

Forest Industry Safe Work Practices Concerning COVID-19



Reducing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19

The purpose of this document is to provide best practices to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19 illness in the forestry industry. This document is intended for employers and workers engaged in work in the forestry industry, including harvesting (pulpwood or firewood) operations, road/bridge building, sawmills, silviculture, or paper mills. This also includes public sector workers engaged in forestry work.

Please note that this document is intended as guideline. Recommendations for the prevention of COVID-19 are evolving as more becomes known about this illness. The information contained in this document is subject to change as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses.

What are your Responsibilities

Employers are responsible to exercise every reasonable precaution to provide a healthy and safe work environment for their workers, as well as, anyone else who may be affected by their operations. They are also responsible to make sure that workers are provided with the necessary equipment, systems, tools, information, instruction, and supervision to safeguard against workplace hazards.

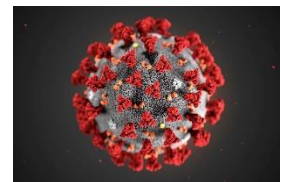
Supervisors are responsible to ensure workers are provided a healthy and safe work environment. That includes safe and sanitary tools and equipment. Be able to advise workers under his or her supervision of the health or safety hazards that may be met by them in the workplace. Provide proper written or oral instructions regarding precautions to be taken for the protection of all workers under his or her supervision. Ensure that a worker under his or her supervision uses or wears protective equipment, devices or other apparel that the Act, the regulations or the worker's employer requires to be used or worn.

Workers have a responsibility to protect their own health and safety, and that of other workers and people at or near the workplace. This may include, following the employers safe work practices and procedures.

Contractors are responsible to follow the Act and Regulations and any other rules set out by the employer or principal contractor.

What is COVID-19?

Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) is a new respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. COVID-19 emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019. The virus spread rapidly to other countries, with the first presumptive case in Canada confirmed in Toronto on January 25, 2020. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a pandemic. This means that the viral infection has spread to several countries or continents and is affecting many people world-wide.



Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that have a crown-like shape, called a corona. These viruses infect people, as well as, many types of mammals and birds. Sometimes a strain of coronavirus will jump from one species to another. It is theorized that COVID-19 originated in bats, and then jumped to an unknown species before jumping to humans.

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We are all impacted by COVID-19 and everyone must do their part to stop it from infecting those around us. Every person doing their part can have a powerful effect! The spread of this disease shows us how connected and how small our world really is.



The forest industry in Newfoundland and Labrador is an important part of our economy for many communities and it is important we protect it for those who rely on it. We are working together to build the industry in a time where renewable natural resources are critical to our economy. It has never been more important than now to follow safe work practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and keep our industry moving forward.

It is critical that everyone follow the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer, create your own safe bubble around yourself and don't burst someone else's. One person infected with COVID-19 can spread the infection to everyone they encounter, whether it be family, friends, co-workers or strangers on the street. This disease has no respect for person, place or thing. Preventing the spread and flattening the curve is critical to putting an end to this pandemic.

In order to stop the spread of COVID-19, everyone must take seriously all attempts to limit the spread of the virus. One best practice to follow is to behave as though everyone around us, ourselves included, is a carrier of COVID-19 and has the potential to infect others.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

COVID-19 illness affects different people in different ways. Most infected people will develop mild to moderate symptoms and recover without requiring medical intervention or hospitalization.

According to the CDC, symptoms of COVID-19 appear roughly 2 to 14 days after exposure and may include the following symptoms.

- Fever (including chills/sweats).
- Cough (new or worsening).
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.
- Runny, stuffy, or congested nose (not related to seasonal allergies or other known causes/conditions).
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing.
- Headache.
- Acute loss of sense of smell or taste.
- Unusual fatigue, lack of energy.

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- New onset of muscle aches.
- Loss of appetite.
- Vomiting or diarrhea for more than 24 hours.

OR a child displaying small red or purple spots on hands and/or feet.

