

UBC Employee COVID-19 Physical Distancing Guidance

Overview

Employers need to take all necessary precautions to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission and illness to employees by identifying exposure hazards and developing measures to control exposure. Physical distancing requires us to limit close contact with others by keeping at least two meters (six feet) away from one another. For some, physical distancing will be difficult as many everyday tasks involve employees having to work closely together (e.g. confined spaces, manual material handling, maintaining/repairing equipment, retail services).

This document provides guidance about UBC's stance on physical distancing in the workplace.

Visit ubc.ca/covid19 for more information about UBC's response to COVID-19, including frequently asked questions.

Current Health Guidance Relating to Physical Distancing

Throughout the current COVID-19 global outbreak UBC has taken direction on infection prevention from the Provincial Health Officer, the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) and Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), and continues to do so. This guidance can be expected to evolve as these agencies continually monitor accumulating scientific evidence to determine how we can best prevent the spread of COVID-19.

As this document has been developed, the current health guidance from the above agencies can be summarized as follows:

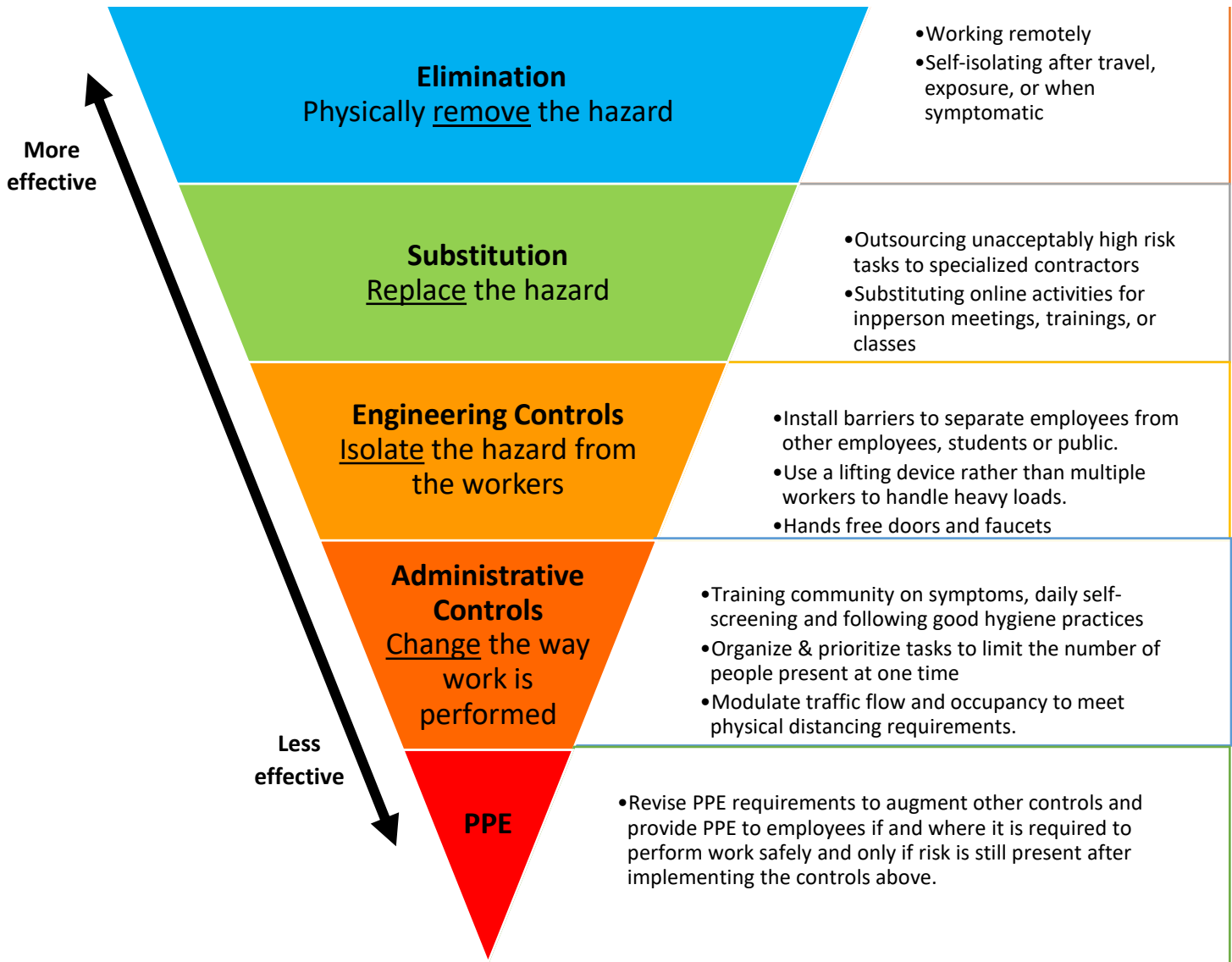
- Physical distancing means limiting close contact with other people to slow the spread of an infectious disease by keeping at least two meters (six feet) away from one another.
- Physical distancing is proven to be one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of illness during an outbreak.
- Work from home and conduct virtual meetings, if possible.
- Stay home as much as possible.
- When outside of your home, practice physical distancing.
- If you are ill, have flu like symptoms or have a fever or cough, you should stay home.
- Avoid crowded places and non-essential gatherings
- Greet people with a wave instead of a handshake.

Achieving Physical Distancing via the Hierarchy of Controls

Based on the current public health guidance and operational needs on our sites, UBC's position on Physical Distancing is that all necessary precautions must be taken to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission to employees. Where physical distance requirements are not met by current Safe Work Procedures (SWPs), tasks may not be assigned unless SWPs are amended as per the [Safe Work Procedure \(SWP\) Review Form](#) to address this additional hazard.

Not all SWPs or common practices allow for easy physical distancing due to space constraints, equipment design, load-splitting needs, etc. Where working in close quarters is used to address another identified hazard, e.g. over exertion, identifying and developing alternative measures to control the original hazard is the best practice. Where this is not possible, additional measures to address infectious risk should be monitored carefully to ensure they do not introduce additional risks.

The best practice for mitigating risk is to follow the Hierarchy of Controls. Note that the examples provided are not exhaustive. Contact Safety & Risk Services for assistance in finding options suitable for your needs.



It is important to note that while the controls are listed in order of effectiveness, all types of controls should be considered and generally work best in combination.

If you have any questions or require advice about Physical Distancing at UBC, please contact Safety & Risk Services by emailing ready.ubc@ubc.ca.