



# TOWN POLICY

## ADMINISTRATION POLICY: **Pandemic Planning Policy**

**DEPARTMENT:** General Administration

**POLICY NUMBER:** GN-150

**APPROVAL:**

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** March 15, 2021  
**SUPERSEDES:** Policy #P-5, GN-028  
**UP FOR REVIEW:** March 15, 2026

**Policy Statement:**

In the event of a pandemic, it is important to maintain the health and safety of town employees as much as possible to enable the continuation of the critical activities needed to operate the Town. Pandemics, by their nature, are unique and can present very different challenge. Specific actions will need to be tailored to each instance of a pandemic. This policy has guidelines and procedures to help administration understand the needs of the pandemic and should assist administration in managing the affairs of the Town in the events leading up to, during, and after a pandemic.

**General Course of a Pandemic**

There will be little lead time between when a pandemic is first declared by the WHO (Level 3) and when it spreads to the Town of Cardston. It is likely that by Level 3, global supply chains will be affected and new personal protective equipment (PPE) or other supplies will be on backorder. Virus transmission usually spreads in waves with multiple waves spanned over one or more years. It is essential to view a pandemic as a long term event that may need to be managed over more than one year.

**Pandemic periods and phases**

For help with response planning refer to the table of pandemic periods and phases.

**Table 1 Pandemic Periods and Phases**

Period	Description	WHO Phases
Inter - Pandemic Phase	New Virus in animals, no human cases	1 - 2
Level 1 - Pandemic Alert	New Virus causes human cases	3
Level 2 - Pandemic Warning	Evidence of increased human-to human transmission	4 - 5





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Level 3 - Pandemic	Efficient and sustained human-to-human transmission Suspected/Confirmed case(s) in Alberta	6
Level 4 - Pandemic	Confirmed case(s) at the Town of Cardston or in Cardston County	6
Post - Pandemic Period	Return to inter-pandemic period	7

## Suggested Actions

### Level 1

1. At level 1, the focus is to keep attention on development of the virus and to not be caught off guard if the transmission of the virus begins rapid acceleration.
2. Identify ways to promote prevention and identify ways to minimize staff, customer and visitor exposure and illness. These may include wearing masks and practicing social distancing.
3. Review how essential messages can be communicated across the Town of Cardston.
4. Establish mechanisms for alerting staff to a change in pandemic status.
5. Establish procedures and triggers for escalating a response to a new case of the virus within the organization to the proper authority.
6. Review internal supply of standard PPE and place orders for items that are low or out of stock.
7. Begin daily monitoring of news channels to keep up to date on the virus's development.

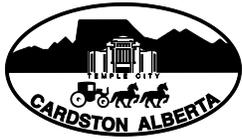
### Level 2

8. At level 2, the focus is to become ready to activate emergency plans if a pandemic is declared.
9. Alert staff to a change in pandemic status.
10. Inform staff of PPE supplies that are readily available and measures to minimize transmission that will be activated if a pandemic is declared.
11. Inform staff of policy relating to sick leave and how time away from work will be handled in relation to illness or quarantine situations.
12. Begin monitoring Alberta Health Services communications to stay informed of guidelines or restrictions on activities.
13. Discuss with staff critical tasks and how the organization will attempt to deal with interruptions to the regular work schedule resulting from quarantines, self-isolation, or getting sick.
14. Review business continuity plans and make modifications if necessary.

### Levels 3 & 4

15. At level 3 & 4, the focus is to follow Provincial guidelines and restrictions and maintain effective communication channels with staff and the community.





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16. Alert staff to the change in pandemic status.
17. Activate measures to minimize transmission of the virus. (Social distancing, management/tracking of illness, cancellations, closures, etc.)
18. Establish regular communications with staff regarding the status of the pandemic and the organizations response efforts to promote confidence in the workplace and response activities.
19. Keep staff aware of Provincial guidelines and restrictions as they change.
20. Activate essential business continuity measures and establish regular review and emergency management processes.
21. Contact the Cardston County Regional Emergency Management Regional Director of Emergency Management (RDEM) and inform them of the state of the Town's response to the pandemic and get their feedback.

