

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Management Approach for Relaunch

1. How is government's approach to PPE distribution changing?

A: Government is prioritizing the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) to Alberta's critical service providers who are at the highest risk of exposure to COVID-19. This includes hospital workers, first responders, those working in homeless shelters and seniors care facilities (such as lodges), and pharmacists conducting COVID-19 tests.

As of July 1, 2020, the following groups will be required to procure PPE through suppliers, rather than through the government (via the Provincial Operations Centre or Alberta Health Services):

- child care providers (day cares/day homes)
- private community based health service providers (diagnostic imaging clinics, primary care physicians, physiotherapy clinics, optometry clinics, etc.)
 - Exception:
N95 masks will be provided through AHS to dentists for emergency procedures and to morticians for embalming procedures. Requests must be submitted through the professional associations for these groups.
- food services (meat packing, food banks, etc.)
- transportation (trucking companies, etc.)
- non-governmental organizations (churches, etc.)
- oil and gas services
- utilities
- general municipal needs (from municipalities)
 - Exception:
Requests from small municipalities for PPE for specialized water and wastewater treatment services will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

There will be no changes in the PPE supply for:

- AHS facilities and services (hospitals, AHS operated clinics and EMS)
- AHS operated and contracted continuing care facilities
- AHS operated and contracted supportive living facilities
- lodges, mental health housing and shelter operators
- AHS operated and contracted home care services
- AHS operated and contracted midwifery providers
- pharmacists conducting COVID-19 screening and testing
- first responders (police and fire)

PPE may be provided to an organization that is not on the PPE distribution list if there are emergent short-term issues, such as to ensure food security, for example.

2. Why is government changing its approach now?

A: Even though the global supply chain of PPE has been under pressure over the last several months due to increased demand, the supply of PPE is increasing as more companies around the world are producing PPE products. Therefore, PPE is becoming more available on the open market.

As Alberta moves forward with relaunch, the need for PPE to protect Albertans continues and the safety of our health-care workers is paramount.

This approach will ensure we continue to have an adequate supply of PPE for front line service providers and help protect our most vulnerable, including Albertans in continuing care facilities.

3. Why is the government doing this now as Alberta enters relaunch and many of these organizations and businesses will need PPE to resume operations?

A: The approach used by the province in the emergency response phase is not sustainable as we enter the recovery phase and re-open our economy so a different approach is required now. Many businesses are able to implement other effective control measures instead of using PPE, as indicated in the [Workplace Guidelines for Business Owners](#). Isolating the hazard and changing behaviour can be key controls to support reopening.

However, as we move forward with relaunch, we know that many businesses and organizations continue to need access to PPE to safely reopen and resume operations.

That's why we are providing information on PPE suppliers on the Alberta BizConnect webpage (<https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx>) to help organizations and businesses source their own PPE.

The global supply of PPE has been limited over the last several months, with the supply chain under pressure. With more companies now developing PPE products and supply increasing, availability has increased. Alberta businesses have more options to source their own appropriate PPE products.

4. What is government doing to support organizations and businesses in accessing PPE?

- A: Businesses and organizations that have already received PPE from the Provincial Operations Centre or from Alberta Health Services will be able to continue to access PPE until June 30, 2020 at market prices. Access will be subject to availability.

This timing will help support organizations and businesses to become or remain operational while they secure their own PPE suppliers.

Information on PPE suppliers is available on the [Alberta BizConnect webpage](#) to help organizations and businesses secure their own PPE.

5. Will First Nations be able to access PPE from government?

- A: First Nations will be able to access PPE from the Provincial Operations Centre (AEMA), for a fee, subject to availability, until August 31, 2020. The PPE distribution will be co-ordinated with Indigenous Services Canada.

6. Will the POC and AHS accept new requests for PPE from businesses and organizations that have already received PPE?

- A: For businesses and organizations that have accessed PPE from the POC or AHS, new orders will be filled until June 30, 2020, subject to availability and for a fee.

The Government of Alberta will not supply PPE to organizations outside of the defined list as of July 1, 2020. PPE may be provided to an organization that is not on the PPE distribution list if there are emergent short-term issues, such as to ensure food security, for example.