Unfortunately, some people may be infected with COVID-19 without experiencing symptoms. This means that they may unknowing spread the illness to others.

How can COVID-19 be spread?

Coronaviruses are most spread from an infected person through:

- Respiratory droplets that are spread when you cough or sneeze.
- Close personal contact
- Touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes



It's not certain how long the coronavirus can live on surfaces; however, scientists estimate it can survive between a few hours and several days, depending on the type of surface.

Am I at Risk?

COVID-19 is extremely contagious. Anyone has the potential to become infected with COVID-19, if they are exposed to the virus. The elderly, children, people who have underlying medical conditions or compromised immune symptoms (ability to fight disease) have an increased risk of developing severe outcomes, but young and healthy people are also at **risk**. Like all viruses COVID-19 has mutated and there are a few variants. The UK strain B-117 has been detected in NL. This variant is transmitted easier than COVID-19 and can make people sicker than the original virus. This virus usually becomes the dominant strain in an area within a short period of time.

Is there a treatment or vaccine?

Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna have vaccines available for COVID-19. The public is encouraged to receive one of these vaccines. Treatment for mild to moderate cases has focused on managing symptoms, such as fluid replacement, cough suppressants and fever suppressants. For severe cases, hospitalization may be necessary.

How are people diagnosed?

Testing to confirm a COVID-19 infection is done by collecting a nose swab, throat swab, or combination of both; and sending them to a laboratory for analysis.

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How to get help?

Anyone who has concerns about their symptoms should seek advice by calling 811, the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Line. **811** is a confidential and free telephone line available to all residents of the province, regardless of age that provides access to a Registered Nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Wait times have been lengthy but the provincial government has added more registered nurses to the system to reduce these response times.

The Health Line also has a self-assessment tool which can be found on their website at:

<https://www.811healthline.ca/covid-19-self-assessment/>

The risk to forestry workers



There are many types of forestry work going on in the province. In some cases, an individual can work by themselves and maintain physical distancing with others. Others are required to work in groups, such as working at sawmills and pulp mills. For example, on some harvesting operations workers must commute to work together and live together during the week. Working together, sharing food, sleeping accommodations and washrooms can make physical distancing difficult.

On the work site there are issues with workers having to work near each other when it comes to making repairs to equipment as a lot of these repairs require 2 people to lift or move parts or other materials. Workers in both sawmills and paper mills must continue to maintain physical distancing while moving around the facilities.

Another issue facing forestry workers is dealing with the general public in the woods. More and more people are taking to the woods because they have been laid off work and are taking advantage of that time to cut wood, ride ATV/snowmobile and fish. Some of these people come around the forestry operations as they have cabins or want to access to an area behind the forestry operation. Maintaining a physical distance due to COVID-19 is critically important, but also take into consideration other safety hazards the general public pose on these operations.

These are unprecedented times and information around COVID-19 is a constantly changing as we learn more about this virus. Continue to seek new developments concerning COVID-19 as it evolves. This disease is not like anything we have seen before in our lifetime and restrictions are being referred to as not seen since war time. This causes a lot of stress and anxiety too many people. If you are finding it difficult to deal with the stress of this pandemic reach out to loved ones through various social media outlets or give them a call. There are resources available through your public health services and you can call the health line at 811. You can also avail of online services at www.bridgethegapp.ca

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In the forest industry, given the nature of the work and the number of individuals and service providers involved in the supply chain and the existing challenges, it will be difficult to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Forestry workers will need to be focused on preventing the spread of COVID-19 and keeping themselves and each other, their families and the general population safe in the face of this pandemic. All other individuals including employers, contractors, service providers and workers who are engaged in work in or around the forest industry in any capacity will also need to be especially mindful of their responsibilities to work safely according to the specific occupational health and safety requirements for their work activities. In accordance with public health guidelines and recommendations for the prevention of COVID-19, this will also include practicing social and physical distancing, handwashing, personal hygiene and environmental cleaning practices.



