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MANUFACTURERS
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COVID-19: SOCIAL DISTANCING IN THE MANUFACTURING WORKPLACE

PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES

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SOCIAL DISTANCING:
PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES IN THE MANUFACTURING WORKPLACE

Along with hand hygiene, social distancing is one of the most important tools in our fight to control the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing, also known as physical distancing, means avoiding or limiting contact with others wherever possible. The Government of Canada's current guidance on social distancing can generally be applied to most manufacturing work environments by making changes in everyday routines to minimize close contact with others. This may include limiting exposure to crowded places, temporarily prohibiting certain common greetings like handshakes, and creating a distance of at least two meters between employees, as much as possible. And most importantly, ensuring that any worker feeling sick or experiencing symptoms of illness stays home is critical to keeping your workforce, and your business, healthy.

Ensuring that handwashing stations and materials are available is relatively simple, but when and how do we enforce social distancing in a Lean facility where each and every square foot has been accounted for and wasted motion and space have been eliminated?

BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES
SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing not only keeps employees safe but is also an important tool to mitigate risk in the event of an employee positive COVID-19 diagnosis. Preventative social distancing measures may mean the difference between a manufacturers' ability to continue operations or face an extended shutdown. Effective implementation hinges on ensuring that all staff are aware of what social distancing is, how it helps, and why it is important to change how we interact. To help companies communicate this message, Health Canada has produced a number of guidelines and tools.

Organizations that operate in a campus environment should consider restricting each building to those employees who need access to perform their necessary job functions only. If possible, all organizations can further protect employees and their business by additionally isolating teams and limiting contact where practical.

CME and our health and safety experts at Made Safe have compiled a list of social distancing best practices in the manufacturing work environment. A summary of recommendations is included below, by operational area:

ON THE FLOOR

1. Time Clocks (Punching In & Out)

- Determine if actual physical punching in is needed or if it can be temporarily forgone or completed using an alternative procedure during the COVID-19 crisis, such as a simple checklist at the entrance.

- Stagger arrival times and/or shift start times and develop a schedule for arrival that allows for following the social distancing guidelines.

- Look for the high touch areas in your punching in process and eliminate them. This may include opening the entrance door and keeping the door propped open, or having a supervisor check names off a list rather than punching in. Where they cannot be eliminated, consider marking the floor in areas where queues occur with tape every six feet.

2. Entrance screening station

- Set up a thermal imaging camera station (using floor markings and one-way traffic flow). Imaging must be focused on the head area.

- If no thermal imaging, non-contact laser thermometers can be used on the forehead. Non-contact thermometers are not as accurate as the various contact varieties; however, all contact thermometers should be considered too invasive for the work environment and a possible virus transmission. Study summaries on the effectiveness of non-contact thermometers can [be found here](#).

3. At workstation

- Where possible and practical, adjust work areas so that workers are spaced at least six feet from one another. This may mean spreading shifts over a longer day or adding an extra shift to operations.

- Provide physical barriers between workstations. If plexiglass is not available or cost prohibitive, consider using rolls of poly sheeting. Focus first on areas where workers are required to be within two metres (six feet), such as assembly lines.

- When workers must be within two meters, ensure that each worker wears a mask and practices safe and frequent hand hygiene. Workers may also wear safety glasses to prevent touching eyes and faces. Disinfect frequently, use anti-fog wipes to prevent workers needing to take off the glasses.

- Wherever possible, do not allow employees' shared tools. Any tools that must be shared must be disinfected before and after each worker uses them.

- Eliminate huddle meetings and if not practical, minimize the number of attendees.

4. Shipping / Receiving

- Stagger delivery to minimize contact.

- Arrange for contactless delivery wherever possible.

- Follow the guidelines on these CME Tips Sheets:

    [Handling Shipments of Imported Goods & Packages](#)

    [Using Disinfectants Correctly & Steps for High Touch Areas](#)

5. Maintenance Shop

- Eliminate or reduce shared tools. For all shared tools, implement disinfecting before and after each worker uses them. Most importantly, consider how employees will access these shared tools and mitigate the risk of employees meeting at certain stations.

