

## Screen Nova Scotia: COVID-19 Related Health & Safety Guidelines for Film and Television Producers

Approved on June 18th, 2020 by Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Robert Strang and the Dept. of Labour and Advanced Education.

### Introduction: COVID-19 in Nova Scotia

The Government of Nova Scotia issued a provincial State of Emergency on March 22nd, 2020 which is still in effect at the time of producing this document (date here). To slow the spread of COVID-19, a Health Protection Act Order and public health directives are in effect.

For the Film and Television Industry, this means:

- ❑ Groups of 10 may gather without social distancing, or use of PPE. The individuals in a group of 10 are not required to be exclusive but are strongly encouraged to be.
- ❑ Beyond a group of 10, practice social distancing – stay 2 metres (6 feet) apart from other people.
- ❑ When physical distancing cannot be maintained, appropriate steps must be taken to minimize risk including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- ❑ Everyone travelling from outside of Nova Scotia must self-isolate for 14 days and follow the instruction provided by this Government of Nova Scotia link [HERE](#).

Further information regarding the Nova Scotia State of Emergency and the current Public Health Directives in effect can be found [HERE](#).

### The Screen Industry in Nova Scotia

Although film production in Nova Scotia was not mandated to close under the Health Protection Act Order, adhering to the requirements imposed by the State of Emergency declaration was prohibitive to moving projects ahead. A comprehensive health and safety protocol document is important to instill confidence industry-wide that filming is possible and meets the requirements of the Health Protection Act Order that is in place to govern Nova Scotia business during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

This document is intended to provide high-level guidance to manage COVID-19 specific risk in the production of film and television in Nova Scotia. These COVID-19 guidelines were developed to incorporate expert advice, allow for alignment with provincial and federal public health and safety protocols, and promote the safe return to work in our industry prior to the availability of a

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COVID-19 vaccine. The Screen Nova Scotia (SNS) Health & Safety Committee will continue to monitor developments with respect to COVID-19 and update these guidelines as appropriate.

The recommendations in this document should be considered as the minimum precautions, based on current Public Health Directives. Individual productions may determine the necessity to require further protocols should use this document when developing the production-specific COVID-19 plan.

The health and safety of all individuals working on production is a top concern during COVID-19. During this time, all parties must place an increased focus on health and safety. These guidelines have been prepared by representatives of the screen industry nation-wide to assist employers/producers, supervisors, and working professionals with identifying potential hazards posed in the workplace due to COVID-19, and the appropriate measures to mitigate those hazards.

All measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 should be executed in compliance with the regulations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and the Public Health Order issued by Nova Scotia's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Robert Strang. These guidelines are not intended as legal or medical advice. Due to the ongoing evolution of the situation with respect to COVID-19, these guidelines should be used only in conjunction with ongoing review of applicable legislation and up-to-date guidance from public health authorities.

Each production should translate these guidelines into the specific actions it needs to take, depending on the nature of their production, including the size and type of production, how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated.

We are currently drafting a detailed set of suggested practices for specific departments as appendices. These supplemental guidelines will act as a complement to this guidance document. Once completed, the appendices will be linked to this document.

## **COVID-19 in the Workplace:**

Current research indicates that COVID-19 can be spread person to person, most commonly through respiratory droplets, including while at work. In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, a hierarchical set of practices should be put in place as a part of a production's safety plan.

Physical distancing is the primary method by which to protect everyone. In addition to distancing, all these measures should be implemented in all production areas:

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- Proper hand washing or sanitizing.
- Cleaning and disinfection of materials, surfaces, and equipment should be performed on a routine basis.
- Screening to assess the health and wellness of all individuals before entry into the workplace.
- Wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

While not currently required by Public Health, Screen Nova Scotia supports individual productions who mandate the continuous use of non-medical masks when possible throughout the production day as an important communal measure in preventing the spread of COVID-19. This is in recognition of the unique workplace and activity in production.

## **Best Practices: Specific Considerations for Employers**

Consideration should be given to the time it will take to develop, implement, and train individuals on best practices aimed at mitigating risks associated with COVID-19 in the workplace. Training should be developed with respect to these guidelines, along with:

- Any applicable company policies and protocols.
- Proper usage of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Proper disinfection techniques and products.
- Handwashing /sanitizing techniques.

