

Return to Safe Work Plan:

A Checklist for Managing Brokers in Rental Property and Strata Management Brokerages

As part of [BC's Restart Plan](#), it's vital that strata management and rental property management brokerages continue to prioritize and encourage virtual/remote options over in-person/office interactions wherever possible, while ensuring physical distancing and high sanitization standards in the workplace. Above all, it is key to ensure that staff and licensed real estate professionals understand the potentially harmful consequences of coming to the office if they are experiencing any symptoms or have been in contact with anyone experiencing [symptoms linked to COVID-19](#).

As managing brokers – leaders in the profession – you play a key role in ensuring your staff, real estate professionals, and consumers are safe. To support you to plan and implement a safe return to work, RECBC had adapted this checklist from the British Columbia Real Estate Association's (BCREA) *Return to Safe Work Plan: Checklist for Managing Brokers*. It addresses the specific concerns and business needs of strata and rental property management brokerages and includes links to other resources and questions to provide additional guidance. Please consider the questions on this checklist as appropriate to the specific circumstances of your brokerage when developing plans and policies.

We thank the British Columbia Real Estate Association, Office of the Superintendent of Real Estate, the Professional Association of Managing Agents (PAMA), LandlordBC, the Vancouver Island Strata Owners Association (VISOA), the Condominium Home Owners Association (CHOA) and the members of RECBC's Strata Management Services Advisory Group for their contributions in the development of this checklist.

Once you have finalized your brokerage's policies, be sure to post them in a visible location in your office(s) in accordance with the order of the Provincial Health Officer.

Return to Safe Work Plan:

A Checklist for Managing Brokers in Rental Property and Strata Management Brokerages

STEP 1: ASSESS YOUR WORKPLACE

Determine changes needed to your office to create a safe workplace.

- Have you reviewed the best practice guidelines provided by [WorkSafeBC](#) and developed with the Public Health Officer?
- How many people can you allow in your office and still maintain [safe physical distancing](#) (two metres distance at all times)?
- How will you ensure [safety at work](#) in shared spaces like meeting rooms, elevators, kitchens and break rooms, and washrooms?
- How can you plan and direct traffic flow in your office to ensure physical distancing?
- Does the layout of cubicles, workspaces and offices allow for physical distancing? What needs to change?
- Will you need to install physical barriers such as plexiglass shields/dividers at any workspaces?
- Does your reception/entrance area allow for physical distancing?

Plan for [business continuity](#).

- Do your brokerage's goals and financial projections need to be changed? Is your annual Accountant Report filing deadline likely to be impacted by recent disruptions to the business of the brokerage? Review RECBC's recent notification of [Extension to Accountants Report Deadline](#).
- What will you do if you or someone in your office is sick or quarantined for an extended period? What cross-training is needed? Have you updated your sick leave policies?

- Have you determined if there is any [government support](#) available for your business or staff?
- Has COVID-19 changed any employee roles/duties or organizational structure? Are these changes sustainable? Have you discussed these changes with your staff?
- How can you ensure cyber security is maintained when staff are working remotely and using more virtual technology?
- Are you complying with the [Personal Information and Protection Act](#) with regards to the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information, and as instructed by your clients?
- Are your brokerage privacy policies and practices, including any consent forms, adequate for collection, use, or disclosure of COVID-19 related information (e.g. disclosure for contact tracing purposes)?

STEP 2: DEVELOP A SAFE WORK PLAN FOR YOUR OFFICES

Develop policies to ensure health, safety and hygiene.

- Does your landlord/rental property manager or strata corporation have policies, rules, or bylaws that you must comply with?
- What are your policies regarding Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)? Will you require that all staff wear PPE? If so, you are required as an employer to provide it.
- Will real estate professionals be required to wear PPE when in the office?
 - Will your brokerage or your real estate professionals provide it?

