



International
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▶ A COVID-19 Action Checklist for the Waste Collection Sector

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Practical measures to help employers and workers prevent and mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 in the waste collection services

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the world in different ways, leading to a number of ongoing health, economic and environmental problems. Millions of people are quarantined or working from home generating extra residential waste, some of which is mixed with discarded facemasks, gloves or other waste that could be contaminated with the virus.

Waste collection typically involves visiting numerous residential and commercial locations on a daily basis, to collect solid and liquid waste either through manual collection or by using a garbage-disposal vehicle to lift and empty waste containers. During the pandemic, waste collection remains an essential

service that must continue as normal as possible to prevent waste from building up in the community. As the pandemic persists, waste collection workers may be more exposed to the contagion as they frequently touch surfaces that may be contaminated and face increased workloads.

This action checklist provides practical measures to help employers and workers in the waste collection sector to work safely, while helping to maintain business continuity and community sanitation during the pandemic.

ILO Reference Materials on COVID-19 and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

- [Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19 at Work - Action checklist](#)
- [A safe and healthy return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Safe Return to Work: Ten Action Points](#)
- [Safe Return to Work: Guide to Employers on COVID-19 Prevention](#)
- [Managing work-related psychosocial risks during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

ACTION CHECKLIST

I. Policy, Planning and Organizing

1 Create and train a COVID-19 response team consisting of managers, subcontractors and worker's representatives with clear tasks for early detection, implementing preventative measures and awareness-raising, including addressing points in this checklist.

2 Establish worksite procedures related to COVID-19, in consultation with workers' representatives, especially covering the management and handling of hazardous wastes, and make them available on site.

3 Consider reallocating staff where needed to maintain regular and safe collection services and to prevent waste from building up.

4 Where possible maintain the same crew members in each team and maintain physical distancing between teams.

5 Limit the number of waste collectors sitting in the driving compartment at the same time and ensure adequate ventilation and appropriate use of masks while in vehicles.

6 Consider dropping off crew members outside the waste depot/landfill so that only the driver proceeds to discharge waste before picking the crew up on the way out.

7 Ensure that all waste depots/landfills have sufficient staff available to support traffic flow and reduce queues.

8 Adopt staggered arrival and departure times to avoid large concentration of workers at entrances and exits and changing areas.

9 Hold meetings in outside or well-ventilated spaces whenever possible. For areas where workers normally congregate or meet, use floor signage to help workers maintain physical distancing.

Do you propose Action?

No Yes Priority

Remarks: _____

II. Risk assessment, Management and Communication

10 Regularly perform a comprehensive risk assessment¹ of all work areas and work tasks, in consultation with workers' representatives. Periodically reassess the control measures² through dialogue between managers and workers and modify them as appropriate.

11 Keep knowledge of the COVID-19 situation up-to-date, follow advice from local authoritative sources and check daily for any updates to health advice.

12 Display images and clear messaging at entrances and around the worksite to remind workers to follow the COVID-19 prevention measures.

13 Provide information to the local authorities and residents on how waste collection can be prioritised during the pandemic in order to maintain safe and regular collection services.

14 Ensure households receive clear information on collection schedules. Give clear guidance to households to the effect that potentially contaminated materials, including used tissues, discarded face masks and gloves, etc., should be double-bagged and stored in a standard trash

¹More information on risk assessment consult "[A 5 step guide for employers, workers and their representatives on conducting workplace risk assessments](#)".

² When selecting preventive and control measures follow the hierarchy of controls as demonstrated in "[A safe and healthy return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)".



bag before being put outside for collection. These items should not be put in recycling bins.

15 Minimize contact or keep distance between members of the public and workers when collecting waste and recommend that drivers remain in their vehicles whenever possible.

Do you propose Action?

No Yes Priority

Remarks: _____

III. Prevention and mitigation measures

16 Provide appropriate hand washing stations with soap and clean water, or alcohol-based hand sanitiser, in convenient places in the waste depots or truck garages such as entrances, exits and eating or rest areas. Encourage and train workers to wash their hands frequently and correctly. Explore alternative ways to promote

hand-washing if there is difficulty sourcing hand-washing stations.³

17 Regularly provide, at no cost to workers, appropriate gloves, masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE). Train and encourage workers to wear appropriate PPE and to avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth.

18 Handle waste with protective gloves, change gloves at a frequency appropriate to the type of glove and ensure workers wash their hands after removing gloves.

19 Provide disinfectants and disposable tissues/wipes to sanitize frequently-touched work surfaces at the end of shifts and between users (such as cabs, door-handles, rails, dashboards, steering-wheels, controls, seatbelt buckles, etc).

20 Train workers to read labels and Safety Data Sheets for cleaning products and ensure that they follow safe practices for effective disinfection of equipment and PPE. Provide time for workers to sanitize equipment and PPE during their shift as part of the worker's job duties.

21 Maintain appropriate distance from the compacting area to avoid splashing, spraying, or aerosolizing waste during collection and transport of waste.

22 Use contactless methods when possible to communicate with staff such as text messaging, phone and email instead of face-to-face contact to minimize physical interaction.

23 In common indoor spaces such as changing rooms, washrooms, etc., open windows or doors to increase ventilation or apply push-and-pull ventilation to introduce outside air

³ For more information: Hand hygiene at the workplace: an essential occupational safety and health prevention and control measure against COVID-19, available at: https://www.ilo.org/sector/Resources/publications/WCMS_754864/lang--en/index.htm

into the space. In any case, encourage workers to avoid congregating in indoor areas.

24 Limit access and use of shared devices such as coffee machines, water fountains, microwave ovens and encourage workers to use individual water bottles and lunch boxes, etc.

25 Replace door handles, taps, paper towel dispensers where possible with hands-free or foot-operated devices.

26 Provide additional parking or bicycle storage and encourage workers to use individual modes of transportation and avoid public transport when possible.

Do you propose Action?

No Yes Priority

Remarks: _____

IV. Arrangements for suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases

27 Conduct thermal screening practices to identify possible COVID-19 cases at the entry points of the site and allow enough space for physical distancing. Ensure confidentiality of

medical information or of results of screening measures.⁴

28 Discourage visitors from entering the worksite, especially those who are at increased risk of serious illness.

29 Encourage workers to conduct daily self-health checks and to seek medical attention if they have COVID-19 symptoms. Encourage them to stay at home and follow directions of local health authorities.

30 Stop workers who have been in contact with someone with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 from working on the site until they provide evidence they are not infected by the virus.

31 Put in place support for workers who may be suffering from anxiety, stress or other psychosocial issues, and workers at high risk, especially those who may be quarantined (older workers or those with underlying medical conditions that increase the risk of infection and complications from the virus).

32 Consider how to identify suspected or self-quarantined workers and support them, without stigma or discrimination.

Do you propose Action?

No Yes Priority

Remarks: _____

⁴ In accordance with Technical and ethical guidelines for workers' health surveillance, available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/ilo-bookstore/order-online/books/WCMS_PUBL_9221108287_EN/lang--en/index.htm

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