Training in these areas should be delivered by qualified individuals. Employers should establish methods to provide training on guidelines and workplace policies/protocols before any individuals commence work in a production workplace, and apply a clear system for the communication and dissemination of COVID-19 related information.

Individuals should be identified with chief responsibilities for COVID-19 prevention/response, including monitoring public health updates.

In addition, employers/producers should:

- Consider additional supports such as set medics, external cleaning crews, etc., to action safety protocols.
- Consider the usual responsibilities of any/all individuals who are assuming additional duties relating to COVID-19 prevention and response, to ensure that adequate time and attention can be dedicated to administering these duties, and/or additional personnel are hired as necessary.
- Consider appointing a COVID-19 health and safety coordinator

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- ❑ Establish the production's policies or protocols in the event of a case of COVID-19 being introduced into the workplace.
- ❑ Provide workers with phone numbers/contact information of individuals they should contact regarding COVID-19 response.
- ❑ Provide visitors with sufficient information about guidelines and/or any policies and safety protocols relevant to their visit.
- ❑ Establish a strictly administered log-book system for any necessary visitors (outside of regular cast and crew, such as couriers/delivery persons, dailies etc) to aid in any contact tracing if required.
- ❑ Consider workplace posters on relevant topics including information about COVID-19 and its symptoms, hygiene, personal protective equipment, food safety, physical distancing, etc.
- ❑ Consider digitizing paper-based procedures like expense submissions, purchase orders, call-sheet and script distribution, etc.
- ❑ Where travel is required, each case should be individually considered to ensure appropriate steps are taken to arrange for safe/appropriate means of travel and accommodation.
- ❑ Consider requiring digital sign-off of receipts and review of these guidelines and producer policies and protocols.
- ❑ Consider and be aware of the impact COVID-19 and protocols in your workplace may have on employee mental health. More information on COVID-19 and mental health can be found on the Government of Canada website [HERE](#).

## Maintaining Physical Distancing

Adhering to proper social distancing in the workplace is key. Here are some tips employers can use to help ensure physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) in the workplace.

- ❑ Implementing remote work/work from home arrangements.
- ❑ Limiting in-person meetings during prep and shoot, and adopting inclusive remote-working technology and other forms of electronic communication (e.g. walkie-talkies).
- ❑ Holding meetings or performing work outside.
- ❑ Marking 2 metre distance on the ground in any place in the workplace where individuals are likely to form lineups.
- ❑ Assessing entrances and exits to limit individuals using their hands to open doors.
- ❑ Identifying break and holding areas that provide sufficient room to ensure physical distancing.
- ❑ Limiting the number of individuals in the workplace at one time to the best extent possible.
- ❑ Arranging workflow to minimize inter-departmental contact (e.g. electric works only when the art department is done).

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- ❑ Dividing workers (cast and crew) into “teams” or “pods” with clear processes as to how to access, and who will access, the different areas.
- ❑ Limiting specific areas of the workplace such as sets and offices to essential personnel only. For example, implementing “closed-set” rules
- ❑ Identifying choke-points and ways to avoid congestion/groups of people, such as having multiple monitored entrances/exits and staggering start times/end times and breaks.
- ❑ Developing methods to provide contactless interactions with outside parties and the general public where possible. For example: interactions may be handled by a single or a small number of predefined individuals; engagements may be kept as brief as possible; paperwork may be managed digitally rather than physically; delivery drivers may remain in their vehicle, etc.
- ❑ Consider methods by which to promote greater airflow where it is feasible to do so to maximize the impact of social distancing (e.g. opening windows and doors frequently, or using correctly operating and adjusted ventilation systems).
- ❑ Identify designated smoking/vaping areas with nearby hand sanitizer or handwashing facilities. Provide receptacles for the safe disposal of cigarette butts (and exercise appropriate safety precautions when removing), and require individuals to adhere to appropriate re-entry procedures.
- ❑ Social gatherings should be limited in accordance with applicable public health guidance. Large physical gatherings, such as in-person wrap parties, should be avoided.

