

IHSA recommendation for eye protection during pandemic

The Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA) is recommending that workers follow the Ministry of Health COVID-19 Variant of Concern Guidance Document, and, in addition to using proper face masking protocol, all those working in member industries within close proximity to others should also use eye protection that fully covers the eyes. This means safety glasses with side shields, goggles, face shields, or other forms of face/eye protection.

The recommendation for eye protection applies in any circumstance (indoors or outdoors) where the two-metre distance from another person cannot be maintained – regardless of whether that person is also wearing a mask. This is because in many workplaces, there is no assurance about the quality of the masks used by others, and because there is no guarantee everyone wears their masks correctly.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, IHSA member firms have been working successfully to reduce the virus hazard on jobsites as best as possible. As Variants of Concern (VOCs) continue to spread, it is important to consider all forms of source control, including eye protection.

When a positive test has been confirmed in a workplace, the Ontario Ministry of Health has laid out four high-risk scenarios for exposure between a person who has a confirmed case of COVID-19 and those who have been exposed to that person:

1. When both are wearing masks but the person who has been exposed is not wearing eye protection while being within two metres of the person with a confirmed case.
2. When the person with a confirmed case is not wearing a mask, and the person who has been exposed is not wearing both a medical mask and eye protection, for any duration of exposure except for a transient exposure while within two metres of each other.
3. When the person who has been exposed is not wearing a mask, even if the person with a confirmed case is wearing a mask (medical or non-medical), for any duration of exposure except for a transient exposure while within two metres of each other.
4. Any direct physical contact with a person who has a confirmed case should be assessed based on consistent and appropriate use of recommended PPE.*

For those involved in a high-risk exposure, the recommendation is that they be tested immediately and quarantine for 14 days.

Hands-on work often necessitates the use of eye protection, such as safety glasses with side shields, goggles, face shields, or other forms of face/eye protection. IHSA considers the use of such devices, along with the masking requirements laid out by provincial and federal authorities, as a best practice on current jobsites.

Please visit your local health unit's website or contact their offices to find out their recommendations on eye protection.

The following links provide additional information on personal protective equipment (PPE) and outbreak management.

- ***Ministry of Health**
https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/VOC_guidance.pdf
- **Public Health Ontario**
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/ppe>
- **Ottawa Public Health**
https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/professionals-and-partners/resources/Documents/COVID-19-Eye-Protection-Guideline_EN.pdf
- **Centers for Disease Control - USA**
<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/eye/eye-infectious.html>
- **Provincial Health Services Authority – British Columbia**
<http://www.phsa.ca/staff-resources-site/Documents/Occupational%20Health%20Documents/PHSA%20Guidelines%20for%20Eye%20Protection.pdf>

About IHSA

The Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA) is Ontario's trusted health and safety resource. Our goal is to improve the lives of Ontario workers. We provide the resources and training that control and eliminate safety hazards in work environments involving high-risk activities.

Our focus is on workers and keeping our promise to provide them with the tools to Work Safe for Life. As part of Ontario's health and safety system, we are recognized by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, Ministry of Transportation, and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) as designated trainers and consultants. So, you can be sure that the training you get from IHSA meets regulatory requirements and compliance standards.

You are automatically a member of IHSA if you pay premiums to the WSIB in the industries that we serve:

- construction
- electrical
- utilities
- transportation
- aggregates
- natural gas
- ready-mix concrete

To learn more, visit ihsa.ca