- Eliminate shared worktables and benches in favour of single worker stations.

6. General tips

- Consider making high-traffic aisle ways one way. Mark with arrows using tape on the floors and add signage to aisleways.

- Post Social Distancing signage in poster format in multiple languages appropriate to your workforce. A number of provinces have produced sample posters in multiple languages, like the one found here.

- Expand cleaning and disinfecting activities beyond eating area. Arrange for a cleaning company to provide large scale disinfecting to the manufacturing areas.

- Add hand sanitizer stations to high traffic areas and mark a wait line six feet from the station to ensure appropriate spacing. Consider doing the same for water fountains/stations.

IN THE OFFICE

- Look for the high touch areas in your punching in process and eliminate them or mitigate risk with signage. Shared resources usually include admin tools, like the copier, water cooler, document processing, etc

- All workers who can work from home should be working from home.
    Purchase the needed electronics to allow workers to be effective away from the office.
    Teleconference whenever possible. Test the boundaries of what is considered possible for teleconferences. Include internal meetings with in-house staff on the list of teleconference meetings.
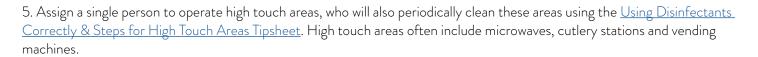
BREAKROOMS & CAFETERIAS

1. Stagger break times so that fewer people are in the room at the same time.

- To identify break time staggering requirements, apply some math to your break schedules (e.g. 120-minute window for lunch break divided by 40 employees who need to take their 30-minute break = 10 people in the break room at a time).

- Use floor markings (such as tape, stickers or paint) to encourage one-way traffic.

- If the break room will only accommodate six people with social distancing, remove all except six chairs in the room.

- Consider using plastic dividers between stations and adjust furniture so that employees are not facing one another.

- If the break room cannot accommodate social distancing using a two-hour window, a longer window will be needed.

2. Replace "Made to Order" food service with "Grab and Go" premade options.

3. Use tape or stickers to mark off two metre spacing:

- At the tables
- In front of coolers
- In front of vending machines
- In front of the microwaves
- In cafeteria lines

4. Clean and prevent contamination of additional areas. Potentially chemically contaminated space must not be used as break rooms, as best practice and also under legislation, such as part 4.15 of Manitoba's Workplace Safety & Health Regulation MR 217. Other jurisdictions will have similar requirements. If there are unused, or underused, areas in your facility that could be made fit for using as additional breaks rooms, do so.

5. Assign a single person to operate high touch areas, who will also periodically clean these areas using the Using Disinfectants Correctly & Steps for High Touch Areas Tipsheet. High touch areas often include microwaves, cutlery stations and vending machines.

6. Staff who have desks should eat lunch at their desks.

7. Weather permitting, encourage staff to eat lunch outside while continuing to observe social distancing.

BATHROOMS, CHANGE AND LOCKER ROOMS

1. Ensure hygiene supplies are available.

2. Post hand washing and cough hygiene posters in the locker room in languages appropriate to your workplace (Sample cough etiquette poster in 32 languages | Sample hand washing poster in 32 languages).

3. Encourage workers to change out of the clothing that they arrive at work in and into clean clothing for the work shift, changing back as they leave the shift.

4. Eliminate all on-site leisure activities. Company gym facilities, clubs, extracurricular meetings should be postponed and only work essential to the companies continued operations continued.

ACCESS TO EXPERTS
CME AND MADE SAFE ARE HERE TO HELP

Our team is dedicated to helping manufacturers through the COVID-19 pandemic; with resources that run the gamut from national advocacy to local shop floor solutions.

Contact our team of health and safety experts for manufacturing-specific insights and supports:

INFO@MADESAFE.CA | CME-MEC.CA

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