## **Post-Pandemic Period**

22. Debrief staff on the Town's response to the pandemic through all the levels and solicit feedback for how it was perceived and what can be improved.
23. Review and update risk and impact assessment.
24. Review supplies of PPE and other supplies that were required in response to the pandemic and make plans to order quantities that will provide a suitable supply to be prepared for the next pandemic.
25. Update pandemic policy as appropriate.
26. Make plans to cross train employees on essential services to mitigate the impact unexpected quarantines.
27. Update Emergency Response Plan and various business continuity plans as appropriate.
28. Meet with the RDEM to debrief them on the effectiveness of the Town's response and any other actions or learning from the pandemic that could impact the regional emergency response plan.

## **Business Continuity**

One of the risks to the Town of Cardston in the event of a pandemic is the critical services performed by town staff that residents rely on will be paused or canceled due to loss of staff from exposure to the virus. These critical services range from maintaining water supply and sewer services, to snow removal, and office functions such as relating to cemetery services or building permits.

Past pandemics have shown that multiple staff can be required to quarantine themselves from work for periods of two weeks at a time. It is possible future pandemics will require an even lengthier quarantine period which would cause considerable disruption to standard workflows. The closure of schools can also interrupt a staff member's ability to leave the home to come to work for an extended period of time. Planning, cross trained staff, and procedures need to be in place so essential services





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can be shared by those who are able to work; and so that staff who are not symptomatic but are required to be quarantined are able to work from home on suitable tasks.

The business continuity plan is focused on 2 key facets to help direct the planning and decision making that will enable the critical services of the town to continue; Core People and Skills, and Maintaining Essential Service.

## Identification of Core People and Core Skills

The issues that need to be considered include:

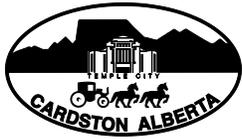
1. What are the critical functions of the department/unit?
2. Who are the primary individuals and how many staff members are required to keep the critical functions of the department/unit running?
3. What are the core skills required to keep the critical functions of the department/unit running and who has those skills?
4. Are there sufficient back-ups for the people and skills if there is a high level of absence? Are there other resources (e.g. volunteers, retirees) that could be utilized if necessary?
5. Are there any systems which rely on periodic physical intervention by key individuals to keep them operational? How long would the system last without attention?
6. Are there other critical inputs (e.g. materials, supplies, products, suppliers, contractors) that are required to maintain the critical functions of the department/unit?
7. Who are the designated people required to manage the pandemic contingency plans for each department/unit?
8. Identify who the critical third party stakeholders are who need to be advised of changes to standard workflows and their contact information? As the status quo is changed, are their people or organizations that need to be consulted to understand their priorities for critical services?

## Action Plan for Maintaining Essential Service/Activity

The action plan should include details for each department regarding:

1. Identification of staff who are able to complete the service/activity that may be called on to fill gaps due to absence.
2. Identification of arrangements that can be made to minimize the risk of staff who remain on the job.





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3. Reorganization of workloads and tasks so that staff working from home are able to do as much as possible.
4. Organization of a communications system to facilitate working from home.
5. Organization of a reporting system to ensure work is being completed.
6. Communication strategy to staff to explain new working arrangements.
7. Communication strategy to third party stakeholders to explain new constraints on services and set expectations and understand needs.

## **PPE and Employee Protection Measures**

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

1. Face masks
2. Face shields
3. Hand sanitizer
4. Latex or Nitrile gloves

### **Employee Protection Measures**

5. Plastic barriers to partition spaces between employees and residents
6. Wash hands regularly, see appendix for a poster from Alberta Health Services. In order to be effective, washing hands must include:
  - a. Enough soap to cover both sides of your hands.
  - b. Scrubbing both sides of your hands as well as in-between your fingers and on your nails.
  - c. Hand washing should last between 15 and 30 seconds.
  - d. Use a paper towel to turn on and off the tap to reduce touch points.
7. Cover your mouth with your elbow or a tissue when you sneeze and wash your hands or use sanitizer after every sneeze.
8. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Some hand sanitizers evaporate very quickly, be sure to use enough to be able to thoroughly rub over the front and back of your hands, between your fingers and over your finger nails before it evaporates. See appendix for a poster from Alberta Health Services.
9. Keep shared surfaces and areas clean. Regularly wash doorknobs, light switches, telephones, keyboards and other surfaces that are high use areas.
10. Employees should maintain appropriate physical distancing at all times in the office. Special attention to distancing needs to be given during meetings and in small spaces such as the file room, lunch room, storage room, etc.. It may be necessary to limit attendance in these spaces to 1 person at a time.





