vaccination Policy.
- b) The District will support Public Health messaging for vaccinations against pandemic or community diseases and may collaborate with Public Health to offer vaccination clinics in public facilities.
- c) The District recognizes the public health benefits of vaccination programs which reduce illnesses, disabilities, and death from community acquired diseases. Employees are encouraged to participate in public health vaccination programs.
- d) The following are reasons to get vaccinated:
 - Vaccine-preventable diseases have not disappeared – viruses and bacteria that cause illness and death still exist and can be passed on to those who are not protected by vaccines

- Vaccines will help keep you healthy – vaccines can prevent short term illnesses and prevent long term chronic disability.
- Vaccines are as important to your overall health as diet and exercise – like eating healthy foods, exercising, and getting regular check-ups, vaccines play a vital role in keeping you healthy. Vaccines are one of the most convenient and safest preventive care measures available.
- Vaccination can mean the difference between life and death – vaccine-preventable infections can be deadly. For example, every year in the US, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 50,000 adults died from vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Vaccines are safe – potential side effects associated with vaccines are uncommon and much less severe than the diseases they prevent.
- Vaccines will not cause the diseases they are designed to prevent – vaccines contain either killed or weakened viruses, making it impossible to get the disease from the vaccine.
- Young and healthy people can get very sick, too – infants and older adults are at increased risk for serious infections and complications, but vaccine-preventable diseases can strike anyone. If you are young and healthy, getting vaccinated can help you stay that way.
- Vaccine-preventable diseases are expensive – diseases not only have a direct impact on individuals and their families, but also carry a high price tag for society as a whole.
- When you get sick, your children, grandchildren, and parents may be at risk, too – adults are the most common source of pertussis (whooping cough) infection in infants which can be deadly for babies. When you get vaccinated, you are protecting yourself and your family as well as those in your community who may not be able to be vaccinated.
- Your family and co-workers need you – millions of adults get sick from vaccine-preventable diseases, causing them to miss work and leaving them unable to care for those who depend on them, including their children and/or aging parents.

11. TRAINING AND DOCUMENTATION:

- 1) Supervisors will train employees on the policies, practices, and procedures during communicable disease outbreaks and keep records of that training.
- 2) If employees have any concerns, they should discuss them with their supervisors.

12. PROTOCOL FOR PUBLIC ACCESS TO MUNICIPAL HALL:

Access to District Hall by the public may be limited or even eliminated during communicable disease outbreaks.

During limited public access, attendance will be by appointment only and all employees must follow the following protocol for public access:

1. Members of the public must not enter any municipal buildings without wearing a mask. If they enter without wearing a mask, please remind them to put on a mask. If they have a valid reason to not wear a mask and the employee can maintain physical distancing, the employee may provide service to that member of the public. If the individual refuses to wear a mask, the employee should contact their supervisor. If at any time the employee feels unsafe dealing with a member of the public, they should contact their supervisor.
2. If access to the hall is required, an appropriately sized meeting room should be used in which physical distancing can be maintained.
3. Upon arrival at municipal hall, ask the member of the public to do the following before admitting them into the building:
 - i) Confirm that they do not have communicable disease symptoms and have not traveled outside the country in the last 14 days, and been directed to self-isolate upon their return,
 - ii) sanitize their hands,
 - iii) wear a mask,
4. Any tables/surfaces used by the public will be sanitized after their departure.

13. RESPONSIBILITIES:

(a) Employer

- Monitor and review communicable disease-related information issued by regional health officers or the Provincial Health Officer
- Implement policies and practices to support employees who have symptoms of communicable disease
- Provide hand-hygiene facilities with appropriate supplies and use policies and signage to remind employees to wash their hands regularly and to cover coughs and sneezes
- Maintain a clean environment through routine cleaning processes appropriate for the workplace and task
- Ensure that building ventilation is adequate, and systems are properly maintained
- Support employees in receiving vaccinations for vaccine-preventable conditions
- Provide employees with communication and training surrounding safe work practices, including this Communicable Disease Safety Plan, and encouraged employees to ask questions and provide feedback to managers
- Provide sick leave provisions as per the Collective Agreement and require sick employees to stay home.

In addition, when advised by Public Health and during a period of elevated risk, we must:

- Follow the directions from medical health officers and the regional health authority
- Follow all orders, guidance, recommendations, and notices issued by the PHO

- Reassess policies and practices based on updated guidance from regional or provincial health authorities

(b) Supervisors

- Ensure that employees are adequately instructed on the work procedures and preventative measures at the work location
- Ensure workplace measures are being followed by employees
- Communicate with department Manager regarding employee's concerns or illnesses (privacy and confidential must be maintained – seek guidance from Human Resources when clarification is required)

(c) Employees

- Report any communicable disease safety concerns, unsafe conditions or acts to their supervisor or to the Health and Safety Committee
- Wash hands frequently
- Follow proper cough and sneeze etiquette
- Follow established communicable disease prevention and practices as directed by the employer or supervisor
- Use Personal Protective Equipment (“PPE”) as instructed and as required
- Know the location of washing facilities, including hand sanitizing dispensing stations
- Sanitize shared or common work surfaces and equipment after use
- If you become sick with symptoms compatible with communicable disease, stay at home and notify the manager and seek medical health guidance
- Become familiar with available health and mental health benefits
- Ask questions and provide feedback to managers on the District's communicable disease prevention safe work practices

(d) Health and Safety Committee

- Participate in conducting risk assessments
- Participate in identifying and resolving workplace safety issues and concerns
- Review this Policy annually and provide recommendations for improvement to the Employer, as required

14. CONFIDENTIALITY:

- (a) Supervisors who become aware of an employee who exhibits communicable disease symptoms or is diagnosed with a communicable disease must not release the employee's name, identifying information, or condition to other employees. All employee healthcare concerns must be forwarded to Human Resources. Supervisors and employees may contact Human Resources with any questions or concerns they may have regarding workplace issues surrounding communicable disease.

- (b) All employee medical information is treated as private and confidential and will be handled in compliance with legal requirements.

15. GENERAL

- (a) This Plan will be incorporated into the new employee orientation process.
- (b) Designated First Aid Attendants and supervisors will be trained in how to monitor employees for symptomatic signs of communicable diseases. First Aid attendants will receive further training in what steps to take if someone they are treating is suspected of having a communicable disease.

References:

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Endorsed by:	Senior Management Team
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Related Publications:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BC Centre for Disease Control• District of North Saanich• Provincial Government of BC• Reportable Disease Data Dashboard• WorkSafeBC

Contact Information:

Position: Chief Administrative Officer
ttanton@northsaanich.ca