

## Forestry operations during the COVID-19 pandemic

Dear OPFA Member,

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the lives of all Ontarians. Professional foresters responsible for forestry operations or providing services to clients will want to ensure their activities and operations are planned and conducted in consideration of the health of all involved.

We are aware and proud of the contributions of many OPFA members who are engaged individually and on behalf of their employers in developing and applying COVID-19 measures to ensure the safety of their families, colleagues, local communities and the public. The designation of the forest industry and related activities (i.e. tree planting) as an essential service elevates the important role of the professional forester as a community leader.

The OPFA aims to support our members at this time by sharing identified best practices and existing guidance material. We encourage members to share information with the OPFA so we may update our communications for the awareness of all members.

### Sources of Guidance

The Ontario Government has released technical sector guidance to support employers and employees in remaining safe in the workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic. You may find the forestry sector guidance document here: <https://www.workplacesafetynorth.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/COVID-19-Workplace-Safety-North-Forestry-Guidance-2020-04-08.pdf>.

British Columbia's guidance on protecting employees, contractors and employers working in the silviculture sector during the COVID-19 pandemic can be located at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-guidance-work-camps-silviculture.pdf>

### Recommended Actions

Common actions observed in published guidance include:



- Maintain physical distancing - redesign work to do so where possible.
- Be conscious of 'touch points' and apply good hygiene practices (use of sanitary wipes) and wear gloves when appropriate
- Evaluate your situation based on your public health unit guidance, and principles of physical distancing and good hygiene.
- Develop a procedure or protocol specific to your local context and activity.
- Communicate with colleagues, contractors and clients
- Monitor recognized information sources; review and modify procedures as necessary

Specific individual actions that are recommended:

- If you are unwell, stay home.
- One person per vehicle; If this is not possible, installation of physical barriers and PPE for all occupants are alternative measures
- Pre-plan field visits and discuss social distancing measures with colleagues.
- Have a COVID-kit in your vehicle as part of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the event of unplanned circumstances (e.g. a vehicle breaks down, or someone is injured and needs transport).
  - This should include appropriate gloves, mask, and hand sanitizer.
- Use your own tools, equipment, phones and computers
- Properly discard used wipes, gloves and masks
- Reach out to colleagues and others within your region or sector for best practices and to share challenges and ideas.

Large Project Planning Recommendations:

- For projects e.g. tree plants, site preparation, supervision of forestry operations develop a protocol in collaboration with the forest manager, contractor, local health unit and MNR and others as necessary.
- Communicate early and often with local municipalities, key stakeholders (such as business suppliers) and First Nations about the location of work sites, timing of activities and protection and reporting measures in place.



- Inform your workers and partners about COVID-19 with information from your public health unit, maintain frequent communication to protect them and others, and reporting requirements.

As experience is gained and knowledge about the pandemic evolves, the nature of the social interactions that are so integral to our practice as professionals must change as well. The OPFA will continue to monitor developments, benefit from the input of its members and health care professionals and do what we can to support you in your professional practice.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fred Pinto', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Fred Pinto, R.P.F., Executive Director & Registrar