



COVID-19 safety protocol the new normal in heavy construction industry



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By Jackie Jones

In the last year, the Covid-19 crisis has demanded important changes in safety procedures from Manitoba's heavy construction industry. A year later, many of them will remain in place.

The heavy construction industry was deemed an essential service right from the start of the pandemic, and the industry quickly adopted additional safety protocols, such as guidelines on social distancing and mask wearing.

As the industry navigates through the pandemic towards a new normal, we have recognized that some changes have become routine safety procedures.

"Last year brought new factors into play that you or I would never have thought about," said Mike Burtnick, Safety Manager of Maple Leaf Construction. "There has been a standard shift in many areas of construction that is leading contractors to do many things different than they have in the past."

COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of worker health and safety. In order to continue working on jobs, Manitoba's heavy construction companies quickly implemented new jobsite policies and procedures for preventing spread of the virus, and keeping the worksite and its workers healthy and safe, which include:

- Social distancing policies and procedures
- Mask requirements where social distancing is not possible.
- Controlled access to jobsites, and daily screening of all personnel and visitors for covid risks and so contractors can track who is on their jobsite
- Self-monitoring by employees for COVID-19 symptoms
- Stepped-up handwashing, sanitization



and disinfection policies for workers, tools, machinery and work areas

- Guidelines for COVID-19 outbreaks and response plans and sick leave policies

"WORKSAFELY™ has been instrumental right from the beginning of the pandemic," said Burtnick. "The fact they kept on top of all the changes, and created and provided resources for our industry was very important."

Having the COR™ safety program in place provided the basis for heavy construction companies to continually work towards working safely, ensuring that safety protocols have been implemented and that there are effective channels of communication to keep projects moving in the right direction.

"As this industry navigates this pandemic towards a new normal, we have recognized that things have changed for the long term and have invested tools and procedures to come out a stronger, more successful industry," Burtnick stated.



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