**Please note:** When physical distancing of at least 2 metres cannot be reasonably maintained, appropriate safeguards should be instituted to minimize risk, which may include the use of personal protective equipment (e.g. masks, gloves, gowns, face shields, etc.). Where possible, individuals working in close proximity (within 2 metres) should remain in these combinations for any close work. For example, if work must be conducted in pairs, the same two individuals should always perform this work together, as possible.

## COVID-19: Symptoms

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to many other illnesses, including the cold and flu. As more is learned about COVID-19, additional symptoms may be identified. Industry and individuals should therefore regularly visit the Provincial Government’s guidance regarding COVID-19, which includes symptoms, self-isolation rules, and when to seek help: [CLICK HERE](#).

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- ❑ Fever (chills, sweats)
- ❑ Cough or worsening of a previous cough
- ❑ Sore throat

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- Headache
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle aches
- Sneezing
- Nasal congestion or runny nose
- Hoarse voice
- Diarrhea
- Unusual fatigue
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Red, purple or blue lesions on the feet, toes or fingers without clear cause

If you have any of the COVID-19 symptoms, or any other symptoms that concern you, call 811 for an assessment by a nurse. The severity of COVID-19 symptoms can range from mild to severe, and in some cases, can lead to death. Current information suggests most people don't experience severe illness or need to be hospitalized, but all individuals should continue to monitor public health guidance regarding COVID-19. Please check the end of this document for a non-exhaustive list of useful resources.

## Protecting Yourself and Your Co-workers

Coronaviruses are spread through close contact with others. Here are some helpful tips to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 at home or in the workplace:

- If you are concerned that you may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 you should access the Health Canada Self Assessment Tool [HERE](#)
- If you are suffering from COVID-19 or experiencing its symptoms (listed above), you should not attend any workplace.
- If you are currently required to self-quarantine or isolate due to an applicable quarantine order or direction from public health (e.g. due to contact with an infected individual or after travel from outside Nova Scotia and/or Canada) you should not attend the workplace and follow the instructions [HERE](#).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- If you use a tissue, discard immediately and wash your hands afterward.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Not eating while working and/or sharing food.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.

## Symptomatic Individuals or those suffering from COVID-19

The following are suggestions for addressing situations involving symptomatic individuals:

- ❑ Symptomatic individuals who attend the workplace should be instructed by their employer/supervisor to isolate in a designated area/leave via appropriate transport home as soon as possible in accordance with established protocols.
- ❑ If a worker is aware that someone with symptoms has attended the workplace, they should immediately inform their employer/supervisor or another individual as identified in production's policies or protocols.

As per the Government of Nova Scotia's guidance for employers and employees on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- ❑ When anyone tests positive for COVID-19, Public Health contacts them directly. They'll work with the person to identify all their close contacts and conduct a risk assessment to determine if any of their close contacts need to self-isolate.
- ❑ Public Health will then directly contact anyone who needs to self-isolate. In some cases, this means Public Health will contact the person's employer if they were at work when they might have been contagious.
- ❑ If Public Health doesn't contact your workplace, that means they decided the risk to people in your workplace was low. You don't need to do anything if Public Health doesn't contact you, and any employees who weren't directly contacted can continue going to work.
- ❑ If an employee is directed by Public Health to stay home, the Employer cannot request a doctor's note. An affected employee will contact the Employer when Public Health has cleared them to return to work.
- ❑ Productions do not need to shut down if an employee/cast/crew tests positive for COVID-19. A production does need to make sure the remaining crews are monitoring their health.

Return to work for any individuals who have previously been diagnosed with COVID-19, or who experienced symptoms, should be coordinated with a designated production representative, the individual's health care providers, and the local public health unit, as applicable. Confirmation of a negative COVID-19 test and/or clearance from a healthcare provider may be required for return to work.

Information regarding the rights of workers, including those not able to work due to COVID-19, can be found [HERE](#). There is guidance for employers and employees on working during COVID-19 including info on safety concerns [HERE](#)

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## COVID-19: Screening

Medical screening is not currently part of the provincial recommendations. Public health guidance with respect to the ability of individuals to spread COVID-19 while not displaying any symptoms should be considered when developing screening protocols.