Return to Safe Work Plan:

A Checklist for Managing Brokers in Rental Property and Strata Management Brokerages

- If your managers are required to physically visit the location of a client, have you developed a protocol for access, interaction with the clients, and the safety of your staff and the clients?
 - What other protection and cleaning products such as disinfectant wipes/spray, hand sanitizers and tissues will you provide? How will you ensure access to these items?
 - How will you plan for a stable supply of Public Health Officer approved sanitizers and PPE, as well as soap, paper products etc., given shortages and potential postal delays?
 - How will you ensure [frequent cleaning](#) of shared workspaces (hot-desking) and high-touch surfaces like light switches, door handles, alarms, whiteboards, phones, photocopiers, documents, coffee machines, fridges, water coolers, elevators, washrooms, etc.?
 - What are your protocols for staff and visitors regarding [frequently washing and/or sanitizing](#) their hands?
 - What else can you do to minimize transmission risks (e.g. temperature checks, removal of personal items from desks, removal of shared items like coffee, remote controls, etc.)?
 - Do staff and real estate professionals understand that physical contact (handshakes or hugs) is unsafe?
- Prepare your office.**
- What protective measures, such as physical barriers, need to be installed?
 - What signage is needed to ensure frequent hand & surface cleaning, safe traffic flow and to remind staff/inform visitors of policies?
- What equipment/tools can you remove to minimize transmission risks (ex. remote controls, whiteboard markers, etc.)?
 - Are changes needed to mechanical, HVAC, and fire/life safety systems?
 - What safety procedures should staff and real estate professionals know BEFORE they return to the office?
- Develop a plan to manage confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19.**
- How will staff and real estate professionals report exposure or suspected exposure?
 - Who will you need to inform of suspected or confirmed cases (public health authorities, staff, real estate professionals and consumers)? How will you protect confidentiality?
 - How will you work to protect the confidentiality of individuals with confirmed cases of COVID-19? How will you meet self isolation/quarantine requirements as they continue to be updated by the Provincial Health Officer? E.g. accommodating someone who chooses to voluntarily self isolate when it is not mandatory?
 - How can you plan for business continuity if your office is closed for sanitization or if staff are unable to work because they have a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19?
 - How will you sanitize your office? Have you discussed sanitation practices with your office cleaners and developed a plan for method and frequency of cleaning cycles and products?

Return to Safe Work Plan:

A Checklist for Managing Brokers in Rental Property and Strata Management Brokerages

Develop [HR policies](#) and staff supports.

- What policies do you need to support sick leaves and self-isolation for staff, including for those caring for sick/self-isolating family members?
- How will you ensure staff and real estate professionals stay home if they have any symptoms of illness related to COVID-19, or if they have been in contact with someone with these symptoms, even if they feel well (as required by the BC Centre for Disease Control)?
- What support is needed for staff and real estate professionals who can't work in the office due to underlying health issues or family care issues?
- Can you adjust schedules to minimize the number of staff and real estate professionals in the office at the same time (e.g. half-days, staggered start/finish times)?
- How can you support your staff's and real estate professionals' mental health and help manage anxiety?
- Can you offer staff and real estate professionals parking options to reduce commuting by public transit?
- How will you minimize business travel? Will staff and real estate professionals report personal travel?
- In the event of an emergency requiring response at your office(s) or a client site, have you developed a protocol identifying who will attend and how to adhere to social distancing requirements, including the use of PPE?

Develop visitor policies.

- How will you ensure visitors don't put your office at risk?
- Have you developed a visitor screening method?
 - Will you ask visitors to confirm they are symptom-free and have not been in contact with anyone with symptoms before entering your office?
 - How will you prevent visitors from entering the premises before they have made these confirmations?
- How will you collect contact information in case contact tracing is needed?
- How many visitors can you have and still meet physical distancing requirements?
- Will you expect visitors to use PPE? Who will provide it? What will you do if visitors refuse to comply with your policies?
- How will deliveries be handled safely?
- Have you enabled electronic funds transfer directly to the brokerage trust accounts? How are you encouraging electronic processing of strata, rental, and/or contracting fees?
- Will staff be trained in safely accepting physical payment, such as cheques, from visitors deciding to pay in-person?

Return to Safe Work Plan:

A Checklist for Managing Brokers in Rental Property and Strata Management Brokerages

STEP 3: ADAPT REAL ESTATE PRACTICES

The [Government of British Columbia has extended the State of Emergency for the Province](#). It is now set to expire at the end of day on June 9, 2020. A reminder that while the Ministerial Order is in effect, landlords have the right to show premises only with consent of the tenant (except in exceptional cases where access is needed to respond to urgent health and safety concerns or to prevent undue damage to the units).

