

IAMAW Position Statement on COVID-19 for District Lodge 140 Members

In the midst of a global pandemic, District Lodge 140 is ensuring members are receiving all necessary information required to protect themselves at work, and as an organization we are asking all of our representatives to begin discussions with employers about safety precautions they are undertaking. The wellbeing of our members is of utmost importance, as such, we are issuing a set of guidelines members and IAMW representatives should familiarize themselves with. Given that COVID-19 has several modes of transmission, and researchers are still learning about it, we are advocating for the highest precautionary protective measures in the workplace.

Employers should have in place training, which includes training on use of personal protective equipment (PPE), including dissemination of information on risks of contracting the virus in each workplace. PPE comes in the form of gloves, facial shields, masks, including the NIOSH N-95 respirator masks for those working in high risk areas. With respect to facial protection, employers should train workers on the use of facial protection, up to and including the N-95 mask. The N-95 mask is designed to protect against 95% of airborne particulates when tested against a 0.3 micron particle, and should be used at a minimum.

While the Public Health Agency of Canada does not recommend the use of surgical masks for healthy individuals, the IAMAW recommends the use of PPE that protects against transmission of COVID-19, especially for workers in high risk areas, such as those working as screening officers and cabin service as they are coming in direct contact with bodily fluids and/or potentially infectious individuals.

We also advocate for the “precautionary principle” as a guiding basis for employer policies, usage of PPE, including at the level of work engineering, administration and the worker level. Health and safety committees must be part of the process of developing policies, training plans, and in dissemination of the information.

Given that the virus is in the early stages of spreading, and all information about the virus is not yet fully known, the IAM believes employers should air on the side of caution and apply the precautionary principle in all matters pertaining to health and safety of workers. The precautionary principle is the foundation for policy when it has to deal with weakly understood causes of potential catastrophic or irreversible events, and where protective decisions require certain and costly policy interventions that may not solve the problem that they are designed to correct. As such, this principle provides a rationale and legal basis for actions taken, even when scientific information is incomplete or unavailable. It is the highest ethical and moral standard in circumstances such as these, and we urge employers to abide by this standard.

Worker Responsibilities:

- If you're not feeling well, stay home. Self-monitor and if your symptoms do not improve in a couple of days, please contact your doctor's office instead of visiting in person, call the provincial health agency, your general chairperson and the Canadian Office.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with hands to prevent self-contamination; clean your hands before contact with any part of the body
- Ensure you are familiar with protocols issued by Health Canada
- Know your rights at work, your collective agreement, and relevant legislation. You have a right to know about the risks associated with your work tasks, and you have the right to refuse dangerous work under certain circumstances. More information on this will be circulated.
- Know and follow employer policies and directives pertaining to COVID-19
- Wear PPE if exposure to COVID-19 is possible
- Avoid contact between contaminated gloves/hands and equipment and the face, skin or clothing when removing PPE.
- Stop if you do not have the required personal protective equipment and speak with your manager or supervisor; document the situation and copy your union and your H&S Committee representative.
- Report any health and safety concerns, including gaps in adequate protocols and procedures and/or communications, access to PPE, to training or other health and safety concerns to your manager or supervisor, copying your H&S Committee and your union.

Employer Responsibilities

- Work with Health and Safety committees to develop measures, procedures, policies and training pertinent to COVID-19
- Ensure workers are properly trained and aware of procedures, protocols, and policies
- Review and update existing institutional pandemic plans
- Develop compensation packages for workers with child-care issues, and those who are forced to stay home due to Health Canada directives
- Ensure PPE is readily available, that workers are fit-tested for the N-95(this should happen twice a year)
- For those who have been fit-tested for the N-95 mask, ensure they are wearing identification of the size for the mask
- Conduct a comprehensive risk assessment
- Ensure sufficient staffing is available to manage a possible outbreak in the workplace and protocols to sub-contracting are followed
- Implement cleaning protocols for PPE equipment such as, fit-tested N-95, face shields, gloves, head protection
- Ensure staff are using disposable equipment and that there are disposal protocols

We are continuously monitoring updated from Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada for updates, and will continue to issue information as it becomes available to us. For additional information consult the following websites;

Health Canada website with daily updates:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

Public Health Ontario:

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus>

Additional Factsheets:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/awareness-resources.html>

Stay healthy, safe and practice common sense. Protecting your health also protects the health of others.

In solidarity,