Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidelines for Community Waste Collection Programs

We understand the importance of ongoing waste collection during the COVID-19 emergency. This document is intended to address concerns raised by members of our community waste collection programs. It is independent of and does not negate Work Safe BC requirements. This document is also based upon current knowledge and it should be understood that guidance is subject to change as new data become available and new developments arise with this new virus; furthermore, unique situations may require some discretion in adjusting these guidelines which are meant to be supportive, not prescriptive.

WHAT is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory infection caused by a newly identified virus. The infection has symptoms similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and common cold: cough, sneezing, fever, sore throat and difficulty breathing. Other symptoms can include fatigue, muscle aches, diarrhea, headache or lost sense of smell. While most people infected with COVID-19 experience only mild illness, severe illness can occur in some people, especially in those with weaker immune systems, the elderly and those with chronic medical conditions.

HOW is COVID-19 Spread?

COVID-19 is spread through liquid droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus in these droplets can enter through the eyes, nose or mouth of another person if they are in close contact with the person who coughed or sneezed. COVID-19 is not transmitted through particles in the air and is not something that can enter the body through the skin.

WHERE to get more information about COVID-19

The province of British Columbia has created a phone service to provide non-medical information about COVID-19 which is available from 7:30 a.m. - 8 p.m. at 1-888-COVID19 (1-888-268-4319) or via text message at 604-630-0300.

More information on COVID-19 can also be found online:
- Vancouver Coastal Health [http://www.vch.ca/covid-19](http://www.vch.ca/covid-19)
- BC Centre for Disease Control [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19)
Guidance for Waste Workers

- Generally, management of waste that is suspected or known to contain or be contaminated with COVID-19 does not require additional precautions beyond those already used to protect workers from the hazards they encounter during their routine job tasks in solid waste, including medical waste, and wastewater management.
- Frequent handwashing is encouraged and the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer when access to a hand sink is not possible.
- If any staff member is showing even mild symptoms for COVID-19, ask them to leave work immediately and have them contact 8-1-1 for further guidance before returning to work.
- Staff/volunteers can also use the online COVID-19 BC Support App and Self-Assessment Tool to know when to seek healthcare.
- Further information can be found on the BCCDC COVID-19 website.

Municipal Waste

- Workers and employers should manage municipal (e.g., household, business) solid waste with potential or known COVID-19 contamination as with other municipal waste.
- Use typical engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, to prevent worker exposure to the waste streams (or types of wastes), including any contaminants in the materials, they manage.

Recycling

- As with municipal waste, employers and workers in the recycling industry should continue to use typical engineering and administrative controls and safe work practices to prevent worker exposure to recyclable materials they manage, including any contaminants in the materials.

Medical Waste

- For medical waste with potential or known COVID-19 contamination, manage as with any other regulated medical waste.

Community Measures

- Instructions to the community to ensure that all waste be placed in tear-resistant plastic bags and tightly sealed before placing in garbage containers. Avoid putting loose garbage in containers.
- The preferred methods of payment at landfills are debit and credit using the tap option to help minimize the spread of COVID-19. (Tap pads to be disinfected regularly.)