

PRACTICING SAFE FIRST AID AND CPR DURING COVID-19

PURPOSE

The purpose of this toolbox talk is to provide all City of Edmonton worksite first aiders with additional information on how to safely perform their first aid duties under the current COVID-19 restrictions at the workplace.

AUDIENCE

While this document is primarily intended for City worksite first aiders, all City employees including Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committee (JWHSC) Members are encouraged to review the information contained in this toolbox box to ensure they are aware of what the City is doing to protect workers and the public when first aid services are provided at City facilities and worksites.

FIRST AID & CPR - A LIFESAVING ACTIVITY

You have likely heard many times or even experienced the simple fact that providing First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) to an injured or ill person can be a life saving activity. Situations can arise at work, at home or while out in the public where a person can require immediate First Aid and CPR.

Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, qualified first aiders must still continue to provide life saving first aid treatment at the worksite. Due to the higher risk for COVID-19 to spread as a result of routine first aid practices, including CPR, the following toolbox talk has been developed to support all City first aiders in taking the proper safety precautions to minimize the risk for COVID-19 spread when providing first aid to other co-workers or members of the public.

Because first aid and CPR may directly expose the first aider or victim to respiratory and other body fluids (droplets and aerosols), through which COVID-19 may be transmitted (spread), certain safety precautions called Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures should be followed to minimize transmission risk.

These IPC measures are described in more detail later in this toolbox talk. It is very important to remember that IPC measures should be practised, not just during the COVID-19 pandemic, but at all times, to prevent exposure to other biological hazards, such as blood and body fluids, in addition to COVID-19.

For additional information on the COVID-19 pandemic and the City of Edmonton's response and relaunch resources, check out COVID-19 City of Edmonton Employee Information on [edmonton.ca](https://www.edmonton.ca).

FIRST AIDER REQUIREMENTS FOR WORKSITES

The [Alberta Occupational Health and Safety \(OH&S\) Code](#) sets the requirements for the minimum number of trained first aiders that must be present at a worksite, at any given time, during the worksite's operation. Each City worksite must ensure that the number of first aiders present during operations and their type of first aid training qualifications comply with OH&S Code Part 11 and Schedule 2 (tables 5, 6 or 7).

City worksites which have continued to operate during COVID-19, in addition to worksites which have employees returning from working at home, are encouraged to review their designated first aider lists to ensure OH&S requirements are met. Worksites where employees are returning are also encouraged to inspect all first aid kits and AEDs before resuming work to ensure the kits and AEDs are fully stocked, and critical supplies have not expired. First aid kit and equipment lists may be found in the OH&S Code, Schedule 2 (table 3). If your worksite has not already done

so, maintain a supply of non-medical masks readily accessible to your worksite first aid kits. Ensure these masks are protected from contamination by placing them in a sealed ziploc bag next to the first aid kit. This bag should contain at least three (3) non-medical masks; two (2) of which may be used by the attending first aiders, and one (1) which may be used for the victim receiving first aid. For additional information on the process to follow to order COVID-19 supplies, including non-medical masks, check out the [COVID-19 Critical Supplies](#) document.

The OH&S Code also sets the minimum training requirements for the different types of first aid training (advanced, standard or emergency first aid courses), and approves third party providers to deliver this training. Approved first aid training agencies issue a first aid certificate to workers who successfully complete an approved first aid training course. Only the Government of Alberta approved first aid training agencies are used to deliver first aid and CPR training to City employees.

For additional information on approved first aid training providers, check out the Government of Alberta's - Occupational Health & Safety [Approved First Aid Training Agencies](#) list.

For additional information on enrolling in a first aid course provided through the City of Edmonton, check out the OneCity [Training & Development - First Aid, CPR & AED](#) webpage.

CERTIFICATION RENEWAL DURING COVID-19 AND RELAUNCH

Under normal circumstances, first aid and CPR training certifications are valid for up to 3 years from the initial date the training was successfully completed. Workers must retrain shortly before or after the certificate expiry date.

During the initial COVID-19 restrictions, a number of first aid training agencies modified their certification and renewal process in response to stopping all in class training by extending all certification expiry dates to the end of June 2020 with approval from Alberta Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S). Following the above extension date, first aid training providers are permitted to resume in class training delivery alongside all other business permitted to open under Stage 2 of the [Alberta relaunch guideline](#), which commenced on June 12, 2020.

At this stage of the relaunch, some training agencies are resuming in class training while others are offering online initial certification or renewal training. Check with the training agency that issued your certification to determine your options for certificate renewal due to the varied training delivery approach different training providers are taking.

For additional information on options for completing initial certification training that is provided through the City of Edmonton, check out the OneCity [Training & Development - First Aid, CPR & AED](#) webpage.

MINIMIZING COVID-19 TRANSMISSION RISK DURING FIRST AID AND CPR ^{3, 4, 11}

ASSESSING THE EMERGENCY SITUATION

All first aid services, including those provided during the COVID-19 pandemic, must always begin with an assessment of the emergency situation and the first aider(s) taking the proper safety precautions for personal protection first. When responding to an emergency situation potentially requiring first aid, consider the following:

- Assess the situation, and check for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) from the victim.
- Call 911 if necessary or have someone else do this for you, such as a bystander.