Forestry Industry Best Practices

Commuting Vehicle safety

The commuting vehicle driver will carry out pre-trip screening of all individuals (in one-on-one sessions) prior to their boarding of the work vehicle.

Pre-screening will consist of asking the following questions:

- a. Have you been diagnosed with COVID -19 or are you awaiting test results?
- b. Have you been in contact with anyone over the past 14 days who has or is awaiting test results for COVID-19?
- c. Do you have any symptoms of COVID-19 including cough, fever, shortness of breath etc.?
- d. Have you been in contact with anyone over the past 14 days who exhibited symptoms of COVID-19?
- e. Have you entered the province within the past 14 days?
- f. Have you been in close personal contact with anyone who has entered the province within the past 14 days?



Individuals who answer yes to any of the screening questions or who have an elevated temperature, will not be permitted in the vehicle, and will be advised to go home and self-monitor and self-isolate as per public health recommendations outlined at www.gov.nl.ca/COVID-19.

Persons with questions or concerns about self-isolation should call the Canadian Red Cross Covid-19 Help Line at 1 800 863-6582. Individuals with symptoms should complete the Covid-19 Self-Assessment also available on the NL government website at www.gov.nl.ca/COVID-19

Commuting

A maximum of 2 authorized persons are permitted in the commuting vehicle at a time. Before

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anyone gets into commuting vehicle the driver must clean the interior touch surfaces in the vehicle. The passenger must sit on the side opposite the driver in the back with a plexiglass shield separating the front from the back.

Everyone must wear a mask , eye protection and gloves in commuting vehicles.

Social distancing at home

All individuals seeking entry onto forestry operations are required to practice social distancing by limiting physical contact with other people when not engaged in forestry work. Following public health recommendations this means:

- a. Stay home unless it is otherwise necessary. (getting essentials)
- b. Avoid having people other than members of your household in your home.
- c. Avoid crowds and interact with as few people as possible when you do go out.
- d. Maintain 2 meters from other people.

Physical distancing at work

At work, workers are required to make conscious effort to minimize close contact with others. To do this, workers should:

- a. Maintain a distance of at least 2 meters (6 feet).
- b. Avoid common greetings such as handshakes.
- c. Avoid handling each other's personal effects (hats, gloves, clothing, kit bags, tools, etc.)
- d. Only allow the minimum number of worker's onsite.
- e. Do not allow visitors or the general public near forestry operations.
- f. During break times only allow the minimum numbers of workers in the lunchroom at a time to maintain physical distancing protocols.
- g. Workers should be encouraged to take breaks in their personal vehicle or have their lunch at home, if possible.
- h. Machine operators need to clean common touch points in their shared equipment at the beginning and end of each shift.
- i. Report to your supervisor and go home, if you begin to feel unwell, even with mild symptoms, such as headache and runny nose.

Personal Hygiene

Hand hygiene is one of the most effective ways to prevent or reduce the spread of germs. Practice personal hygiene to avoid contracting the virus. To do this:

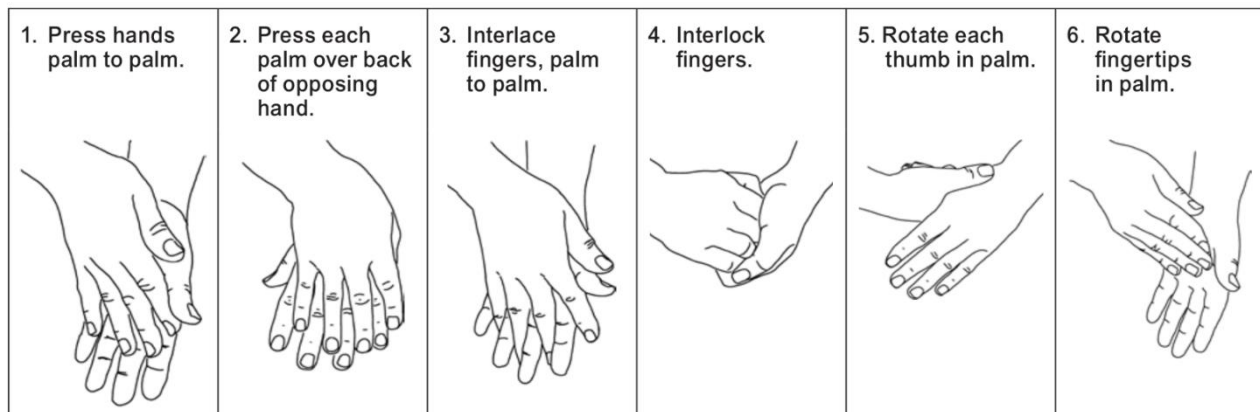
- a. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, touching dirty surfaces such as taps and doorknobs, when preparing food, before and after eating, after coughing and sneezing, handling contaminated waste, laundry, or whenever your hands look dirty.
- b. Use a minimum of 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

