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*For the most up to date information, refer to the [Employee Guide](#) or visit the [COVID-19 onecity page](#).*

*Note: Bookmark a link to this document. Do not download a copy. The link will always take you to the most current version of this document.*

# Employee Reorientation to the Workplace

## Introduction

In response to the control measures required to create a safe workplace for City of Edmonton employees, your workplace has changed. The following information is meant to reintroduce you to your workplace and inform you on the changes that have taken place and how to navigate them.

This information is meant for all City of Edmonton employees working in a variety of types of workplaces, including public spaces or at home. It also includes details on the Workplace Reintegration Plan which, rather than directing the return to the workplace, outlines how to do so safely, should an appropriate business need arise.

## Guiding Principles

This is grounded in our Safe Cultural Commitment — we value, respect and protect the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of each other and those we serve. Additionally, we will:

- prioritize the health, safety and wellness of our employees first. The cornerstone of our operations is our employees — beginning with the Employee Experience.
- Continue to align with the Government of Alberta's Provincial Health Guidelines.
- maintain a re-exit plan and readiness for a sustained pandemic response.
- implement these measures and continue to manage the risks related to a COVID-19 outbreak based on the hierarchy of controls.

## Hierarchy of Controls

Our guidelines align with Provincial Health Guidelines and guidance and follow the control methods below:

- Engineering Controls
  - Isolate people from hazards and place barriers or partitions between them.
- Administrative Controls
  - change the way people work or act, including changes in policy or procedures to reduce or minimize hazard exposure, such as limiting the size of gatherings or hours of operations.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
  - Use equipment to minimize exposure to hazards -- for example, using masks or gloves when unable to physically distance

Note: When a hazard cannot be controlled by a single method such as an engineering control, a combination of controls should be used to achieve an acceptable level of safety.

## Workplace Reintegration Plan

Occupancy of City buildings is based on the implementation of safety protocols and processes to ensure safety of employees and the public including governance and monitoring of compliance/adherence to safety measures and controls.

### Who is Returning to the Workplace

For Phase 2 (current state) the following decision-making factors are to be considered when determining if employees return to their workplace:

- job function requirements
- business/customer needs
- mental health and wellness (wanting to return to the office)

Business area leadership will determine who within their workforce will continue to work from home under the Temporary Work From Home Arrangement and who will return to the workplace and will communicate their reintegration plan to their employees.

Additionally, throughout the summer, employees are encouraged to work from the office one day per pay period to get reoriented. Leaders are to help coordinate and monitor occupancy of their work areas ensuring that 33% is not exceeded.

PHASE 1 - The City has returned to this phase. All employees who are able to work from home must do so. Employees should only attend the workplace if their physical presence is required for operational effectiveness.	
BUILDING TYPE	DESCRIPTION OF OCCUPANCY
<b>Occupied / Relaunch</b> Buildings that have continued to be occupied throughout the pandemic to support essential services or have relaunched as approved by ELT.	Continued occupancy of building and/or reintegration of staff to an Occupancy threshold of 33%.  Leaders must review their business needs for anyone who is attending the workplace - the focus should be on necessary tasks that need to be completed from the work site and mental health and wellness considerations.
<b>Low-Rise</b> Buildings of four or fewer floors where an elevator is generally not essential and which is generally made up of office spaces.	
<b>High-Rise</b> Buildings of four or more floors where an elevator is necessary	Leaders must review their business needs for anyone who is attending the workplace - the focus should be on necessary tasks that require physical presence or to be completed from the work

for the majority of staff. These include Century Place, Chancery Hall, Edmonton Tower, Scotia Place and MNP Tower.	site and mental health and wellness considerations.
<b>PHASE 2</b> - The City was previously at this phase up to September 15.	
<b>BUILDING TYPE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION OF OCCUPANCY</b>
<b>All Types of Buildings</b>	Occupancy threshold of up to 33%. Employees who are not required to attend the worksite for business needs will continue to temporarily work from home. Employees who have an interest in returning to the workplace may return before November 15, within the 33% occupancy.
<b>PHASE 3</b> - Subject to Public Health Orders, further information will be provided on a date.	
<i>NOTE: higher occupancy in some buildings has been approved, and will continue to be, when hazard assessments and inspections confirm that effective controls allow for greater capacity and an appropriate business need has been identified with approval from the Deputy City Manager (DCM). New requests require approval of the business area DCM.</i>	

## COVID-19 Control Measures

### Physical Distancing

Physical Distancing is required on all worksites effective September 16, 2021. All employees are required to stay at least 2 metres (6 feet) apart, whenever possible, even when masked.