Everyone entering the workplace should be instructed (verbally, with signage, etc.) to self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing, and/or other symptoms as listed by public health authorities.

**Health Questionnaire:** If an individual is anticipated to be in the presence of other employees/crew members, a standard health questionnaire should be provided to be completed by all employers, employees, contractors, visitors and subjects, either verbally (with responses recorded by a screener) or electronically (e.g. administered through an app or website and accessed via personal devices) prior to entering the workplace for the first time each day, whether on set, on location, in a production office or in the offices of a production company.

This questionnaire may include questions regarding:

- Whether the individual is suffering or is suspected to be suffering from COVID-19 or its symptoms.
- Travel history, in particular whether the individual travelled outside of Nova Scotia or Canada within the past 14 days. If so, the individual must self isolate per the instructions [HERE](#).
- Whether the individual has had close physical contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Whether the individual has been in close physical contact with a person who is currently sick with a new cough, fever or difficulty breathing and/or who has travelled outside of Nova Scotia or Canada within the last 14 days.
- A health questionnaire may also include an undertaking for the individual to immediately declare if they become symptomatic or become aware of circumstances that would change their answers to the questions/declaration.
- A sample questionnaire can be found [HERE](#).

## Temperature checks:

- Health questionnaires should still be used if temperature checks are undertaken, as current evidence suggests that temperature checks on their own may be an insufficient screening tool.



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- ❑ If temperature checks are performed, they should be done using a contactless thermometer by an individual adequately trained in its use. Additional temperature checks throughout the day may be considered.

## Testing:

- ❑ If PCR testing (*Polymerase chain reaction* or current nose swab test) is reasonably available, production may consider arranging for testing 48 to 72 hours in advance of individuals' first day at the workplace. This may particularly be considered for individuals who may be in close proximity to other workers without PPE (e.g. performers) or who are required to perform work that may have a higher risk of transmissions.
- ❑ Any such strategy for when and how testing should be performed should adhere to guidance from public health authorities, and any diagnostic COVID-19 testing should be administered by trained healthcare professionals.
- ❑ A protocol should be implemented to manage situations where individuals do not pass the screening protocols.
- ❑ The frequency of testing (including whether reliable rapid testing may be appropriate) may be reconsidered based on any ongoing changes to the availability of tests

## Record Keeping:

- ❑ A wristband or other system may be considered to identify individuals who have successfully completed screening.
- ❑ Ensure the privacy of screening participants is secure, including the methods of tracking screening information and personal information.

## Workplace Sanitation and Waste Management Provisions

Coronaviruses are spread person to person through close contact. While employers always have an obligation to maintain clean worksites, that obligation is under sharper focus due to COVID-19.

**Personal Hygiene:** Employers should set out best practice personal hygiene for crew, in line with Government and Public Health Authorities' guidance. This may include the following:

- ❑ Handwashing facilities and/or hand sanitizer (at least 70% alcohol) should be provided at screening sites, entrances, exits, and throughout the workplace.
- ❑ Portable handwashing stations should be considered where established handwashing facilities are not available.

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- ❑ Washrooms should be assessed to consider the identification and posting of maximum capacities to maintain physical distancing.
- ❑ Workflow and scheduling should be considered to provide individuals with sufficient time to wash/sanitize their hands throughout the day, as appropriate.
- ❑ All individuals in the workplace should be instructed on proper hygiene, including:
  - Allow for Washing hands (for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water, when available) or using hand sanitizer.
  - On entering the workplace and again before leaving.
  - Before and after breaks.
  - After using the washroom.
  - After coughing, sneezing or using a tissue.
  - As may be required based on interaction with other individuals, surfaces, items or equipment.
  - Otherwise regularly throughout the workday, but especially before meal breaks.
- ❑ Consider providing workplace parties with individual sanitation/hygiene kits where feasible (e.g. personal-sized sanitizer, wipes, etc.). [Para. 30]

