

## Recommendations for maintaining municipal road operations in light of COVID-19

Under Ontario Regulation “O. Reg 82/20, CLOSURE OF PLACES OF NON-ESSENTIAL BUSINESSES”, roads are considered critical infrastructure, and construction and maintenance operations necessary to maintain them are deemed essential services which are allowed to continue, within reason, while the regulation is in effect. Many municipalities are adopting different work practices and procedures to ensure work can continue in compliance with the regulation, in a way that reduces the risk of transmitting the infection among staff or between staff, contractors, the public, and others.

Since no two municipalities are the same, and each must assess their own priorities and how to address them, it is not practical to propose “best practices” that all should adopt. Nonetheless, the following are some examples of what different municipalities are doing. You should assess your own situation and priorities, and decide if any of these could apply in your municipality. If you have adopted other practices that you would like to share with your peers, feel free to submit them to [dennisonel@aors.on.ca](mailto:dennisonel@aors.on.ca), and we’ll update this document as needed.

- Use a buddy system to set up work crews, so that staff only work with the same 1 to 3 co-workers, rather than allowing staff to mix between crews. And to the extent possible, ensure staff in a work crew practice safe distancing between themselves, or take other precautions.
- Each of the work crews should be isolated from others as best as possible. Dispatch them from different yards, even if that means setting up temporary satellite yards that are stocked by a separate group.
- Where multiple crews must work from the same yard, consider staggering shifts by an hour to minimize the number of staff present at the same time.
- If possible, assign one operator to each vehicle or piece of equipment. Vehicles should be parked outside, locked, and the operator takes the keys home with them.
- If there aren’t enough vehicles to go around, consider multiple shifts. Or allow staff to drive their own vehicles to the work sites and compensate them for mileage.
- If there is part of your operation or staff that is “critical”, or would be in an emergency situation, consider locking it down now and only allowing access on an as needed basis, and ensure critical staff are assigned in a way that minimizes contact between themselves and others.
- Work instructions should be sent by text or email, minimizing the need for face to face meetings.

- Ask staff to do a self-assessment. Go Evo (Government Evolved) has created a secure app that gives employers a way to assess their employees for COVID-19 risk before they report to work. It's 100% free to use, completely secure and helps keep employees and your workplace safe and healthy all while balancing the need to deliver essential services to the public. To learn more and signup, please visit their website at <https://www.go-evo.com/covid-19>.
- Clean, clean, and clean some more. All high-touch surfaces in equipment and buildings should be sanitized regularly. Make sure staff have the supplies they need.
- Minimize contact with the public, and where contact is necessary, maintain safe distancing and other protective measures (e.g. masks).
- You may need to reprioritize what gets done when. Are there certain projects that are best done while you are fully staffed? You may want to prioritize those in case you find yourself short-staffed later in the year. Are there tasks that may not seem critical now, (e.g. catch basin cleaning), but could become urgent later (e.g. in the event of a major storm)? Again, now may be the best time to tackle them, while you are at full staff.
- If you do decide to delay or cancel certain operations, consult with neighbouring municipalities to avoid large discrepancies in service levels that could trigger complaints from rate payers. In any event, use common sense and document your decisions.
- In all cases, be sure to comply with the regulations and recommendations of public health authorities. They take precedence over MMS. Again, be sure to document why certain tasks are not being done.
- There are several resources to help Public Works supervisors manage their operations during these challenging times, including webinars presented by OGRA, which can be viewed online.
  - [Closure of Non-Essential Businesses in Ontario: Assessment of Impact on Municipal Construction Projects](#)
  - [Municipal Road Construction Projects During the COVID-19 Crisis: What Municipalities Need to Know](#)
  - [Municipal Road Maintenance During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Let Dennis know if you find other resources that would be helpful to your peers.

And when this pandemic finally passes, think about if and how any of these extra precautions could become part of your “new normal”, to improve the security and resiliency of your operations.