

Essential Service Workers Who have Traveled are Required to Meet Needs of Critical Workforce

The definition of what constitutes essential services, and which workers in those essential service are critical for business continuity, varies between organizations and the public and private sector. Generally essential services are those considered critical to preserving life, health and basic societal functioning. For example, this includes first responders to life threatening events, health care workers who are essential to delivering patient care and life-saving services, critical infrastructure workers such as drinking water, hydro, and natural gas and workers who are essential to supply society by critical goods such as food and medicines.

Primary prevention is key so essential service workers should not travel outside Canada unless travel is part of the essential service that they provide.

Principles to determine whether a worker in an essential service should return to work earlier than 14 days after returning from travel outside of Canada include:

- Preventing new introductions of the virus that causes COVID-19, it is of paramount importance to limit the spread of the virus.
- As of March 13th, the Federal Government declared that ALL travellers from outside of Canada are considered potential carriers of the virus and must self-isolate.
- To preserve essential services, it is key to consider the risk that a returning worker could pose by endangering the health of multiple other essential service staff, which could jeopardize the ability to provide essential services.

Management of essential service should follow the recommended 14-day self-isolation after travel guidance as far as practical and establish thresholds where the delivery of the essential services can no longer be delivered and **then, and only then**, make decisions to waive individual workers from the self-isolation protocol based on an overall risk assessment of:

- Where the person travelled, recognizing that many countries in the world are experiencing significant community transmission of the virus
- Duration and type of activity while away (family visit versus large gathering events)
- Current symptoms of the individual or household. If there are any symptoms demonstrated by the individual or those they live with, they should be assessed and COVID 19 ruled out before returning to work.
- Essential service type and overall risk of reduced or minimal staffing
- Work environment of the individual e.g. whether they work independently, outside or in a group setting.
-

Essential services must establish a protocol to prevent risk of transmission by an essential service worker with a travel history, support rapid response to an essential service worker with a travel history who develops symptoms while at work and maintain high levels of hygiene.

Key elements of such a protocol are:

- Workers who return from travel and critical to the delivery of an essential service may return to work but must take the following additional precautions to reduce the risk to their clients, colleagues, and the public should they become symptomatic:
 - Self-monitor daily for signs and symptoms of illness.
 - Require workers, if they exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, dry cough, etc.) to call 811 for further instructions and self-isolate.
 - Follow Infection prevention and control protocols including diligent hand hygiene and wear procedural mask.
 - Reduce close contact with other workers i.e. maintain a two meter separation and avoid shared spaces where possible.
 - Avoid close contact with others when travelling to and from work and between shifts.
 - Self-isolate at home on days when not required at their workplace.
 - Avoid any unnecessary public establishments.
 - Implement a company-wide, self-distancing policy for all employees requiring a minimum physical distance of 1-2 meters between individuals. This includes avoiding standard greetings that require physical contact such as shaking hands.
 - Increase regularly scheduled cleaning with a disinfecting agent such as antimicrobial disposable wipes or a bleach solution,