Develop physical distancing policies to ensure compliance with public health orders when working with consumers, service providers and employees

- How will you continue to prioritize remote services by using virtual platforms and electronic signatures?
- Have you considered purchasing additional technology to support remote and/or virtual working, as physical distancing requirements could be in place for some time?
- How will you communicate guidance to real estate professionals on safe physical distancing requirements, if any in-person rental property showings are held?
- What information about safety must be communicated to consumers at the outset of a real estate professional/client relationship to ensure compliance with safety protocols?
- Have you discussed with your client how to conduct move-in / out procedures safely, including the possibility of remote or virtual inspections?

Develop practice guidance on safe rental property showings.

- Have you reviewed the status of Ministerial Order M089 which temporarily amends the Residential Tenancy Act?
 - At the time of writing, under the Ministerial Order landlords of tenanted properties may access premises only with consent of the tenant (except in exceptional cases where access is needed to respond to urgent health and safety concerns or to prevent undue damage to the units).
 - To stay up to date, visit the [Residential Tenancy Branch COVID-19 page](#) frequently for notices.
- For vacant rental properties, how will you communicate to real estate professionals that any scheduled in-person showings, including of vacant rental properties, should only be held with serious potential tenants?
- Have you informed your landlord clients and made sure they are aware of the Ministerial Order and how that may impact the clients' tenanted properties?
- Are you continuing to facilitate open and clear communication between tenants and your landlord clients?
- For commercially tenanted properties, are you ensuring your landlord clients (and tenants) are apprised of any municipal bylaws and restrictions that may impact a tenant's ability to continue to offer their services? How will you document the communication?
- If a rental property manager becomes aware that a tenant has been exposed to COVID-19 or has recently returned from travel outside BC and must self-isolate, the rental property manager must provide that material information to the landlord.

Return to Safe Work Plan:

A Checklist for Managing Brokers in Rental Property and Strata Management Brokerages

- If a tenant is vacating the property during the showing of the rental property, how will you ensure occupants and visitors maintain safety protocols during the showing and any pets are safely confined?
 - Will your brokerage require real estate professionals and consumers to wear PPE during a showing? Who will provide it?
 - How will you ensure your real estate professionals are prepared if clients require PPE during showings? Who will provide it?
 - How will you ensure real estate professionals ask consumers to confirm they have no symptoms of illness related to COVID-19 and have not been in contact with anyone with symptoms before doing an in-person showing?
 - How will you ensure consumers, i.e. prospective tenants, understand they must cancel appointments if they are showing any symptoms related to COVID-19?
 - What guidance will you give real estate professionals on providing services within their area of expertise, including working in the communities they typically serve?
 - How many people will you allow in a property for a showing at the same time?
 - What guidance can you provide real estate professionals regarding safe traffic flow throughout the property? What policies will you develop for real estate professionals regarding WorkSafeBC signage recommendations?
 - What guidance will you provide real estate professionals and clients on sanitizing or washing their hands before and after entering a property?
 - What guidance will you provide to help ensure proper sanitization of a property before and after a showing? Who will be responsible for sanitization?
 - What guidance will you give real estate professionals on scheduling viewings to allow for proper sanitization between viewings?
 - What guidance will you provide real estate professionals on sanitizing high-touch items such as keys and lockboxes?
 - What steps will you take if a real estate professional refuses to sanitize a property because they are concerned of putting themselves at increased risk?
 - What recommendations will you make on reducing cross-contamination risks if consumers and real estate professionals view or attend multiple properties in one day?
- Strata Property Management safety protocols and practice guidance for strata meetings and in-person showings.**
- Have you reviewed Standard Bylaw 17 (or other amended bylaws of the strata corporation) permitting strata councils to hold council meetings electronically?
 - Have you reviewed the status of [Ministerial Order M114](#) allowing strata corporations to hold meetings, including hearings, AGMs and SGMs electronically without a bylaw? The order is in effect until the expiration of the provincial State of Emergency.
 - Have you reviewed SPA s49, which allows a strata corporation to adopt a bylaw to provide for attendance at an annual or special general meeting by electronic means?

