

August 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 March 30, 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. The statement included five required measures to minimize the transmission of, and resulting infection and illness from, the Omicron variant of COVID-19.<sup>1, 2</sup>

Recommendations of the March 30, 2022 statement have been re-evaluated, taking into consideration a number of factors, and as we head into the fall and winter months (respiratory season):

- As a result of vaccination and natural infections, there is much greater population level immunity against severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19 now as compared to the beginning of the pandemic.
- The Omicron variant is now the predominant COVID-19 virus circulating in BC and in the Northern Health region.
- There is now clear evidence that, while the Omicron variant is more transmissible than previous COVID-19 variants, the illness is significantly less severe in healthy persons under 60 years of age who are fully vaccinated. The increased transmissibility and shorter incubation period of the Omicron variant has decreased the effectiveness of early intervention through case and contact management.
- It is not yet known how significant a burden COVID-19, in combination with influenza and other respiratory illnesses, will pose to the health care system this respiratory season.
- There is already no reserve capacity in the Northern Health care system to accommodate additional acute/primary care service demands imposed by workers who are from other jurisdictions.
- Industrial camp settings, like other large congregate settings, have the potential for high transmission of communicable diseases, including but not limited to COVID-19.
- Northern Health is uncertain about the impact on health services due to respiratory illness among the industrial camp temporary workforce in the 2022/23 respiratory season.
- Irrespective of multiple COVID-19 case surges in the general population since the March 2022 statement, Northern Health observes ongoing stable pressure on NH's critical care capacity.

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

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

Requests for COVID-19 vaccine product have slowed since the initial immunization series was predominantly completed amongst the general population. NH also notes low demand for booster doses from industrial medical clinics. This, combined with the knowledge of generally low uptake of annual influenza immunization of the same population, NH concludes that there is low uptake of routine COVID-19 boosters in the industrial workforce population. Considering this, as the Northern Health Chief Medical Health Officer, I strongly recommend that workers complete the full primary immunization series of COVID-19 and subsequent routine boosters. This remains a primary protective quality for the health of the general population – in industrial worksites and in community.

Additionally, Northern Health medical health officers are updating expectations effective today through March 30, 2023. This letter and the details that follow repeal and replace my letter issued on March 30, 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 monthly reports of COVID-19 related measures and indicators (see table below) that inform local and regional risk assessments, and consult with Northern Health as appropriate.<sup>3</sup>

Expectations will be re-evaluated in the event of an increase in the burden of illness related to COVID-19 impacting NH care system, the circulation of a new variant causing more severe COVID-19 disease, and/or before March 30, 2023.

Sections A, B, C and D of the [Industrial Camps - July 8, 2022 Order of the Provincial Health Officer](#) pursuant to Sections, 30, 31, 32, 39 (3), 54 (1) (k), and 67 (2) of [Public Health Act](#), S.B.C 2008 outline the requirements of Employers, Co-ordinators, and Workers in the context of communicable disease, including SARS-CoV-2, and specifies that medical health officers may make subsequent orders applicable to camps in whole or part of their geographical area.

Section A states that an Employer must do the following:

- (11) After notifying the medical health officer of an occurrence of illness, above the incident level that is normally expected or an outbreak of communicable disease, as required by section 23 of the Industrial Camps Regulation,*
- 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;*

Section D states that:

- (1) A medical health officer may make an order subsequent to this Order for the purpose of imposing more restrictive limitations or conditions with respect to camps in the whole or part of*

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<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of monthly reporting, NH has prepared a single spreadsheet (distributed with this letter) to support reporting requirements, including a summary of worker presentations to Northern Health facilities or clinic, and workforce projection and actuals report. Completing and submitting this spreadsheet on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month will satisfy the monthly reporting requirements (3 and 4 from the table).

*the geographic area of the province for which the medical health officer is designated, or with respect to a particular camp or class of camp.*

*(2) While it is in force, a provision in an order made by a medical health officer subsequent to this Order, which imposes more restrictive limitations or requirements than this Order with respect to one or more camps, or one or more classes of camps, applies in the whole or part of the geographic area of the province for which the medical health officer is designated, according to the terms of the order, despite the provisions of this Order.*

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.	Care for persons with respiratory infection (RI) causing moderate to severe illness <sup>4</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide appropriate clinical evaluation for all individuals with RI causing moderate to severe illness.</li> <li>2. Provide appropriate care for all individuals with RI causing moderate to severe illness.</li> <li>3. Ensure workers are aware of the self-screening tool for COVID-19 treatment (<a href="#">BC COVID-19 Treatment website</a>).</li> </ol>	If testing is advised by the BCCDC or a medical health professional, report positive COVID-19 results to public health through standard reporting mechanisms (BCCDC eForm, NH eForm, or a BC laboratory information system).
2.	Manage communicable disease clusters of concern, <sup>5</sup> including COVID-19 <sup>6</sup>	Manage cluster of concern in consultation with NH.	Report clusters of concern within 24 hours <sup>7</sup> to <a href="mailto:RegionalCD.HubTeam@NorthernHealth.ca">RegionalCD.HubTeam@NorthernHealth.ca</a> or 1-855-565-2990 during regular business hours or the MHO On-call after hours (1-250-565-2000, press 7 for switchboard).
3.	Monitor burden of illness impacting NH care system	n/a	Provide a monthly summary report of worker presentations/MSP transfers to Northern Health facility or clinic for any reason. <sup>8</sup> Submit to the <a href="#">Office of Health and Resource Development</a> on the 15 <sup>th</sup> of each month.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> Per [BCCDC List of Reportable Communicable Diseases](#).

<sup>6</sup> A cluster of concern is identified by three (3) or more *epidemiologically linked* COVID-19 cases within three (3) days that meet the criteria for RI causing moderate to severe illness. "Epidemiologically linked case" is a case in which the patient has/had exposure with a confirmed case (i.e. close contact) OR was exposed to a known cluster or outbreak ([Epi-linked case, BCCDC](#)).

<sup>7</sup> Per the [Industrial Camps Regulation](#) s.23.

<sup>8</sup> Inclusive of occupational and non-occupational presentations.

4.	Workforce <sup>9</sup> (projection and actuals)	Scale medical services in alignment with workforce projections	<p><b>Workforce projections:</b> 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. Submit to the <a href="#">Office of Health and Resource Development</a> on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.</p> <p><b>Workforce actuals:</b> report actual number of local and non-local workers (by week) for the period since last report. Submit to the <a href="#">Office of Health and Resource Development</a> on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.<sup>10</sup></p>
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In addition to the requirements indicated above, Employers and Camps are expected to adhere to the requirements set forth in the:

- [BCCDC Communicable Disease Manual](#)
- [BCCDC's guidance on when to test for COVID-19](#)
- [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.
- [Reporting Information Affecting Public Health Regulation](#), including reporting of communicable diseases to Public Health.
- [Industrial Camps Order - July 8, 2022](#) **new**
- [Industrial Camps and Communicable Diseases Guidelines](#) including employer facilitation of worker access to vaccination services for communicable disease. **updated July 8, 2022**
- [Industrial Camps Regulation](#) regarding duty to report illness.
- [Public Health Act](#)
- [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.

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

Sincerely,



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

Attachments:

- Industry Monthly COVID-19 Report Template (August 2022)

<sup>9</sup> Workforce includes all workers attached to the site/location.

<sup>10</sup> Beginning October 15<sup>th</sup>, submit numbers dating back to September 15<sup>th</sup>.