April 4, 2020

Recommendations for Minimizing COVID-19 Risk 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 Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and how does it spread?
The novel coronavirus, COVID-19, is transmitted via larger liquid droplets when a person coughs or sneezes. The virus can enter through these droplets into the eyes, nose or throat of individuals who are nearby. The virus is not known to be airborne (e.g. transmission through particles that are suspended in the air). It can also be spread by close personal contact (such as touching or shaking hands) or touching an object or surface with the virus on it, and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands. That’s why we recommend you cough or sneeze into your arm, wash your hands regularly, and avoid touching your face.

What Are the Symptoms?
While many of the characteristics of COVID-19 are still unknown, mild to severe illness has been reported for confirmed cases. The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and common cold. They include cough, fever, and difficulty breathing.

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. Staff/volunteers can also use the online COVID-19 BC Support App and Self-Assessment Tool to know when to seek healthcare.
We do not recommend returning to work. Further information can be found on the [BCCDC COVID-19 website](https://www.bccdc.ca).

**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.)