**Cleaning and Disinfecting:** Employers should establish a plan to ensure and monitor effective cleaning and disinfecting of all materials across all departments. Employers should clearly establish responsibility for the implementation of this plan. Such a plan may include:

- ❑ A schedule to regularly disinfect high-touch surfaces (e.g. equipment, props, tools, keyboards, telephones and handsets, desks, light switches, door handles, washrooms, handwash stations, etc.).
- ❑ Depending on the circumstances, it may be useful to maintain a log to help track scheduled cleaning.
- ❑ Providing appropriate training and requesting individuals to familiarize themselves with public health guidance regarding cleaning and disinfection with respect to COVID-19.
- ❑ Identifying which disinfectants are appropriate for specific surfaces/objects/equipment. This may include UV disinfection for certain electronics that may be damaged by liquid disinfectants.
- ❑ Ensuring that appropriate individuals are adequately trained on the use of the specific disinfectants to be used.
- ❑ Assignments of specific cleaning tasks to pre-determined individuals (whether general/production wide, or department-specific) and ensuring that these individuals have received appropriate training.
- ❑ Instructions for individuals to regularly disinfect personal equipment and supplies (e.g. tools, walkie-talkies, cell phones, etc.).

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- Instructions to use disposable cloths or paper towels, when possible.
- Instructions that reusable cloths, sponges, mops, etc., should be disinfected or washed after each use and rotated and disposed of as appropriate.
- Protocols for the safe disposal of PPE in line with any applicable government regulations.
- Protocols for the environmentally safe disposal of cleaning/disinfecting materials.

**Waste Management:** Employers should establish a plan to ensure and monitor effective waste management across all departments. Employers should clearly establish responsibility for the implementation of this plan. This will be for all sites including production offices, studios, workshops, basecamps and locations. Such a plan should include:

- All waste-paper bins/garbage receptacles must contain garbage bags.
- It is strongly recommended that these waste-paper/garbage receptacles have a lid and foot pedal.
- All bins must be emptied by end of the day into an outdoor official garbage receptacle.
- Staff must wash hands thoroughly after completing this task.

**Managing Equipment and Supplies:** Employers should implement measures to mitigate the risk of virus spread through the sharing of items. This may include the following:

- Avoiding the sharing of equipment and supplies.
- Taking appropriate precautions if items need to be shared (e.g. regularly clean the items, wear gloves, wash / sanitize hands before and after use, etc., in addition to any other necessary general safety precautions).
- Encouraging individuals to store their own equipment in a predefined area or in a bag labeled with their name when not in use.

**Personal protective equipment (PPE).** When worn properly, non-medical masks and personal protective equipment can reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19. Here are some tips for employers regarding PPE.

- The primary purpose of PPE should be to bolster other safety practices.
- PPE should only be used on its own in limited specific instances when other protections are not reasonably available.
- Production will provide PPE as required.
- PPE should not be shared.
- It is important to note that this is an additional precaution, in addition to hygiene measures, that may help reduce transmission of COVID-19 where physical distancing is not possible.

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- ❑ Protocols should be established for each department and for workplace visitors concerning, as appropriate:
  - The proper use of PPE (including donning and doffing).
  - Changing/replacing PPE.
  - The cleaning of and/or proper disposal of PPE, including masks, gloves, face shields, etc.
- ❑ Ensure workers are appropriately trained on all PPE protocols and procedures.
- ❑ Consider providing separate bins for the disposal of PPE at all exits and entrances.

## Visitors and Public Spaces

When a visitor is deemed necessary, they should be provided with sufficient information about guidelines and any policies and protocols relevant to their visit. Only essential visitors should be allowed into the workplace.