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11. Employees must understand that they are expected to stay home when they are sick. Negligence to this may have significant ramifications to the organizations ability to continue providing essential services to the community.

## Employee Absence Due to Pandemic Influenza

It is imperative that employees who are sick or displaying symptoms of a pandemic illness do not come to work and infect other employees. This type of transmission can lead to the complete shutdown of departments and represents a major threat to the organization.

The Town of Cardston recognizes that in the event of a federally, provincially or locally declared Pandemic, the current sick leave policy may not address the needs of the employees. Provincial health regulations may require individuals who are not displaying symptoms but have been identified as coming in contact with the virus to quarantine themselves to prevent transmission. Mandated self-isolation, sick or not sick, may not be accommodated in the current sick leave policy. This policy provides extraordinary provisions that are in effect during a provincially declared pandemic and supersede the existing treatment of sick leave and sick leave policies.

1. All staff members will be granted paid sick leave if they are diagnosed with the pandemic virus.
2. Except as in #6 and #7 below, all staff members will be granted paid sick leave if they are required to quarantine or self-isolate by provincial or federal mandate even if they are not diagnosed with the pandemic virus themselves.
3. If a staff member exhausts their accrued paid sick leave, the Town will issue additional sick leave for a pandemic related absence. This pandemic related sick leave will be required to be earned back, meaning that the employee may be granted additional sick leave, but must work out of the deficit once they are back to work. Should the employee become sick following the pandemic and they still do not have any surplus sick leave, they will be required to use their vacation allotment and or personal days allotment for time away from work.
4. Staff members who have exhausted their paid sick leave, vacation allotment and personal days will not be paid for time away from work.
5. If a staff member requires paid sick leave, they shall provide acceptable evidence of their diagnosis or requirement to quarantine.
6. If a staff member knowingly participates in an activity that will require a quarantine period, such as international travel, that quarantine period will not be covered by paid sick leave.
7. If a staff member knowingly participates in an activity that is prohibited due to provincial or federal restrictions, and is required to quarantine because of being identified as being in contact with the pandemic virus, or they are diagnosed with the pandemic virus and it is traced to that activity, their time away from work will not be covered by paid sick leave.





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8. If in the opinion of an employee's manager or the CAO, the employee is sick or displaying symptoms of the pandemic virus, the employee will be required to leave the workplace and not return until the risk of transmission has been mitigated. If available, the employee will use paid sick leave, vacation allotment, or personal days, in that order, to cover the time spent away from work. If the employee has exhausted all of those allotments, the time away from work will be unpaid.
9. Wherever possible, staff staying at home due to a pandemic related circumstance, who are able to work, will be provided work they can do from home to reduce the use of paid sick leave, vacation allotment, or personal days.
10. In a Pandemic situation, the Provincial or Federal Government may provide provisions for employment insurance benefits or other similar benefits for affected employees. Employees may wish to take advantage of this program during a period of required isolation, once all paid leave options have been exhausted. The organization will make every effort to accommodate this promptly.
11. The CAO has the ability to grant paid sick leave, if the situation merits an exception to the above policy statements.

## Vaccination

In a pandemic, there are normally aggressive initiatives to vaccinate the population against the prevailing virus. The concept of mandatory vaccinations in the workplace is a contentious one as it touches on topics such as personal choice, and risk of others. The Town of Cardston will not take the position to require all staff members to receive a vaccination. If a staff member refuses to be voluntarily vaccinated, and if that is determined to be a risk to the other employees and/or themselves, the CAO and the staff member will work out a plan involving personal protective equipment, work area layout and barriers, working from home provisions, or other mitigation items to reduce risk to the organization.





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## REVISION HISTORY

Date	Description
September 8, 2009	SARS pandemic – New Pandemic Influenza Planning Policy
March 15, 2021	Policy updated significantly during COVID-19 pandemic

**APPROVAL:** ..... **DATE:** .....

*Chief Administrative Officer, Jeff Shaw*

*(signed copy kept in CAO policy binder)*

