

INFORMATION FOR NIFCS EMPLOYEES REGARDING NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

The health and safety of our Agency and staff are of the utmost importance, which is why we are reaching out to address concerns regarding the Wuhan novel coronavirus (COVID-19). NIFCS is aware of the coronavirus outbreak in China and around the world. With confirmed cases in Canada, we are monitoring the situation's potential impact. Further, we are working with local, provincial and federal health agencies to stay apprised of updates.

WHAT IS NIFCS DOING?

At the Agency, we will be implementing increased measures such as an awareness campaign to help staff and the communities we serve to be mindful to precautionary practices; distribution of [World Health Organization](#) communication material; additional cleaning protocols in high touch areas; enhanced client surveillance in accordance with public health requirements.

At this time, there have been no presumptive confirmed cases of the virus in Prince Rupert, Terrace, and in the communities, we serve. Further, Health Authorities have assessed the risk as low. As such, all NIFCS services and related activities will continue as scheduled. Should circumstances change, we will take appropriate action under the direction of public health, and advise staff and communities promptly.

We encourage you to remain up-to-date about the virus and precautionary measures from the Government of Canada. Click on the following link for more information: [coronavirus and its symptoms](#).

ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS

A novel (new) virus that has not previously been seen in humans was identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019. COVID-19 is from the same large family of viruses (coronaviruses) that caused Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS).

HOW IS COVID-19 SPREAD?

COVID-19 can spread from person-to-person, usually after close contact with a person infected with the virus. The virus can be spread either:

- Directly, through contact with an infected person's body fluids (e.g. droplets from coughing or sneezing); or
- Indirectly, through contact with surfaces that an infected person has coughed or sneezed on; therefore, contaminated with the virus. It is still not known how long COVID-19 virus survives on surfaces, although current information suggests the virus may survive a few hours. Simple household disinfectants can kill the virus.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FEEL SICK

As during any flu season, if you feel sick, follow the usual best practices:

- Stay home.
- Avoid close contact with others.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and then throw the tissue away and wash your hands, or cough/sneeze into your elbow.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.

PREVENTION

There are steps you can take to prevent the spread of viruses.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

To reduce the spread of germs, including the novel coronavirus and the flu, we recommend that you:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or hand sanitizer when hands are not visibly dirty.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or elbow and encourage others to do the same.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces, especially those that are high-touch areas.
- Do not share water bottles, straws, eating utensils, cigarettes, toothbrushes, toys or anything else that has been in contact with saliva, nose or throat secretions.
- If you are ill, stay at home and keep yourself away from others.
- If you are ill and must visit a healthcare provider, call ahead or tell them right away when you arrive that you have a respiratory illness and wear a mask while waiting to be seen.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE SYMPTOMS?

If you have flu-like or cold symptoms that escalate, please take the following direction:

- If you are away from the worksite, contact your health-care provider.
- If you are in the office, stay where you are, and have someone phone the health centre at (250) 624-2171 (RUPERT) and (250) 635-2211 (TERRACE).

SCREENING CLIENTS AND COMPANIONS

- The appropriate staff member should screen all clients by phone before appointments are scheduled to determine the risk for COVID-19.
- Staff should also ask about any other person who will be in the home during the appointment (e.g., visitor or family member) and where appropriate, screen this person too.
- Staff should provide further guidance (e.g., over the phone) to clients and others in the home who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and have a recent travel history (within 14 days) to mainland China (e.g., they should call the local public health unit).
- Sample Screening Questions:
 - Do you have a fever and/or new onset of a cough or difficulty breathing; and any of the following:
 - ✓ Recent Travel outside of the area – where? **or**
 - ✓ Close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19? **or**
 - ✓ Close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has been to a known affected area (e.g., China, California, Washington State, etc.)

The symptoms of COVID-19 include cough, temperature and, sometimes breathing difficulties (e.g. shortness of breath).

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Can NIFCS send employees home who we think may have been exposed to or show symptoms of coronavirus?

Employees should be encouraged to go home if they are sick to prevent illnesses from spreading to others in the office, but as far as requiring an employee to go home, NIFCS will follow the same protocol and legislative considerations that we would for any other employee illness or medical absence.