Return to Safe Work Plan:

A Checklist for Managing Brokers in Rental Property and Strata Management Brokerages

- Have you reviewed [Order in Council 270](#), which allows a strata corporation to delay their AGM and hold it up to two months after the last day on which the meeting must be held under the provision in the SPA?
- Have you advised your strata managers to discuss alternatives to in-person meetings with their strata clients? Any in-person strata meetings should be held virtually where possible.
- Have you directed strata managers to provide strata corporations/councils with available resources from RECBC/CHOA/VISOA?
- How will you ensure that strata managers advise strata corporations who may be considering deferring meetings that cannot be conducted safely to seek legal advice?
- What will your real estate professionals do if a visitor does not want to provide their personal health information?
- Will you ask for contact information in case contact tracing is needed? If so, how will you avoid everyone using the same pen?
- What guidance will you provide on helping to determine how many people can be in a property at the same time and still maintain safe physical distancing?
- What measures can you suggest to ensure a safe flow of traffic throughout the property (signage or arrows inside the property)?
- How will your brokerage and real estate professionals plan for and respond to safety concerns/criticism about open houses from neighbours or tenants (in-person or on social media)?

Rental Property Management safety protocols and practice guidance for open houses at rental properties.

RECBC's recommendation against open houses is still in effect. Brokerages should start planning now, so that safety protocols are already in place once the recommendations are removed.

- How will your brokerage help reduce transmission risks at rental open houses? Will you require real estate professionals and consumers to wear PPE? Who will provide it?
- Will the brokerage have policies to ask open house visitors to confirm they have no symptoms of illness and have not been in contact with anyone with symptoms before doing an in-person showing or entering an open house?
- Have you reviewed the bylaws of strata corporation clients to determine whether open houses are permitted or if there are any other limitations?

Determine what new documentation or changes to existing documentation are needed.

- Are your client service agreements still representative of the services the brokerage is contracting to provide? What needs to be updated?
- Will you be using additional waivers or agreements related to COVID-19? How will you ensure clients, consumers or contractors understand who these waivers or agreements benefit and advise them to seek legal advice before signing?
- What legal advice does your brokerage need in drafting or reviewing agreements with COVID-19 specific clauses to ensure they are client-specific?
- Are you remaining informed of any updates or changes to [BC Housing's Short Term Rental Supplement](#) for tenants and [landlords](#).

Return to Safe Work Plan:

A Checklist for Managing Brokers in Rental Property and Strata Management Brokerages

- Where rent deferral agreements have been entered into, have you provided your client all material information with regards to this, and noted any important due dates and terms in the agreements on behalf of your client.
- **Provide guidance to real estate professionals on brokerage expectations.**
 - What can you do to make sure real estate professionals keep up to date with changes to procedures (regular remote attendance of office meetings, electronic communications, signage)?
 - How can you support real estate professionals in identifying and avoiding risky situations?
 - What measures can you take to ensure unlicensed assistants in the brokerage do not provide real estate services?
 - What measures will you take to ensure caretakers employed by the brokerage are aware of these policies and procedures as it relates to the permitted activities they may perform under the [Regulation](#).
- **Develop a plan to monitor and adapt to changes to public health guidance.**
 - How will you keep up-to-date and share changes to public health guidance with your staff and real estate professionals?

PLANNING RESOURCES

The information is based on current recommendations and may change. For the latest guidance, please see the following websites:

- [British Columbia Centre for Disease Control](#) for health information
- [Government of British Columbia](#) for the latest news
- [Office of the Provincial Health Officer](#) for the latest orders
- [WorkSafe BC COVID-19](#) for advice on returning to work safely
- [RECBC guidance for real estate professionals](#)
- [BC HOUSING - BC Temporary Rental Supplement \(BC-TRS\) Program](#)
- [Condominium Homeowner's Association](#)
- [Vancouver Island Strata Owners' Association \(VISOA\)](#)
- [Clark Wilson LLP](#) – Advice for Strata Corporations

STEP 4: ENSURE COMPLIANCE

- **Develop a plan to train staff and real estate professionals on new policies and procedures and ensure compliance.**
 - How will you monitor compliance, respond to concerns, or deal with non-compliance?
 - Who will be responsible for monitoring compliance in your office?
 - How will you ensure real estate professionals follow safety procedures while working outside the office?

*This checklist has been adapted for use by managing brokers of rental property management and strata management brokerages, with permission of the British Columbia Real Estate Association, from their **Return to Safe Work Plan: Checklist for Managing Brokers**.*