

Strategies to Increase Physical Distancing and Reduce Virus Spread while Using Vehicles for Work

Physical distancing reduces the spread of COVID-19. Where workers are required to be in vehicles together, the same physical distancing principle of remaining 2 metres/6 feet apart should be applied. The following prevention strategies are listed in preferred order.

Suspend services and tasks that are non-essential

- Critically review all services and suspend those that are deemed non-essential, especially in cases that require two workers in a vehicle

Maintain one worker per vehicle

- Where traditionally two or more workers are in a vehicle, provide an additional vehicle(s) or modify processes to allow one worker in each vehicle (a valid City Driver's permit is required for each driver in City vehicles). To accomplish this:
 - The division should consider sharing of vehicles within units, between sections and within the division in order to best utilize its existing fleet
 - Consider reducing services, staggering operations (i.e., number of crews, frequency of task being performed, shift rotation) to increase availability of vehicles to accommodate one worker per vehicle
 - See if it's possible to engage the division's Fleet Vehicle Representative to assist with vehicle inventory
 - If appropriate, consider having employees use their personal vehicles to drive to worksites
 - If divisions have exhausted their inventory, they may reach out to Fleet Services to determine if other vehicles (rentals/leases) are available*Any additional vehicles should contain the safety features required for the work process being performed (e.g., TC-12, beacon lights). When increasing the number of vehicles at a work location, consider all safety elements, including traffic control, parking, etc.*
- Rotate unlicensed passengers to other tasks, so that licensed employees can drive a vehicle

Use larger vehicle to separate workers

- Where possible, utilize a larger vehicle to increase distancing between driver and passenger(s). Separate workers using a large SUV such as a Tahoe/Suburban (that allows 2 metres separation) or transport van with the passenger seated furthest away from the driver (e.g., passenger rides in back seat opposite the driver and not directly behind the driver)

Other controls and personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Both driver and passenger should be screened for COVID-19 symptoms before travelling together in a vehicle
- Open windows for fresh air
- Install a physical barrier between front and rear seats
- Where the division has exhausted the above recommendations and cannot achieve 2 metres physical distancing within a vehicle, the division should consider appropriate PPE alternatives (e.g., procedural masks)

Other preventative measures

- In all situations, any worker using a vehicle should [clean and disinfect](#) common touch areas at the start of each shift, between operators and at times where cross contamination may occur, e.g., filling gas. The common high-touch areas include: keys, door handles, controls, steering wheels, seat belts, rear view mirror, seat and mirror adjustments, etc.
- Where it is difficult for the worker to wash their hands on site and hand sanitizer is limited, consider having a portable water jug, soap and paper towels available in the vehicle.
- Although operations outside the vehicle are out of scope for this review, it is important that once the workers exit their vehicle, strategies are in place to maintain physical distancing of 2 metres (6 feet) between workers and to ensure proper hygiene while on the worksite and back at the yard/office.



Possible solutions to maintain physical distancing in unique situations

Picking up or dropping off City vehicles for maintenance service

In normal circumstances, two employees will travel together to the Fleet garage to pick up a vehicle, then drive back to their location in their separate vehicles. In these circumstances:

- Clients/divisions should first reach out to their designated garage supervisor to discuss a coordinated effort to manage pick up and drop off options. These options may include:
 - Coordinate the maintenance schedule so that the employee who drops off a vehicle for service returns with another vehicle that has already been serviced regardless of section or division
 - Have vendor pick up the vehicle directly from the division's location

- Ensure that divisional staff drive a minivan or large passenger van/SUV that allows the greatest distance between passengers, striving for 2 metres (6 feet)
- Have Fleet Services organize a pick-up service using a minivan or large passenger van/SUV that allows for the greatest distance between workers, striving for 2 metres (6 feet) or a physical barrier between front and rear seats
- Arrange and use towing contract to bring vehicles to and from garage and yard

NOTE: Vehicles such as: 2021 Tahoe/Suburban/Yukon/Yukon XL, potentially Ford Explorer or Expedition can meet the requirement for 2 metres (6 feet) physical distancing.

Collections operations – Rear Packer

In normal circumstances, the collections operator rides as the passenger when driving to and from beat/transfer stations. In these circumstances, consider:

- Suspending rear packer activity and using side loaders where possible
- Reducing the time spent in the cab, by using the passenger's (loader) personal vehicle to meet driver at the start of the beat and return passenger to their vehicle before driving to the transfer station. Alternate the roles each day
- Optimizing routes to reduce need for worker (loader) to enter cab

For further assistance, staff can reach out to their Occupational Health and Safety consultant or ergonomist.