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- c. Use disposal towels to dry your hands.
- d. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend of your arm, not your hand.
- e. Dispose of any tissues you have used as soon as possible in a lined waste basket and wash your hands afterwards.
- f. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- g. Do not share personal items, toothbrushes, washcloths, cigarettes.
- h. Do not share phones, computers, and electronics unless they have been thoroughly cleaned. Refer to manufacturer recommendations before cleaning these items



Workplace Hygiene

Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces. Some commonly touched surfaces include door handles and railings, cupboard doors, tables, appliances, electronics, steering systems, engine and hydraulic systems controls, tools, light switches, phones, beds, washrooms, etc.

Clean high touched surfaces frequently with regular household cleaning products or a diluted bleach solution (0.5% hypochlorite). For a complete list of cleaners visit the Environmental Protection Agency at <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

All surfaces need to be sanitized between shifts if someone else will be using them. These include machinery, tools, vehicles, etc.

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Food Handling

Implement measures to minimize handling of shared food, dishes and cutlery.

- a. Remove shared food containers, such as shared coffee cream dispensers, salt and pepper shakers, etc.)
- a. Do not share food, unwashed eating utensils and beverage containers
- b. Have one designated person involved in food preparation and dispensing food onto plates
- c. Minimize handling of multiple sets of cutleries
- d. Use pre-packaged snacks
- e. Practice good hand hygiene
- f. Ensure that all food preparation, table and counter surfaces are cleaned frequently.

Sleeping Accommodations

Physical distancing of 2 meters (6 feet) between beds in some shared accommodations may be challenging given the layout and size of the rental unit.

- a. Assign personnel their own bed space, if practical
- b. Do not share linens, pillows and blankets, unless they have been previously laundered

What to do for a worker that becomes ill

Workers are responsible to self-monitor their health before going to work.

Workers should notify the supervisor immediately if they start to feel unwell. Based on the condition of the worker and the presenting signs and symptoms, the supervisor will determine if emergency response is necessary.

- a. Isolate the ill worker along with their equipment and tools, if applicable. For workers, provided with accommodations see below for details.
- b. Notify the supervisor of possible COVID-19 case.
- c. Call the health line 811 to see if testing is required.
- d. The supervisor will arrange to transport the worker home or to the hospital, if applicable
- e. The supervisor will contact the rest of the crew, if self-isolation is required.
- f. The supervisor will arrange for the work area, equipment and tools to be sanitized.

For workers living in sharing accommodations

Whenever possible, the ill worker should be isolated from the rest of the workers to decrease the chance of person-to-person transmission of the virus. When doing this,

- a. Isolate the ill worker where possible to a private room, monitor and provide food, water, tissues and other necessary supplies.
- b. Clean and disinfect shared accommodations and bathrooms frequently.
- c. Place laundry, bedding and towels used by the ill worker in a waste bag and store securely away from other people.
- d. Use of masks (appendix a) as per public health recommendations are not recommended for preventing the spread of COVID-19 for healthy individuals.