### COVID-19 Pre-Shift Screening Checklist

It is important to reduce the risk of an employee coming to work that may have COVID-19. The self-screening checklist is a quick and convenient way for you to screen for any symptoms of COVID-19 prior to your shift.

All employees working at City of Edmonton or other work sites are required to complete a pre-shift screening prior to starting their shift. Before leaving for work, you complete the [COVID-19 Pre-Shift Screening Checklist \(printable version\)](#) at home to determine if you are fit for work. Employees who are working from home are not required to complete the checklist unless they are reporting for work outside of the home, but they are encouraged to monitor themselves for symptoms.

## Masking

As of August 31, 2021 face coverings are required for all employees in all indoor City of Edmonton owned and operated facilities and workspaces (including City vehicles). Limited exemptions are when a person is alone at a workstation, separated by a physical barrier, consuming food or drink, or based on a hazard assessment.

## Workstation Cleaning and Disinfecting

It's everyone's responsibility to maintain a clean and sanitary workplace. In preparation for increased occupancy, we will increase the cleaning of routinely touched surfaces such as tabletops, door handles, common seating areas, bathroom fixtures, boardroom phones and keyboards.

**If the necessary disinfectant cleaning supplies are not available in your work area, please speak with your supervisor.**

Follow these three easy steps on your personal workspace when required, and prior to using a shared workspace:

1. Use a disinfectant solution sprayed on a paper towel or disposable disinfectant cloth to wipe down hard surfaces. These include: keyboard, mouse, phone, desktop, chair armrests, door handles, cabinet door/drawers and table tops.

It is important to understand how to disinfect a surface. Each product requires certain amounts of time to be effective. Ensure that you read and follow the instructions on the product labels.

2. Carefully dispose of the sanitization materials immediately after use.
3. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after using products.

Business Areas are responsible to ensure they have an appropriate amount of cleaning and disinfecting supplies available for their staff at all times. Additional supplies are available through [CPSS](#).

In addition to proactive, regular cleaning and disinfection, workplaces must be prepared for a rapid response if an employee develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at work. In this case, the Rapid Response procedures must be followed immediately. Information can be found in the [Supervisor Toolkit for Pre-Shift Screening and Rapid Response](#).

## Meetings

Meetings and training should be conducted virtually wherever possible. If a meeting is held, limit the number of attendees to those necessary, allow for 2 metres of spacing wherever possible and follow mandatory masking requirements.

Meeting rooms that are used will be disinfected on a daily basis per standard cleaning procedures. Disinfectant products will be left in each meeting room for employee use. Users are recommended to disinfect before and after using any high-touch surfaces including: door handles, tabletops, arm rests and computer mouse/keyboard. Be sure to wash your hands afterwards. If appropriate disinfectant products are not found in a meeting room, please inform your supervisor.

## Escalators, Elevators and Stairwells

Elevators have high rates of air exchange which places riding an elevator with all passengers wearing masks in a low exposure risk category, with a relative risk similar to that of shopping in a supermarket. Employees are encouraged to wash their hands and avoid touching their face after touching elevator buttons. Some employees may choose to wear a mask until they are seated at their workstation and that choice must be respected.

Leaders are encouraged to be flexible with start and end times so that crowding at buildings requiring the use of elevators is limited.

Depending on the building, there may be a limited occupancy for the elevator. Employees are expected to comply with any occupancy limit. Employees are encouraged to use the stairs, to ensure that elevators remain accessible to people who are unable to use the stairs.

## Washrooms, Locker Rooms, Change Rooms and Showers

There are no occupancy limits for washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms or showers. Employees are expected to be courteous to one another and encouraged to give others space where possible. Routine hand washing is the first line of defence against COVID-19. Drying your hands well is equally important in minimizing the spread of COVID-19.

## Kitchens/Dining Areas

There are no occupancy limits for kitchens/dining rooms. Employees are strongly encouraged to distance themselves when eating and give others space in the kitchen area.

Some changes to these areas include:

- Communal meals should not be provided nor should food be made available in common areas where employees may congregate. Communal condiments must be removed.
- Kitchen appliances (fridge, kettle, microwave, coffee machines, drinking fountains, etc.) must be wiped down after use.
- The 'Sanitize' setting on the dishwasher must be used. If this setting is not available, use the highest temperature setting. Ensure you wash your hands before unloading the dishwasher.

Kitchen areas should be cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis at minimum by custodial services. High-touch surfaces should be cleaned by each user.

