



COVID-19 Update

Dear Member,

This email is intended to provide relevant and reliable information to you about COVID-19 and the services & supports that are available. While much of the information has been relayed to you previously, this email also provides new and updated material.

This resource has been prepared by the BC Building Trades on behalf of its affiliated Unions which includes the members of District Council 38.

You will also be able to find this information on our [COVID-19 web page](#).

Fraternally,
IUPAT District Council 38

Dan Jajic
Business Manager

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COVID-19 General Overview

What the BC Building Trades and its Affiliates are Doing

We are working with provincial and federal governments to help the construction sector successfully navigate COVID-19. This includes:

- Pushing WorkSafeBC to enforce occupational health and safety regulations to make construction sites safe. Our work has resulted in a special “inspectional initiative” to bring construction worksites into compliance with health and safety regulations.
- Lobbying for financial supports for construction workers facing job loss due to COVID-19.
- Coordinating the flow of accurate and relevant information throughout our networks so that our members can find it where and when they need it.
- At the affiliate level, our local unions are variously helping their members access the many supports and services available to them, reaching out to retired and out-of-work members to offer help, assisting their communities manage the crisis by leveraging the unique skills of construction workers, and keeping their members informed about the near-hourly changes to the response to this current health crisis.

COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool

The BC Ministry of Health developed a self-assessment tool to help determine whether you may need further assessment or testing for COVID-19. You can complete this assessment for yourself, or on behalf of someone else, if they are unable. [COVID-19 Self-assessment Tool](#)

Self-monitoring & Self-isolation

The BC Centre for Disease Control offers information on self-monitoring and self-isolation on its [website](#).

Self-monitoring means looking for new symptoms or signs of COVID-19 infection such as fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat, etc.

Self-isolation means staying home and not going to work or school, and monitoring for symptoms for 14 days. Some essential service workers may be exempt from the 14-day self-isolation period.

Check the BCCDC [website](#) for full details.

Who to Call

- Non-medical hotline: 1-888-COVID19 or 1-888-268-4319. The line is staffed from 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, and information is available in more than 110 languages.
- If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in close contact with someone known to have COVID-19, call 811 to speak with a health care professional.

Stay up to date

The B.C. Government has developed a COVID-19 Support application, which lets you receive the latest updates and alerts, and resources from trusted sources. The self-assessment tool is also embedded in the application. Download it from the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#), or access the [web version here](#).

Protecting Your Mental Health

These are challenging times, and we urge you to be mindful of your mental health as well as your physical health.

As a member of the BC Building Trades, you have access to the Construction Industry Rehabilitation Plan, which offers a number of options to keep your mental health in check.

CIRP offers long-term counselling to assist members dealing with depression, anxiety, Substance use, pain management and other mental health concerns. All services are free, completely confidential, and available via video conferencing during this new working-from-home normal.

Visit the [CIRP website](#), email info@constructionrehabplan.com or call 1-888-521-8611 for more information.

Construction is an essential service

Under the province's Emergency Program Act, construction work has been deemed an essential service.

Essential services are those daily services that are essential to preserving life, health, public safety and basic societal functioning.

While the Provincial Health Officer has ordered some types of businesses to close, construction workers are considered non-health essential service providers. All construction work must continue to abide the orders and guidance provided by the Provincial Health Officer to ensure safe operations and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. This is not optional.

More information [here](#).

Guidelines for construction

The BC Government has issued specific guidelines for construction sites operating during COVID-19. The guidelines include:

- No more than 50 people in the same space in any circumstances.
- Employees should maintain a distance of two metres apart.
- Reduce in-person meetings and other gatherings and hold site meetings in open spaces or outside.
- Increase the number of handwashing stations and post signage that identifies their location.

Find the full list [here](#).

Occupational health and safety – washroom facilities on construction sites

The condition and provision of washroom facilities on construction sites and any other workplace is covered by [Section 4.85](#) of the B.C. Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

This regulation requires workplaces to have either fixed or portable washroom facilities that include provisions for hand-washing, and that they are kept in clean and sanitary condition with the proper supplies necessary to use them.

We know that many construction sites are not following these rules, and we are in the process of working with contractors and government to address this issue.

If your construction site is not maintaining proper washroom and hand-washing facilities to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, we ask that you:

- Email us (regardless of whether you are a member of one of our unions) at info@bcbuildingtrades.org so that we can compile information to advocate on your behalf AND
- Call WorkSafe BC at 604-276-3100 (Lower Mainland) or 1-888-621-7233 (toll free) to report your site.

Right to refuse unsafe work

You have the right in B.C. to refuse unsafe work. WorkSafeBC provides the steps to follow in order to achieve a remedy [here](#).

We realize that conditions of “unsafe work” have taken on new meaning in the context of COVID-19. If you feel you are being asked to work unsafely (social distancing and sanitation requirements and recommendations are not being met, for example).

In this case, you should consult your union for advice and direction.

Importantly, workers who voluntarily quit instead of being laid off are normally not entitled to Employment Insurance. However, if you have “just cause” for quitting – you can show that quitting your job was the only reasonable alternative – you may be paid regular EI benefits. Just cause may include occupational health and safety regulations, human rights or labour rights not being followed. See full information on the steps to take [here](#).