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- e. Use of a mask (appendix a) by ill individuals, however, may act as a barrier and helps stop the tiny droplets from spreading when you cough or sneeze.
 - i. Masks should not be touched or handled during use.
 - ii. If the mask gets wet or dirty with secretions, it must be changed immediately.
 - iii. Discard the mask in a household waste bag after use.
 - iv. Wash and dry your hands after removal of the mask.

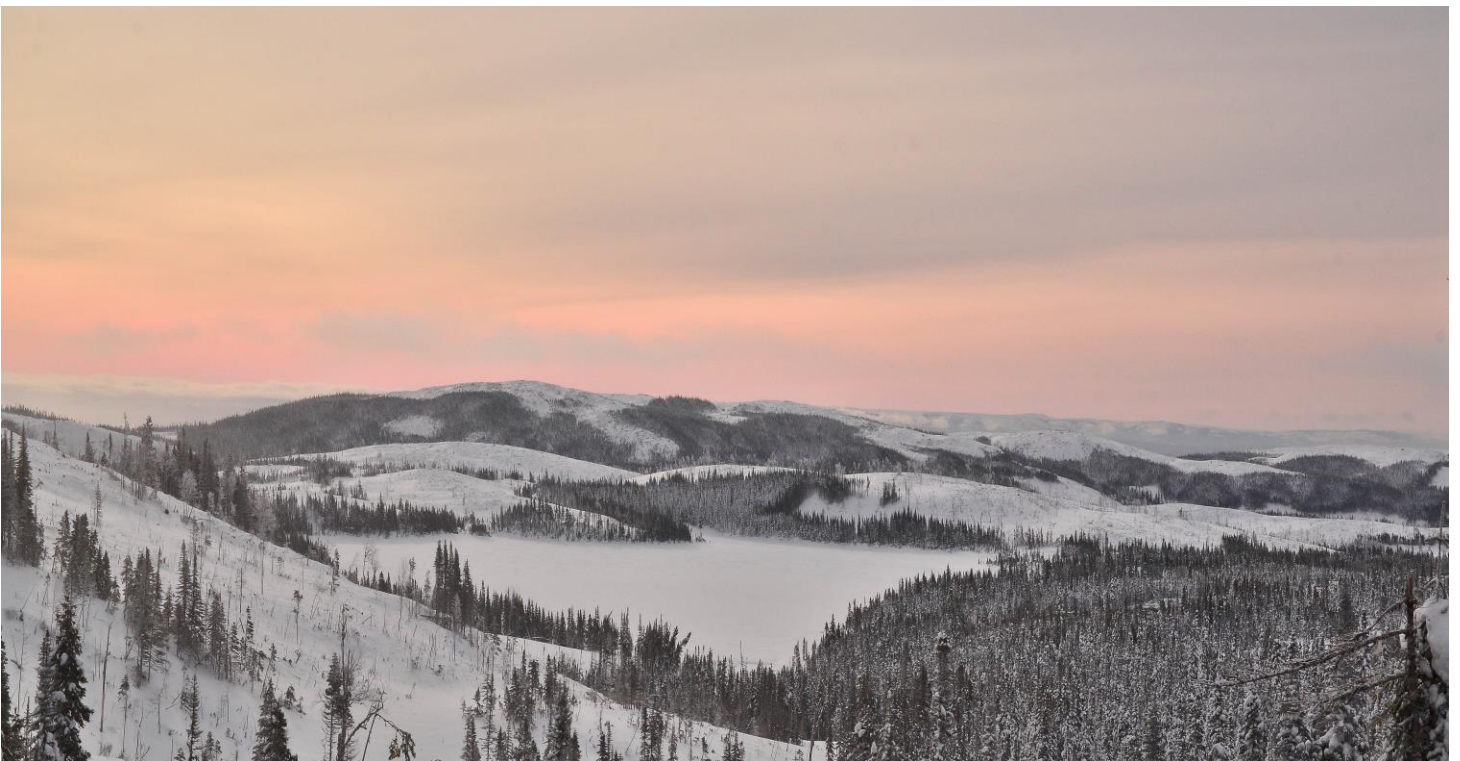
Where COVID-19 testing is performed

If the test result is negative

- a. The worker must notify the supervisor immediately.
- b. The supervisor will notify the remainder of the workers of the negative test result.
- c. Work can resume.

