Planning for Disruption During COVID-19

During an infectious disease outbreak, issues may come up about how to keep you company operational, and at the same time, how to protect your workers from the effects of illness. Your workplace likely will be affected by staff absenteeism, shortages of supplies, and decreased numbers of customers.

Get prepared now with these tips from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)

Tips for Employers

1. **Help protect employees by slowing the spread of the virus**.
   o Provide hand washing facilities and extra sanitizing gels in key places at the workplace (lunchrooms, washrooms, entrances, exits).
   o Ensure cleanliness of work surfaces including door knobs, hand railings as well as shared telephones, keyboards, computer mouse, etc.
   o Increase the distance between workstations
   o Provide good ventilation
   o Allow employees to work from home where possible.
2. **Have corporate policies** that let employees know what to expect in a pandemic, especially in terms of sick leave and leave to care for families. Make sure employees know that they can - and should - stay home if they are not feeling well.
3. **Have a business continuity plan.** Know your business. Be sure to plan for employee absences as well as for increases and decreases in business trade, and for changes in how you do your business. Ensure all employees understand the business continuity plan, their roles, and the roles of specific staff as outlined in the plan.
4. **Provide for adequate training.** Ensure people are trained to cover the job duties of others, and that they are comfortable performing these added job tasks and responsibilities.
5. **Help people stay informed.** Keep everyone informed of what you are doing as well as any information from local or national public health officials.
6. **Watch the daily 12 pm (ET) Government Update and monitor the news.** The Government of Canada is holding a daily update at 12 pm Eastern. As the situation is very fluid, measures that were in place yesterday, may be different today.

Tips for Workers

1. **Know what steps your workplace has in place for a pandemic.** Ask if there is a business continuity plan. Find out what role you have in this plan.
2. **Participate in any training and education your workplace offers**. During a pandemic, it will be essential for various employees to be able to cover some of the duties normally done by co-workers. Help train others to do aspects of your job as well.

3. **Know what "leave" policies your workplace has for sick leave, or for caring for your family.** Knowing what options are available ahead of time will help you know what arrangements you need to make.
4. **Wash your hands the right way**, and at the right times (after using the washroom, before eating, and after touching common surfaces such as doorknobs, railings, telephones, etc.). Do not touch your eyes, mouth or nose as this helps the virus enter your body more easily. Follow personal hygiene steps such as cough etiquette to help slow the spread of the virus.
5. **Have a home emergency kit, and a personal or family plan for a pandemic**. Write down and post your family and work contact information. If you are at home with the flu, or to take care of a family member, be sure to keep in touch with your workplace so they know what your situation is. Also, let your workplace know if you have any medical conditions that may be an issue should you get sick at work.
6. **If you have the flu, or think you might, stay home.** Staying home when sick, and handwashing are the most effective ways to help slow the spread of a virus.