Job-protected leave

The B.C. Government has amended the Employment Standards Act to provide job protection to workers who are unable to work due to COVID-19. This allows workers affected by COVID-19 to stay home as needed for the following reasons:

- they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and are acting in accordance with instructions or an order of a medical health officer or the advice of a medical practitioner, nurse practitioner or registered nurse;
- they are in quarantine or self-isolation in accordance with an order of the provincial health officer, an order made under the federal Quarantine Act, or guidelines of the BC Centre for Disease Control or the Public Health Agency of Canada;
- they have been directed by their employer to stay home because of concerns about their exposure to others;
- they are unable to return to B.C. because of a travel or border restriction; or
- they are providing care to their minor child or a dependent adult who is their child or former foster child, including when a school, daycare or similar facility has closed.

There is no limit to how long people can take leave. More information [here](#).

Extension of Occupational Safety Certificates

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, WorkSafeBC is granting extensions on any occupational first aid, or equivalent certificates, that are due to expire between March 1, 2020 and June 30, 2020. These certificates will now be acceptable in the workplace for 90 days beyond their original expiry date. More information [here](#).

Working at home

Construction workers can't work from home, however, some administrative staff

are working remotely due to COVID-19. WorkSafeBC offers guidelines for basic health and safety when working from home.

The employer should ensure a basic health and safety policy is in place to work remotely and that each party understands their role, duties and responsibilities. More information [here](#).

WorkSafeBC claims

WorkSafeBC continues to provide services related to work-related injury or disease, including for new and outstanding claims. All call centres remain open. Information on work-related injury claims for workers is available [here](#).

Financial Relief

Employment Insurance

The Government of Canada has made changes to Employment Insurance in response to COVID-19, including waiving the waiting period for those who qualify for [EI Sickness Benefits](#), as well as waiving the requirement to provide a medical certificate to access these benefits. Members should apply for Sickness Benefits if they are unable to work due to illness, injury or quarantine.

If a job is cancelled or suspended because of COVID-19, members out of work are on an economic lay-off and the current waiting period for EI still applies. We hope this will change, and we are currently lobbying government to eliminate the waiting period altogether. Members who have lost their job through no fault of their own and do not qualify for EI Sickness Benefits should apply for [Regular Benefits](#).

Canada Emergency Response Benefit

For those who do not qualify for paid sick leave or EI benefits, a new [Canada Emergency Response Benefit](#) will provide a taxable benefit of \$2,000 a month for up to four months to:

- workers who must stop working due to COVID19 and do not have access to paid leave or other income support.
- workers who are sick, quarantined, or taking care of someone who is sick with COVID-19.
- working parents who must stay home without pay to care for children that are sick or need additional care because of school and daycare closures.
- workers who still have their employment but are not being paid because there is currently not sufficient work and their employer has asked them not to come to work.
- wage earners and self-employed individuals, including contract workers, who would not otherwise be eligible for Employment Insurance.
- Workers who are already receiving EI should not apply for the Canada

For information on this and additional federal supports, [click here](#).

BC Emergency Benefit

A provincial [Emergency Benefit](#) of \$1,000 is available to workers, regardless of their eligibility for Employment Insurance and any other federal income top-up. Applications will be available in April, with a one-time payment in May.

Rental relief

A new temporary rental supplement of \$500 a month for four months is available to help tenants. Evictions have also been halted and rents have been frozen. The benefit will be available to low- and middle-income tenants who do not qualify for other rental assistance. Funds will be paid directly to landlords on behalf of tenants in order to ensure landlords continue to receive rental income during the pandemic. More information is available [here](#).

In addition, the government has placed a moratorium on all evictions for non-payment of rent.

Utility relief

BC Hydro customers can [defer payments](#) or arrange for flexible payment plans without penalty. They can also access grants of up to \$600 to pay their hydro bills using a [Customer Crisis Fund](#).

Fortis BC has waived late payment fees and will ensure no customer is disconnected from the energy they need due to financial hardship at this time. More information is available [here](#).

Car insurance relief

ICBC customers on monthly payment plans can [defer payments for up to 90 days](#) without penalty.

Tax relief

Deadlines for various tax payments have been extended.

- Personal income tax filing deadline changed to June 1
- If you owe taxes, ability to defer tax payments until August 31

Business tax filing deadline changed to July 31

Student loan relief

Starting March 30, 2020, [B.C. Student Loan](#) payments are automatically frozen for six months. In addition, there is a moratorium on the repayment of [Canada Student Loans](#).

Community Savings Credit Union line of credit

Community Savings Credit Union is offering a special line of credit for workers facing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Those facing job losses can have access to an interest free \$2,500 line of credit.

Due to the current economic situation, the credit union is also maintaining a degree of flexibility for applicants in terms of work history and current employment status. You can still apply for it whether you are receiving EI or other income supports.

Importantly, these offerings are for current or new members of Community Savings only. Workers must join the credit union in order to leverage these options. This is an easy process and although Community Savings has branches throughout B.C., workers do not need to live near a branch in order to sign up; they can apply on the website.

For more information, visit their [website](#).

Contact Us

If you have any questions, you can reach our offices by calling:

- Greater Vancouver **604-524-8334**
- Toll-free **1-800-266-1527**
- e-mail officeservices@dc38.ca
- Prince George **250-962-6951**
- Greater Victoria **250-385-8312**

Office Hours

While the office staff will continue to be available from 8:30am to 4:30pm, both from the office and from home, we ask for your patience as we expect there may be times when we will not be able to respond to you as quickly as we'd like.

We will continually monitor the situation and return to regular business services when it is safe to do so.

Business Representatives

Painter's (Lower Mainland)

Justin Chapman

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