## Print/Copy Rooms

Wherever possible be mindful of others and wait to enter print/copy mail rooms until others have left. Users should disinfect all high-touch surfaces after using them. This includes but is not limited to: keypads, paper, staplers, hole punches, supply cabinets. Wash hands after disinfecting. Include print/copy rooms in daily cleaning routines.

## Building Ventilation

Ventilation is an effective measure to reduce the concentration of airborne disease in indoor locations, and the Government of Alberta encourages operators to ensure ventilation systems are well maintained and functioning optimally for the control of COVID-19 (and other respiratory illnesses) in the workplace. The City of Edmonton has a dedicated team responsible for the daily operation and maintenance of building ventilation systems throughout City-owned buildings, ensuring that building ventilation is maximized at all times and does not drop below minimum ventilation requirements.

## Fire Safety and Evacuations

Due to limited occupancy, there may not be a fire warden in your area at all times. It is important that you familiarize yourself with the Emergency Response Plan for your facility and know how to respond in case of emergency. ERPs can be found on [Onecity](#) or posted on the health and safety board at your facility.

# Working Through Concerns With Respect, Empathy & Inclusivity

Returning to the workplace after working from home for a long period of time can be stressful. For some, the level of uncertainty and change has been a great challenge. Others will welcome the chance to return to the workplace. Be mindful of different perspectives on the reorientation to the workplace and consider the tips below.

## Plan to connect

Plan an opportunity to connect virtually with one another about returning to work. Discuss the comfort level each of you has with workplace reintegration. Don't make assumptions that your colleagues have similar needs, requirements or concerns as you. Talk to each other about these issues and respect each individual's perspective. Do not ask colleagues whether they have been vaccinated.

## Assume positive interactions

Start by assuming your colleague has good intentions. Because you have not been working alongside one another, it sometimes can be easy to misread or misinterpret what others are trying to say or how they are acting.

## Support your teammates mental health

Returning to work may be very stressful for some employees. Child care, family health, and financial concerns have affected a great number of people. Others may be very excited and enthusiastic about returning to work. Be empathetic and supportive with each other as we return to work and be respectful of the diversity of issues that people might be facing. Likewise, some employees may face extra stress when working from home and should be supported through this time.

## Communicate

Be open and honest in your two-way communication. Be aware that some people may need extra time or support to get back into their routines. If you are struggling or are feeling overwhelmed, communicate that to your colleagues, supervisors, or other supports for assistance. Don't face these challenges alone.

## Speak calmly and respectfully

If emotions start running high, we can say things that are mean and hurtful. When we lash out, it is because we are perceiving a threat and our body is responding with a fight or flight response.



You have the ability to re-engage the reasoning part of your brain by asking yourself a question such as “What am I really angry about?”, “Am I *reacting* or *responding*?”, “What story am I telling myself about this situation?”, or “What might be happening for the other person?”.

### **Additional Resources for Working Through Concerns With Respect, Empathy & Inclusivity:**

[Giving & Receiving Feedback in the Workplace](#) [Unconscious Bias at Work](#)

[Return to the Workplace: A psychological toolkit for heading back to work](#)

## **Information for Leaders**

### **Communicating with staff who are returning to the workplace**

Coming back to the workplace after working from home can be filled with excitement, anxiety or maybe even fear. Two-way communication with staff is crucial to ensure staff are aware of any requirements and able to share any concerns they may have with returning. Leaders are encouraged to review individual situations and work with the employee to arrive at a mutually acceptable strategy for returning to the workplace where needed. Factor in such things as dependent care needs, transportation, work requirements and hours of work.

Here are a few ways you can help your staff reorient themselves to the workplace.

#### **Help them feel safe**

- Create opportunities to talk about anxiety and fears of coming back to the workplace.
- Create awareness of the extra precautions that are being taken to keep your team safe, including pre-shift screening, cleaning and disinfecting, and isolation and quarantine.
- Encourage staff to respectfully ask others for personal space if someone is too close.

#### **Help rebuild connections**

- Take time to rebuild your work relationships.
- Try not to make assumptions as to how your employees feel. Ask questions such as “How are you feeling about returning to work?” or “How can I best support you?” and recognize that this may change for an individual over time. Continue being curious.
- Set up regular check-ins with individuals and the team.

#### **Communicate safety protocols and expectations**

It will be important for leaders to provide information to staff on safety protocols and responsibilities upon return. It is recommended that leaders communicate to staff any unique requirements regarding their site including: use of common or shared areas, particular cleaning protocols, where cleaning products can be obtained and how to raise concerns, as needed.