

# BRITISH COLUMBIA EMPLOYERS NOW AT RISK OF EXPEDITED WORKPLACE CLOSURES

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Effective April 12, 2021, local public health authorities will have the power to order the temporary closure of businesses where confirmed outbreaks of COVID-19 have occurred in the workplace. This power is authorized by a new 'expedited workplace closure order' that was announced by Dr. Bonnie Henry on April 8, 2021.

This power will permit the medical health officer of a local health authority to order the closure of businesses for a minimum period of 10 days where 3 or more employees are confirmed to have transmitted COVID-19 in the workplace. A closure order can either be made in respect of a business as a whole, or for larger employers, in respect of a particular area of the business if transmission has occurred in a particular area. Public health authority staff will be assisted by WorkSafeBC prevention officers, who have been delegated the power to serve closure orders on businesses where outbreaks have occurred.

There are certain workplaces to whom this new order will not apply, including:

- Police stations and fire halls;
- Healthcare facilities, schools, shelters;
- Ferry system and public transportation; and
- Distribution hubs of necessary goods such as food and medicine.

Dr. Henry also confirmed that businesses who are ordered to shut pursuant to this new power, will be publicly listed together with the date on which the businesses will be allowed to reopen.

Given this new closure order, it is imperative that businesses take every measure and precaution to limit the risk of transmission in the workplace. Employees should be reminded of the safety protocols they are required to follow while at the workplace, and employers should ensure that updated Exposure Control Plans are in place and shared with employees.

by [Dianne Rideout](#) and [Michelle McKinnon](#)

## A Cautionary Note

The foregoing provides only an overview and does not constitute legal advice. Readers are cautioned against making any decisions based on this material alone. Rather, specific legal advice should be obtained.

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