7. For businesses and organizations that have not received PPE from government, will new requests for PPE be accepted?

- A. For organizations that have not accessed PPE from the Provincial Operations Centre or Alberta Health Services, it is recommended that they source PPE supplies independently through the supply chain.

The Government of Alberta will not supply PPE to organizations outside of the defined list as of July 1, 2020. PPE may be provided to an organization that is not on the PPE distribution list if there are emergent short-term issues, such as to ensure food security, for example.

8. Will government fulfill outstanding requests for PPE that have already been submitted?

A: Businesses or organizations that have already received PPE from the POC and have submitted requests for additional PPE may be able to access PPE at market price, subject to availability.

9. Where can organizations and business get information on how to access PPE?

A: Information is available on the [Alberta BizConnect webpage](#). Once businesses have assessed the need for PPE, they can also visit the following procurement websites that may be able to link them to PPE suppliers:

- [Rapid Response Platform Canada](#)
- [ATB Nexus](#)

The Government of Alberta will continue to monitor developments and provide more information as it becomes available.

10. The government has listed two potential contacts for PPE supplies on the Alberta BizConnect website. Will the government be providing information on more suppliers?

A: Businesses and organizations are responsible for making their own decisions on PPE supplies, and we recommend implementing other control measures (as noted in the guidelines for reopening. Numerous organizations are taking action to make supplies of PPE available. The Alberta government will continue to monitor developments and provide more information as it becomes available.

11. Who can businesses and organizations contact for more information (e.g. on outstanding requests/new PPE fees)?

A: Information is available on the [Alberta BizConnect webpage](#). Once businesses have assessed the need for PPE, they can also visit the following procurement websites that may be able to link them to PPE suppliers:

- [Rapid Response Platform Canada](#)
- [ATB Nexus](#)

For details on existing PPE requests, businesses and organizations can:

- contact the Provincial Operations Centre at: MA.PPESupport@gov.ab.ca or check the status of your [order online](#) , or
- email Alberta Health Services at: ppe@ahs.ca

Businesses and organizations can contact Alberta BizConnect for more general information at bizconnect@gov.ab.ca.

12. Where can organizations and businesses find out how much the PPE from government will cost?

A: Pricing information for PPE will be available on the Alberta Emergency Management Agency webpage at: <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-emergency-management-agency.aspx>. Prices may be revised after June 30, 2020.

13. How is the government determining market prices for PPE?

A: The price of each item of PPE provided by the Provincial Operations Centre and Alberta Health Services has been determined based on the average observed market prices in mid-May. These prices will remain consistent until June 30, 2020 when they may be revised to reflect current market rates.

14. How will organizations and businesses be expected to access PPE that is in high demand when supplies are limited (e.g. N95 masks)? Won't they have difficulty doing this without government's support?

A: We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for PPE worldwide has put the global supply chain under pressure.

However, with more companies now developing PPE products and supply increasing, availability continues to increase. As the supply chain begins to expand, Alberta businesses have more options to source their own PPE products, as appropriate.

We are providing information on PPE suppliers on the Alberta BizConnect webpage to help organizations and businesses secure their own PPE.

15. Why is government providing N95 masks to dentists only for emergency services and not for regular operations? Won't that put dental staff and patients at risk?

A: N95 masks are one of the types of PPE that are extremely limited in the market. We are supplying these masks for the emergency dental services that are required for Albertans. For regular operations, dentists will be opening when they believe they can effectively address their occupational health and safety needs through procuring their own PPE supplies.

16. Is the government now restricting PPE distribution because it provided PPE to other provinces last month?

A: Alberta was able to send surplus procedural masks, gloves, goggles and ventilators to B.C., Ontario and Quebec, while maintaining supply for Alberta's health-care system, at that time.

As part of the COVID-19 pandemic response, government helped meet an immediate need by providing PPE to some non-Alberta Health Services (AHS) facilities, such as pharmacies, disability service providers, social service and civil society groups, and independent medical clinics.

With more companies developing PPE products and supply increasing, Alberta businesses now have more options to source their own PPE products, as appropriate, while government can focus on the most vulnerable populations.

Alberta's approach to empower businesses to address their own operational health and safety concerns for relaunch aligns with other jurisdictions including Quebec, Ontario, B.C. and Manitoba. These provinces are also restricting their medical-grade PPE supply to front line healthcare workers.

