

March 30, 2022

TO: EMPLOYERS AND OPERATORS OF PROJECTS IN THE AQUACULTURAL, FORESTRY, AND RESOURCE SECTORS (“INDUSTRY”) AND PERSONS WHO PROVIDE ACCOMMODATION FOR WORKERS IN THESE SECTORS IN AN INDUSTRIAL WORK CAMP OR OTHER CONGREGATE SETTING, INCLUDING A MOTEL, HOTEL, LODGE OR TENT (“CAMPS”)

RE: UPDATED STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS AND OPERATORS OF INDUSTRY AND CAMPS IN THE NORTHERN HEALTH AUTHORITY AS A RESULT OF THE DECREASE IN IMPACT AND SEVERITY OF THE OMICRON VARIANT OF COVID-19

On February 4, 2022 Northern Health issued an updated statement of expectations to employers and operators of industrial projects and industrial camps located in the Northern Health region. This statement included recommendations for additional requirements and controls necessary to limit the transmission of, and resulting infection and illness from, the Omicron variant of COVID-19^{1, 2}.

Since the February 4 statement, a number of factors have led us to reevaluate these recommendations as we head into the spring and summer months:

- as a result of increased access to and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines including booster doses by persons residing in BC, we have high levels of COVID-19 immunity in the general population;
- over the last several weeks we have observed a significant reduction in both the rate of COVID-19 infections and the number related hospitalizations in the Northern Health region;
- there is now clear evidence that while the Omicron variant is more transmissible than previous COVID-19 variants, the severity of illness is significantly less particularly in healthy persons under 60 years of age who are fully vaccinated;
- the Omicron variant is now the predominant COVID-19 virus circulating in BC and in the Northern Health region;
- the increased transmissibility and shorter incubation period of the Omicron variant has decreased the effectiveness of early intervention through case and contact management.

As such, Northern Health Medical Health Officers are updating expectations effective as of today's date through August 31, 2022. This letter and the details that follow repeal and replace my letter issued on February 4, 2022.

- 1) Employers and operators of industrial projects and industrial camps are expected to identify and manage COVID-19 cases, clusters of concern, and outbreaks using their own occupational health and safety protocols and site-specific mitigation measures scaling them as appropriate based on knowledge gained since March of 2020.
- 2) Employers and operators of industrial projects and industrial camps must provide Northern Health with regular updates of COVID-19 related measures and indicators that inform local and regional risk assessments and consult with Northern Health as appropriate.

¹ For information on the prevalence of COVID-19 variants of concern in BC, see the [BCCDC Data Trends website](#).

² For information on the epidemiology of COVID-19 in BC, see the [BCCDC Data Trends website](#).

These expectations will be reevaluated in the event of a new surge of COVID-19 infections, an increase in the burden of illness related COVID-19 impacting our health care system, the circulation of a new variant causing more severe COVID-19 disease, and/or before August 31, 2022.

Sections A, B, and C of the [Industrial Camps - July 7, 2021 Order of the Provincial Health Officer](#) pursuant to Sections, 30, 31, 32, 39 (3), 53, 54 and 67 of [Public Health Act](#), S.B.C 2008 outline requirements of the Employer, Co-ordinator, and Worker in the context of SARS-CoV-2.

Section A states that an Employer must do the following:

(12) In the event of the occurrence of a case, cluster or outbreak of communicable disease in workers,

- a. work with the medical health officer to determine what measures may be necessary in order to reduce the risk of transmission of communicable disease;*
- b. put in place any measures recommended by the medical health officer;*

As such, and as the Chief Medical Health Officer of the Northern Health Authority, I direct Employers, Operators and Camps to implement the following:

| | Measure | Clinical Management Requirements | Reporting Requirements |
|----|---|---|--|
| 1. | Persons with respiratory infection (RI) causing moderate to severe illness ³ | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Testing of persons with RI causing moderate to severe illness OR those seeking treatment for COVID-19 using either Antigen or PCR testing. 2. Provide appropriate care for all individuals with RI causing moderate to severe illness. | Report positive COVID-19 results to public health through standard reporting mechanisms (BCCDC eForm, NH eForm, or a BC laboratory information system). |
| 2. | COVID-19 cases and clusters of concern ⁴ | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide appropriate care for persons with COVID-19. 2. Ensure workers are aware of the self-screening tool for COVID-19 treatment (BC COVID-19 Treatment Website). 3. Manage cluster of concern in consultation with NH. | <p>Report positive COVID-19 results to public health through standard reporting mechanisms (BCCDC eForm, NH eForm, or a BC laboratory information system).</p> <p>Report clusters of concern to RegionalCD.CoordinatorTeam@northernhealth.ca during regular business hours or the MHO On-call after hours (1-250-565-2000, press 7 for switchboard).</p> <p>Provide a monthly summary of COVID-19 cases including the total number of cases, the number of cases that meet the definition of RI causing moderate to severe illness, and the number of cases that require a higher level of care to the Office of Health and Resource Development on the 15th of each month.</p> |

³ New onset respiratory illness with fever greater than 38°C AND cough AND one or more of the following: sore throat, joint pain, muscle pain, or fatigue.

⁴ Three (3) or more COVID-19 cases within three (3) days that meet criteria for RI causing moderate to severe illness.

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| 3. | Impact on primary and acute case health services | n/a | Provide a monthly summary of worker presentations to Northern Health facility or primary care clinic for any reason ⁵ submitted to the Office of Health and Resource Development on the 15 th of each month. |
| 4. | Workforce projection ⁶ | n/a | Provide a monthly workforce projection report indicating estimated number of local and non-local workers by month for a period of not less than three months submitted to the Office of Health and Resource Development on the 15 th of each month. |
| 5. | Vaccine status reporting of workforce population | n/a | Employers, contractors, and operators that do NOT have a COVID-19 vaccine mandate, provide a <i>point in time submission</i> to the Office of Health and Resource Development on August 15, 2022 that represents the workforce at the time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total workforce number • # of fully vaccinated workers • # of partially vaccinated workers • # of unvaccinated workers • # of workers declining to disclose status |

For the purposes of monthly reporting, we have prepared a single spreadsheet (attached) which includes a summary of reportable COVID-19 cases, a summary of worker presentations to Northern Health facilities or primary care clinic, and a workforce projection report. Completion and submission of this spreadsheet on the 15th of each month will satisfy the monthly reporting requirements (2, 3, and 4 above).

In addition to the requirements indicated above, Employers and Camps are expected to adhere to the requirements set forth in:

- Under the [Public Health Act](#), a health officer may issue an order if the health officer reasonably believes that a health hazard exists.
- Report communicable diseases to Public Health per the [Communicable Disease Regulation](#).
- The [Worker's Compensation Act](#) regarding managing onsite transmission of communicable diseases within your workforces, notably that investigations are completed to understand the source of exposures and where transmission is identified or suspected.
- The [BC Employment Standards Act](#) regarding legislated paid leave for COVID-19 vaccination;
- [Section 3.16](#) of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation* regarding sufficiency of onsite medical care.
- The [Industrial Camps Order](#).

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Office of Health and Resource Development at resource.development@northernhealth.ca.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jong Kim, MD, MSc, FRCPC
Chief Medical Health Officer
Northern Health

⁵ Inclusive of occupational and non-occupational presentations.

⁶ Workforce includes all workers attached to the site/location.

Attachments:

- Industry Monthly COVID-19 Report Template