

Planning Checklist for Retailers: 2019 Novel Coronavirus

The purpose of this checklist

The checklists below are intended to help with retailers' planning for the 2019 Novel Coronavirus. First, there is a checklist of steps that will be helpful on a preventative basis and that is equally appropriate to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus or to influenza, which is currently far more widespread. Second, there is a more detailed checklist, in the event that the 2019 Novel Coronavirus were to become a widespread outbreak.

Retail Council of Canada (RCC) is in regular contact with the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada and provincial health ministries to monitor the situation and will update members as the situation evolves. RCC will also be instituting a standing weekly call, to which members may dial-in, on which we will provide the latest information about the disease, the number of regional instances and any suggested best practices emanating from public health authorities.

What is the 2019 Novel Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some that cause illness in people and others that cause illness in animals. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people, and more rarely, these can then spread from person to person through close contact. This particular virus, now officially known as the 2019 Novel Coronavirus or 2019-nCoV, is of concern as it has not previously been identified in humans.

Illnesses associated with 2019-nCoV are similar to several respiratory illnesses and include fever, dry cough, sore throat and headache. Most cases are considered mild to moderate with a subset experiencing more severe illness with shortness of breath and difficulty breathing. There have been deaths reported from China.

The ways in which the 2019-nCoV may be spread still require better understanding. Cases have been linked to exposure to live animals at a seafood market in Wuhan City but more recently cases have been identified without animal or market exposure.

What can we expect in Canada?

The Governments of Ontario and BC had together confirmed three cases of 2019-nCoV Coronavirus in Canada as of January 28. Provincial and Federal agencies continue to monitor what is considered to be an evolving situation.

The cases are related to travel to Wuhan, China, where a cluster of cases was first reported in December.

The risk to Canadians at this time is considered low. As always, employees should wash their hands regularly, the working environment should be cleaned thoroughly, and employees displaying flu-like symptoms should be encouraged to stay home.

The Federal Government is in close contact with provincial and territorial Chief Medical Officers of Health to ensure that Canada is prepared to continue to be able to rapidly identify and manage the situation.

For more public health information, please refer to the following links:

Jurisdiction	Web page English	Web page French
Canada	https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html	https://www.canada.ca/fr/sante-publique/services/maladies/2019-nouveau-coronavirus.html
Ontario	https://www.ontario.ca/page/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov	https://www.ontario.ca/fr/page/nouveau-coronavirus-2019-ncov
Quebec	https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/	https://www.quebec.ca/sante/problemes-de-sante/a-z/coronavirus-2019/
British Columbia	http://www.bccdc.ca/about/news-stories/stories/2020/information-on-novel-coronavirus	
Alberta	https://albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx	
Manitoba	https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/diseases/coronavirus.html	
Saskatchewan	https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus	
Nova Scotia	https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/	https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/fr/
New Brunswick	https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_diseases/coronavirus.html	https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/fr/ministeres/bmhc/maladies_transmissibles/content/maladies_respiratoires/coronavirus.html
Newfoundland and Labrador	https://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/coronavirus/	https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/fr/alerte/advisory-coronavirus-infection
Prince Edward Island	https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/alert/advisory-coronavirus-infection	
Yukon	https://yukon.ca/novel-coronavirus	
Northwest Territories	https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/services/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov	https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/services/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov
Nunavut	See Health Canada	

Checklist appropriate to currently limited instances of 2019-nCoV in Canada

Though the potential impact of 2019-nCoV is unpredictable, we should be planning now. RCC recommends adopting a structured yet flexible business strategy to minimize any disturbances. The primary role of retailers in this situation is to reduce health and safety risk to employees and customers as well as managing necessary business operations.

This first, short checklist recommends immediate steps appropriate to the currently limited impact of 2019-nCoV in Canada (only two cases at time of writing).

1. Your Business

	Not started	In Progress	Complete
Ensure that you have up-to-date and reliable information readily available (Government of Canada website: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify and assign roles and responsibilities for response plans. When you are planning, ensure you include everyone involved and have their feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Your Employees & Customers

	Not started	In Progress	Complete
Plan for staff absences. Staff who experience fever, dry cough, sore throat and headache should be told to stay home even if (as is highly likely) it turns out that those symptoms are unrelated to 2019-nCoV.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider your customers' needs and devise alternative arrangements to meet those needs/concerns. (i.e., e-commerce capabilities, "click-and-pick", telephone orders with home delivery, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Your Policies

	Not started	In Progress	Complete
Ensure that you have absence policies that meet regulations (i.e. provisions for emergency personal leaves/"sick leave" and on when infected people can return to work when symptoms have gone).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that you have policies for reducing infection set up at work (i.e., cough and sneeze etiquette, hand hygiene, persons with slight symptoms asked to stay home).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Your Resources

	Not started	In Progress	Complete
Ensure you have sufficient products on hand to reduce spread of infection (i.e. hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, disinfectant soap, paper towels, tissues - and receptacles for their disposal). Make sure that these are available to staff and customers alike for in-store use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure you have taken measures for thorough and regular cleaning on the premises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure policies are in place for staff who may be working overseas and that they have specific arrangements in place for their care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure staff lists with emergency contact numbers are up-to-date.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Communication & Education