If the test result is positive

- a. The worker must notify the supervisor immediately.
- b. The supervisor will notify the remainder of the workers of the positive test result.
- c. The workers will be directed to self-isolate and follow directions of public health on self-isolation.



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APPENDIX A

There is so much discussion around the availability of N95 masks. Here is some information provided by WorkplaceNL concerning the use of different respirators, if N95 masks are not available.

This is some general information on air-purifying respiratory protection. These are respirators that use a filtering media to remove contaminants from the air. This information does not apply to supplied air systems, such as SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus).

This information is also specific to air-purifying respirators designed for particulate contaminants, including dusts, fibres, mists, fumes, bio-aerosols (i.e. filters). This information does not apply to air-purifying respirators designed for gas or vapour protection (i.e. cartridges or canisters).

What are particulate filters?

Filters remove particulates (i.e. dusts, mists, fumes, fibres and bio-aerosols) from the air bypass the air through a woven material with an electrostatic charge. Filters are color-coded magenta (pink purple); however, the face piece of disposable respirators (i.e. dust mask) is often white (see images below for examples).



Bottom line: Particulate filters may take many forms, but they all protect from the same hazards.

What types of particulate filters are available?

There are 9 possible types of particulate filter that are available (see table below).

Minimum Efficiency	N Class No Oil	R Class Oil Resistant	P Class Oil Proof
95%	N95	R95	P95
99%	N99	R99	P99
100%	N100	R100	P100

Three possible filter efficiencies:

- 95 - 95 per cent efficient
- 99 - 99 per cent efficient
- 100 - 99.97 per cent efficient

Three possible classes of oil resistance:

- N Series - not oil resistant
- R Series - oil resistant
- P Series - oil proof

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Bottom line: The N95 is the lowest possible level of protection and the P100 is the highest.

When should filters be replaced?

Filters must be replaced when:

- They become damaged, wet, soiled, or unhygienic
- They cause a noticeable increase in breathing resistance (i.e. they are hard to breathe through)
- R Series filters must be replaced after 8 hours of use or after the respirator has been exposed to 200 milligrams (mg) of the contaminant
- P Series filters must be changed every 40 hours or 30 days, whichever is first
- In accordance with an established change-out schedule (based on sampling and analysis)

Do filters expire?

Filters don't typically have an expiry, but you should always double check your specific brand.

Should I use a disposable or a reusable filtering respirator?

Particulate respirators may be in either a disposable (i.e. dust mask) or non-disposable (elastomeric face piece) form (see examples below). Both offer the same level of protection; however, there are some advantages and disadvantages to each type.



Disposable respirators (see image above, on the left), also called “dust masks”, are designed for particulates only. The primary advantage of these respirators is that they can be thrown away after each use. This is ideal when workers are in an environment with infectious contaminants, such as healthcare workers. The primary disadvantage is that they do not perform well in environments with high humidity or mists.

There are a variety of options offered by each brand name (3M, North, Honeywell, Miller, etc.). For example, folded and non-folded types often have a different fit. As another example, some makes include an exhalation valve (a valve on the front of the mask that lets air out, but not in) that reduces that amount of moisture that builds up inside the respirator. It is ideal for extended use.

Non-disposable respirators consist of an elastomeric face piece and straps, too which filters are attached (see example above, image on the right). These respirators come in two forms, half-face and full-face (see images below). When used in an environment containing infectious contaminants, the filters can be disposed; however, the face piece must be cleaned before and after use.

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Are there standards for respirators used at work?

Yes. All respirators used for the protection of workers in Canada must be approved by NIOSH (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health). Beware of knock off brands that have no logo or modified logo (see example below).



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