- Obtain or call for an AED to be on standby.
- If critical intervention is not needed, initially ask the person from a distance:
 - Are you having any respiratory illness symptoms?
 - Have you been in contact with anyone who has been sick?
- Determine if the victim can treat themselves with direction and supplies from the first aider (minor injuries):
 - If the injured person is able to self-treat, they should be instructed in how to do so, and the first aider should remain on standby to treat the injured person should it become necessary;
 - If the person cannot treat themselves, put on the appropriate level of protection for the incident, such as gloves and surgical/procedure mask.^{6, 7, 8, 9}
- Limit bystanders to be at least 2 meters (approximately 6 feet) away unless you request their assistance.
- After treating the victim:
 - Sanitize all reusable equipment with soap and water then disinfect with an approved disinfectant.
 - Use of a broad spectrum disinfectant compatible with the material being sanitized can also be used.
 - Discard all single use disposable (non-reusable) items.
- Upon event completion, remove gloves and mask, if used, and dispose of these into the regular garbage.
- Clean hands with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitizer (minimum 60% alcohol content).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION (CPR)

Research has shown that the most effective CPR includes cycles of 30 chest compressions and 2 breaths, with application of an AED as soon as possible. Performing the breaths can create the potential for the first aider to become exposed to respiratory fluids (droplet and/or aerosol) which may contain the COVID-19 virus, or for the first aider to pass on the virus to the victim if they are not showing [COVID-19 symptoms](#) but may have the virus.

One very effective method to protect both first aider and victim when providing breaths during CPR, is to use a device called a pocket mask as a barrier device. The pocket mask is equipped with a one-way valve and a viral filter to prevent the first aider and victim from coming into contact with each other's respiratory fluids. These devices may be purchased through first aid equipment suppliers, and are also typically found in the pouch attached to an AED.

COMPRESSION ONLY (HANDS-ONLY) CPR^{4, 11}

As a first aider, if you are in a position to assist someone who is unresponsive and not breathing by performing CPR and you do not have access to a pocket mask to safely provide ventilations (breaths), your potential for exposure to respiratory infections, including COVID-19, can be reduced (but not eliminated) by taking the following precautions and performing Hands-Only CPR:

- Consider the previously mentioned precautions.

- Put on the necessary PPE based on emergency and victim scene assessment, which during COVID-19, should include the minimum:
 - Nitrile gloves;
 - Non-medical surgical/procedure mask;
 - Safety glasses or face shield (if available).
- Lay a cloth, a towel or clothing over the victim's mouth and nose to prevent potential respiratory fluids from escaping into the air during compressions before providing Hands-Only CPR.
 - A non-medical surgical/procedure mask may also be used if there is one available, if the victim is able to tolerate wearing the mask.
- Perform Hands-Only CPR with continuous chest compressions and do not provide ventilations.
- Continue Hands-Only CPR until EMS arrives.
- Upon event completion, remove gloves and mask, if used, and dispose of these into the regular garbage.
- Clean hands with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitizer (minimum 60% alcohol content).

For additional information on providing Hands-Only CPR, in addition to instructional video, check out the Heart and Stroke Canada [Hands Only CPR](#) and American Heart Association [Hands Only CPR FAQ](#)

To order COVID-19 related supplies, such as disposable nitrile gloves and non-medical masks, consult the Corporate Procurement and Supply Services (CPSS) - [COVID-19 Critical Supplies Process](#) document.

AQUATICS FIRST AIDERS IN RECREATION FACILITIES^{1, 2}

PROVIDING FIRST AID & CPR IN AQUATICS ENVIRONMENTS DURING COVID-19

In response to the higher risk for COVID-19 transmission when providing first aid and CPR and considering the unique circumstances and challenges to maintaining first aider safety in aquatic environments, aquatics training organizations such as the Lifesaving Society of Canada, are recommending a specific change to resuscitation procedures and practices for this group of first aiders. For all other non-aquatics first aid emergencies, consult the material above.

For additional information regarding aquatics first aid changes in response to COVID-19 and relaunch, consult the Lifesaving Society's: [Re-Activating Aquatics in Alberta - Guidelines for Aquatics Operations and Programs](#).

EDMONTON FIRE RESCUE SERVICES (EFRS) MEDICAL FIRST RESPONDERS

EFRS firefighters are trained in Medical First Response (MFR) and provide basic first-on-scene emergency medical care to patients before and after Emergency Medical Services (EMS) arrives. EFRS has implemented advanced safety precautions and response protocols to support the nature of their medical response activities, which incorporate additional PPE to protect against COVID-19 transmission when providing medical aid services.

For additional information regarding these protocols, EFRS members are encouraged to speak with their platoon Captain, Training Coordinator, Safety Engagement Lead.

REFERENCES

1. Lifesaving Society Canada [COVID-19 Resuscitation & First Aid Recommendations](#) & [Re-Activating Aquatics in Alberta - Guidelines for Aquatics Operations and Programs](#)
2. Lifesaving Society Canada [Recommendations for Progressive Reopening](#)
3. Red Cross First Aid Tips [Red Cross First Aid Tips](#)
4. Heart and Stroke Canada [Hands Only CPR](#)
5. Alberta Health Services [AHS COVID-19 Information](#)
6. Alberta Health Services [N95 Respirator Use Information](#)
7. Alberta Health Services [Masks and You FAQ Video](#)
8. Alberta Health [How To Wear Non-Medical Mask Poster](#)
9. Alberta Health [Guidance for Wearing Non-Medical Masks](#)
10. WorkSafe BC [First Aid during COVID-19](#)
11. American Heart Association [Hands Only CPR FAQ](#)

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information regarding First Aid and CPR safety precautions as a result of COVID-19, contact your Safety Engagement Lead using the OHS Services Team Delivery Department Contact tool on Once City (One City>People+Groups>Department Contacts).