Here are some tips regarding visitors to the workplace and interacting with external individuals/public spaces:

- ❑ Regular workplace screening procedures if in effect should apply to visitors entering the workplace.
- ❑ Provide a strictly administered log-book system for any necessary visitors (outside of crew such as couriers/delivery persons etc) to aid in any contact tracing if required.
- ❑ If a visitor is entering the workplace, the visitor should be instructed on all applicable protocols.
- ❑ Visitors should be directed to the most direct route to their destination in the workplace to limit potential interactions with others.
- ❑ Where feasible, consider assigning a designated individual(s) to receive deliveries for a specific workplace or department.
- ❑ Where feasible, process courier or other deliveries outside the workplace (e.g. outdoors) and in a contactless manner.
- ❑ Individuals picking-up, dropping off, receiving, or going through materials from an external source (e.g. a rental house, courier deliveries) or materials that are not known to be disinfected should don appropriate PPE (e.g. gloves) and should wash or sanitize hands before and after handling such material.
- ❑ Individuals should exercise diligence when in a public space, consider appropriate use of PPE, and practice appropriate hygiene protocols.
- ❑ Individuals in a public space should adhere to any physical distancing guidelines or requirements established by the specific establishment (e.g. store, mall, etc.), the municipality, and the provincial and federal governments.

## COVID-19: Information on Prevention and Control

All businesses, organizations and employees need to follow the Health Protection Act Order and public health directives. Employers can contact the Government of Nova Scotia [HERE](#) for questions on workplace infection prevention and control related to COVID-19 infections.

**Share information:** It is important that all parties in a workplace communicate their roles and responsibilities. Employers must ensure health and safety policies are updated and posted for all workers to see. Using industry resources, including this one, will improve on-site understanding. A verbal reminder at the start of each day of handwashing station locations, and safety protocols may help to enforce compliance

**Policies/protocols:** The Government of Nova Scotia laws, regulations, and available public health guidance, such as those resources referenced in Resources at the end of this document should be considered when establishing production protocols related to COVID-19.

Guidelines and producer policies and protocols should be posted throughout the workplace, and applicable guidelines, policies and protocols should be referenced on or attached to call sheets. Applicable protocols should be clearly communicated to all individuals who are required to adhere to, or should otherwise be aware of, such protocols.

These policies/protocols that comprise your COVID-19 response plan should be based on the considerations in these guidelines that apply to your specific workplace(s). This includes identifying key roles and responsibilities. Your policies/protocols should cover how the workplace will operate, including but not limited to:

- ❑ Screening measures (only to be implemented per Nova Scotia Government and Public Health advice).
- ❑ Protocols should be included for workplace parties and visitors who do not pass the health questionnaire/screening, become symptomatic during the workday, on the way to work, when away from the primary workplace, or during non-working hours. Depending on the circumstances, these should include:
  - Identifying and reporting illness to the proper individual(s) with assigned responsibility for isolation/evacuation protocols.
  - Isolation/evacuation of the symptomatic individual and other impacted individuals.
  - Donning and doffing personal protective equipment by the symptomatic individual and other impacted individuals.
  - Supplying PPE in areas designated for the isolation of symptomatic individuals.
  - Special cleaning/disinfection regimens, including conducting a risk assessment prior to disinfection, and protocols for the closing of the affected area(s).

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- Communications to other workers or affected individuals, etc.
  - Return to work.
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- How physical distance will be maintained in the workplace, where possible.
  - Disinfection of the workplace(s).
  - Limiting, to the extent possible, the requirement for workers to physically attend at the production office for various accounting interactions and production paperwork.
  - Particular COVID-19 risks and applicable mitigation strategies, as well as applicable guidelines, policies and protocols, should be reviewed during safety meetings.
  - Relevant procedures should be provided to other workplace parties, such as third-party vendors and unions/guilds representing affected workers, as appropriate.
  - Coordination with third-parties involved with production, such as studios, locations and post-production facilities, as appropriate, to ensure adequate measures may be put in place in line with these guidelines.
  - If there are multiple productions or tenants in a facility, protocols should be established to facilitate the recommended physical distancing, and other appropriate measures, between productions/tenants.

## Resources

### Government of Nova Scotia:

- [Novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Government's response to COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19: Staying Healthy](#)
- [COVID-19: Factsheets and Posters](#)

### Government of Canada:

- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Outbreak update](#)

### World Health Organization:

- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#)

Please note that these guidelines are supplementary to the existing Health and Safety Guidelines for the Nova Scotia Screen Based Production Industry, which can be found [HERE](#).