	Not started	In Progress	Complete
Ensure you have communication channels set in place in for status and action updates to your employees, customers, vendors and suppliers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure your staff have information about response plans including their roles in the preparedness plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that your plan is culturally and linguistically catered to your staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Share available information to educate your staff (e.g. signs & symptoms, modes of transmission, personal and family protection, personal hygiene etiquette, contingency plans) .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Information adapted from UK Resilience <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/seasonal-influenza/preparedness/influenza-pandemic-preparedness-plans>

Checklist in the event that 2019-nCoV in Canada evolves toward being a widespread outbreak

At present, the impact of 2019-nCoV is very limited in Canada but the nature of infectious diseases is such that this status could change rapidly. RCC has offered the more comprehensive checklist below during Canada's H1N1 pandemic (2009) and SARS outbreak (2003) and the measures remain appropriate to 2019-nCoV.

RCC recommends that retailers adopt a structured yet flexible business strategy to minimize any disturbances. This checklist is intended to be a general guideline and should not be considered as a comprehensive checklist to address all business planning for a 2019-nCoV outbreak.

6. Your Business Continuity

	Not started	In Progress	Complete
Ensure that you have up-to-date and reliable information readily available (Government of Canada website: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify and assign roles and responsibilities for response plans. When you are planning, ensure you include everyone involved and have their feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify your essential services to keep the business running. Include payroll, systems maintenance, communications services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discuss with suppliers whether they have a response plan on standby and coordinate with your own.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that you have access to a broad pool of employees to take on essential tasks in your business. Identify contract staff, retirees and others who may be available when some employees are absent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assess the possible impact that a widespread outbreak (or pandemic) will have on business related	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

travel. Consider reducing non-essential travel.			
Formulate a communications strategy. This plan should be a chain system with key contacts, employees, suppliers, customers, and include a process for tracking and checking status of those involved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Determine the possible impact of a widespread outbreak on company financials.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider how you will strengthen communications and IT infrastructures to support increased employee telecommuting and remote customer access.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set up authorities, triggers and procedures for activating and terminating the business' response plan, altering business operations and transferring business knowledge to key employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Your Employees & Customers

	Not started	In Progress	Complete
Plan for staff absences. Remember that the scope can range from staff absences to disruptions in transit system, schools etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assess your businesses' need for continued face-to-face contact with your customers and suppliers. Consider plans to change the frequency or the type of contact because there could be an advisory against non-essential travel domestically as well as internationally.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan for an increased request in employee welfare services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that your customers and your employees with special needs are considered for while planning a response plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider your customers' needs and devise alternative arrangements to meet those needs/concerns. (i.e., e-commerce capabilities, "click-and-pick", telephone orders with home delivery, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anticipate employee fear and anxiety, rumours and misinformation and plan your communications accordingly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide information from public health authorities for the at-home care of ill employees and family members.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Your Policies

	Not started	In Progress	Complete
Ensure that you have absence policies that meet regulations (i.e. provisions for emergency personal leaves/"sick leave" and when infected people can return to work when symptoms have gone). Calibrate those policies with the advice of health care professionals as the situation evolves.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that you have policies for reducing infection set up at work (i.e. cough and sneeze etiquette, hand hygiene, persons with slight symptoms asked to stay home).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that you have policies in place for employees who are suspected to be ill or become ill at work (e.g. infection control strategy, absences).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that you have proper mechanisms to notify the authorities and health care professionals when a suspected infection has occurred. Also ensure containment of the infection when it has occurred.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With latest information from the Health Canada, staff who have recently travelled to infected areas should be asked to stay home for 2 weeks (the gestation period), travel should be limited as staff should not be sent overseas to the infected areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Your Resources

	Not started	In Progress	Complete
Ensure you have sufficient products on hand to reduce spread of infection (i.e. hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, disinfectant soap, paper towels, tissues - and receptacles for their disposal). Make sure that these are available to staff and customers alike for in-store use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure you have taken measures for thorough and regular cleaning on the premises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that you have additional channels for communication with staff in case face-to-face interactions are not possible (i.e. tele-conferencing) and that they are able to access their files via remote access.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure policies are in place for staff who may be working overseas and that they have specific arrangements in place for their care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that staff lists with emergency contact numbers are up-to-date.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Communication & Education

	Not started	In Progress	Complete
Ensure that your information is from accurate, up-to-date sources and that it covers international and domestic issues.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that you have communication channels set in place in for status and action updates to your employees, customers, vendors and suppliers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure your staff have information about response plans including their roles in the preparedness plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that your plan is culturally and linguistically catered to your staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Share available information to educate your staff depending on the appropriate stage of the alert. (e.g. signs & symptoms, modes of transmission, personal and family protection, personal hygiene etiquette, contingency plans).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Your Community

	Not started	In Progress	Complete
Involve yourself in resilience teams and forums in your community. Find out what other organizations and agencies are planning for a possible outbreak.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Information adapted from UK Resilience: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/seasonal-influenza/preparedness/influenza-pandemic-preparedness-plans>; Vancouver Coastal Health: <http://www.vch.ca/Documents/Businesses-checklist-pandemic-response-planning.pdf>

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