



Local 230

Established in Victoria in 1902

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March 11, 2020

To All IBEW Local 230 Signatory Contractors:

Re: CoronaVirus/COVID-19

Late last year, a new strain of the CoronaVirus known as COVID-19, originating in Wuhan China, has now, within a very short timeframe infected people in at least 103 countries around the world. This has caused a second country (Italy) outside of China, to quarantine regionally and nationally. It has negatively impacted investment markets with its greatest loss in a twelve-year period, as well as the price of oil and industries like air travel. Currently, there are over 100 confirmed cases in Canada. The CoronaVirus can infect both animals and people and can cause a range of respiratory illnesses from the common cold to lung lesions and pneumonia. It has made about 120,000 people sick (that we know of) and more than 4,000 have died. Symptoms, which can take between 2 to 14 days to appear, include fever, runny nose, a dry cough, fatigue and difficulty breathing or shortness of breath. Milder cases may resemble the flu or a bad cold.

At this point in time it appears that the spread will continue and so will the fatalities. The medical community has said that we are likely a full year away from a vaccine, however in the same vein of seasonal flu's, we may get a summer reprieve, which was the case with influenza 100 years ago. Although, the following year it came back with a vengeance globally killing millions more. BC's occupational health and safety system, WorkSafeBC, outlines that it's the employer's responsibility in keeping its workers safe. To date the medical community in Canada continues to state the best defense from contracting COVID-19 is cleanliness and good sanitation. Local 230 is urging all signatory employers to observe and adhere to Article 513 of the construction collective agreement:

513 "Toilets, etc. and Lunch Areas

The Employer shall provide a suitable heated lunchroom, vented where practical, and facilities for employees to change and dry clothing. The lunchroom shall not be used as a place to store tools and/or equipment.

Where there is no running water available, cool drinking water in approved sanitary containers shall be provided. Paper cups will be supplied.

The Employer shall supply clean flush toilets, wash up facilities and hand cleaner.

On jobs of insufficient size or length to warrant the above conditions, this clause shall not apply.

In the event that proper toilet facilities as described above are not provided, no employee will be penalized for leaving the job in the case of necessity."

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We are further recommending you purchase bacterial killing hand sanitizer and paper masks to make them available for workers on all jobsites, especially for those that are showing cold or flu symptoms. It appears that COVID-19 is spread through droplets by sneezing and coughing, so keeping a distance we recognize as "personal space", most people will be fine. Transmission of COVID-19 is more likely to occur by touching an infected area previously exposed to those droplets or by shaking an infected persons hand, then touching your face, nose or eyes. We suggest every foreman, employer and workers move away from shaking hands at this point in time. I would also recommend all lunch room tables and door handles be cleaned and wiped with anti-bacterial (Lysol type) wipes after each coffee and lunch break.

Shared tools and equipment are other areas of possible transmission. I would recommend the right number of ladders, drills, etc. and a supply of wipes in the job boxes so they may be wiped on their return and/or prior to use.

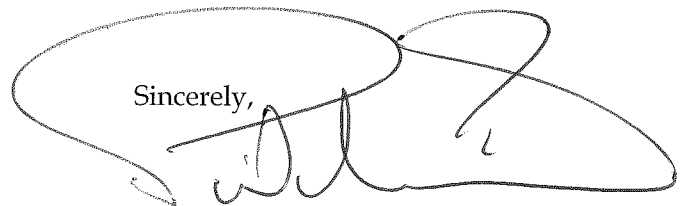
I understand these measures will eat into productive time on the job, and this may sound like over-kill, but losing an entire crew from our jobs will be much worse than paying the lowest term apprentice to spend 10-45 minutes (with consideration of job-size) a day cleaning lunch rooms, shared tools and equipment.

At some point a member may request to work either in isolation or away from someone who is showing cold or flu symptoms. I would ask you take this request serious enough to accommodate them if there is the possibility doing that on the job. Remember this is a fatal virus we are only beginning to understand, but we do know has had grave consequences for many around the world. Older workers and smokers are especially susceptible to the virus, and it does make sense for them to work in isolation whenever possible. This accommodation will at some point likely fit in with the right to refuse unsafe work, simply due to the ease of transmission and its ability to be fatal.

In the event an employee returns from abroad and you require them to quarantine themselves for two weeks, and/or they are diagnosed with COVID-19, it is important to note and share that the Federal Government has changed the wait times for Employment Insurance (EI) allowing any worker who qualifies for EI to qualify for insurable earnings immediately. If they do not qualify for E.I. please refer them to D.A. Townley so they may apply for weekly indemnity.

Local 230 continues to be committed to our partnership with our employers and concerns over our member's safety at work. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this correspondence please call me in our Victoria business Office.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Venoit', is written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Phil Venoit, RSE
Business Manager/
Financial Secretary