17. Why did government spend money to advertise the PPE contribution to other provinces?

A: The donation of surplus PPE and ventilators to other provinces demonstrated Albertans' support for all Canadians during this pandemic. It was important to inform people in other provinces of that support.

The advertising strategy employed a cost effective means of delivering this message.

Less than \$20,000 was spent on social media ads that reached an audience of over 2 million people across the country.

The Alberta government has undertaken similar advertising strategies during this pandemic, to inform people impacted by specific decisions and announcements.

Engagement levels with the ads were relatively high, indicating that people in other provinces were interested and the announcement resonated with other Canadians.

18. Government's recommended guidelines for child care centres say that staff should wear masks when interacting with children for prolonged periods (e.g. when changing a diaper or feeding). Now government is no longer providing these masks for free. Won't that put staff and children at risk?

A: Child care centres will be required to source their own PPE supply, as will other businesses. Child care centres and other businesses and organizations that have already received PPE from the Provincial Operations Centre can continue accessing supplies subject to availability and for a fee, until June 30, 2020. This timing will help support these groups as they transition to other PPE suppliers.

19. Why is the government not continuing to provide PPE to food industries? Is there a concern that this may impact food supply/food security (e.g. meat packing plants affected by recent outbreaks)?

A: When there is a short-term emergent need, the government will still provide PPE for organizations at market price.

PPE may be provided to an organization that is not on the PPE distribution list if there is a critical need.

20. How many requests for PPE has the government received to date from non-health organizations and businesses?

A: The Alberta Emergency Management Agency has received more than 4,000 requests for PPE. This does not include requests made to AHS.

21. Assuming that the demand for PPE exceeds government's supply, how will government determine which requests for PPE get fulfilled?

A: The Government of Alberta is working quickly to fulfill requests. Given the volume of requests, the availability of items and the need to fulfill priority orders, we are unable to fill all requests at this time.

22. What happens after June 30th? Will organizations and businesses still be able to purchase PPE from the government?

A: As of July 1, 2020, organizations and businesses will be expected to independently secure their own PPE through the supply chain.

23. How does this fit with the Masks for All Albertans initiative?

A: This PPE distribution is separate from government's program to provide non-medical masks to Albertans. We expect to receive the non-medical masks in a couple weeks and distribution details will be provided when the program is ready to be launched.

24. Government is no longer providing PPE to community physicians and nurse practitioners for free. How are they different from other doctors and nurses?

A: Community medical clinics are private businesses required to provide OH&S supplies to their employees just like all other small businesses in Alberta. Those Physicians and Nurse Practitioners who are employees of, or under contract to, AHS will continue to get PPE from AHS as part of their AHS roles.

25. Does this apply to community physicians and nurse practitioners that are conducting COVID-19 testing?

A: COVID-19 testing to date has been primarily occurring in AHS assessment centres and AHS has been providing PPE. We are exploring options to enable expanded testing in community settings and PPE needs will be considered.

26. What about nurse practitioners in long-term care facilities (given that on May 4, government announced changes to the nursing home regulations to allow nurse practitioners to act as primary care providers in nursing homes, admitting and assessing residents, and offering follow-up care)?

A: Long-term care facilities will continue to receive PPE. Nurse practitioners providing direct resident care or working in resident care areas, such as licensed long-term care or designated supportive living facilities, will be provided the necessary PPE by the facility they are working in.

27. Why are morticians able to obtain N95s for embalming procedures? How do morticians access PPE?

A: Due to the potential exposure to COVID-19 for morticians, the need for medical-grade masks is critical. Protecting Albertans is key as we move to relaunch, and there are challenges in obtaining N95 masks at this time for front-line workers. These requests must be submitted through the appropriate professional association to the Provincial Operations Centre, which sources the PPE through Alberta Health Services.

28. Why are dentists able to obtain N95s for emergency procedures? How do dentists access PPE?

A: Due to the potential exposure to COVID-19 for dentists during emergency procedures, the need for medical-grade masks is critical. Protecting Albertans is key as we move to relaunch, and there are challenges in obtaining N95 masks at this time for front-line workers. These requests for PPE for emergency dental procedures only must be submitted through the appropriate professional association to the Provincial Operations Centre, which sources the PPE through Alberta Health Services.