



COVID-19: BEST PRACTICES
Tackle the Present and Plan for the Future

► TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview: Keeping The Workplace Safe	3
Methodology	3
Summary Of Key Insights	4
Key Insight #1: Biological risk is now the most prevalent risk to manage in workplaces and is tackled using the effective risk assessment process and a hierarchy of controls	5-6
Key Insight #2: Knowledge, expectations and requirements are changing fast; communication with all key stakeholders needs to bring agility and reach	7
Key Insight #3: Travel restrictions are limiting available workforce; focus has become to hire locally and to strengthen competencies	8
Key Insight #4: Mental illness struggles have become a widespread obstacle; implementation of freely available resources and benefit programs has become paramount	9
Cognisafe	10
References	11
About Cognibox	12

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OVERVIEW

KEEPING THE WORKPLACE (AND THE WORLD) HEALTHY AND SAFE

The COVID-19 virus has become a global health pandemic. Countries are trying to minimize the propagation of the virus by enforcing ever-evolving health precautions and protocols. As deconfinement lifts gradually, organizations are rushing to adapt to this reality to survive and must follow governmentally regulated health and safety standards to stay afloat and prevent potential closure.

Cognibox's mission is to help organizations adapt to the new reality of these trying times and minimize the risk of transmitting the Coronavirus in the workplace and beyond. As a health and safety company, Cognibox's focus is to continue to develop tools to prepare for and reduce the virus' insurgence and bring as much ease and comfort as possible to their consumers who are not only dealing with personal COVID-19 related stress, but additional discomfort in returning to work during this crisis.

Organizations in the mining, pulp and paper, food, and steel industries that were engaged in roundtable discussions to help produce this whitepaper have created new corporate health and safety policies and protocols to follow government mandated regulations. They have implemented manual solutions and have shared their concerns about long-term feasibility, sustainability, and the fear of the unknown.

OVER THE COURSE OF THE FOUR ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS, DOZENS OF TOPICS WERE DISCUSSED, HOWEVER, THE CONVERSATIONS KEPT STEERING TOWARDS FOUR MAIN ISSUES:

- **The prominence of biological risks in the workplace and the burden to manage it for every single person present on the worksite**
- **The ever-evolving nature of pandemic-related information and the importance of communication**
- **The current hiring obstacles organizations are facing**
- **The rise in mental health struggles in the workforce**

METHODOLOGY

Through extensive interviews, this whitepaper is built on the perspective and experience of health and safety leaders working in some of the largest mining, pulp and paper, aluminum, and food organizations in the world. These organizations are Canadian firms operating domestically, and

across the globe with project sites in the U.S., Mexico, Russia, and other countries across Central and South America, Asia, and Africa. Globally, these organizations employ more than 200,000 workers, directly and indirectly.

➤ SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS



KEY INSIGHT #1

Biological risk is now the most prevalent risk to manage in workplaces and is tackled using the effective risk assessment process and a hierarchy of controls.



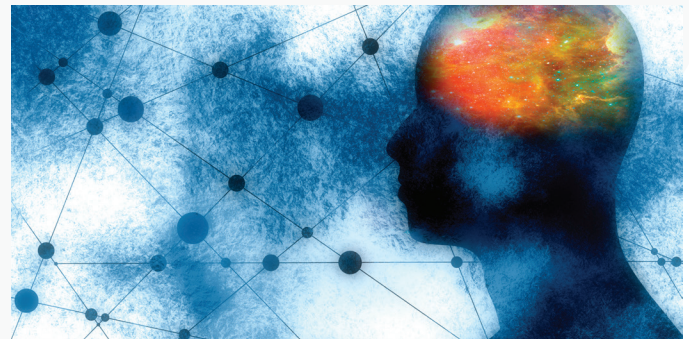
KEY INSIGHT #2

Knowledge, expectations and requirements are changing fast; communication with all key stakeholders needs to bring agility and reach.



KEY INSIGHT #3

Travel restrictions are limiting available workforce; focus has become to hire locally and to strengthen competencies.



KEY INSIGHT #4

Mental illness struggles have become a widespread obstacle; implementation of freely available resources and benefit programs has become paramount.

► KEY INSIGHT #1

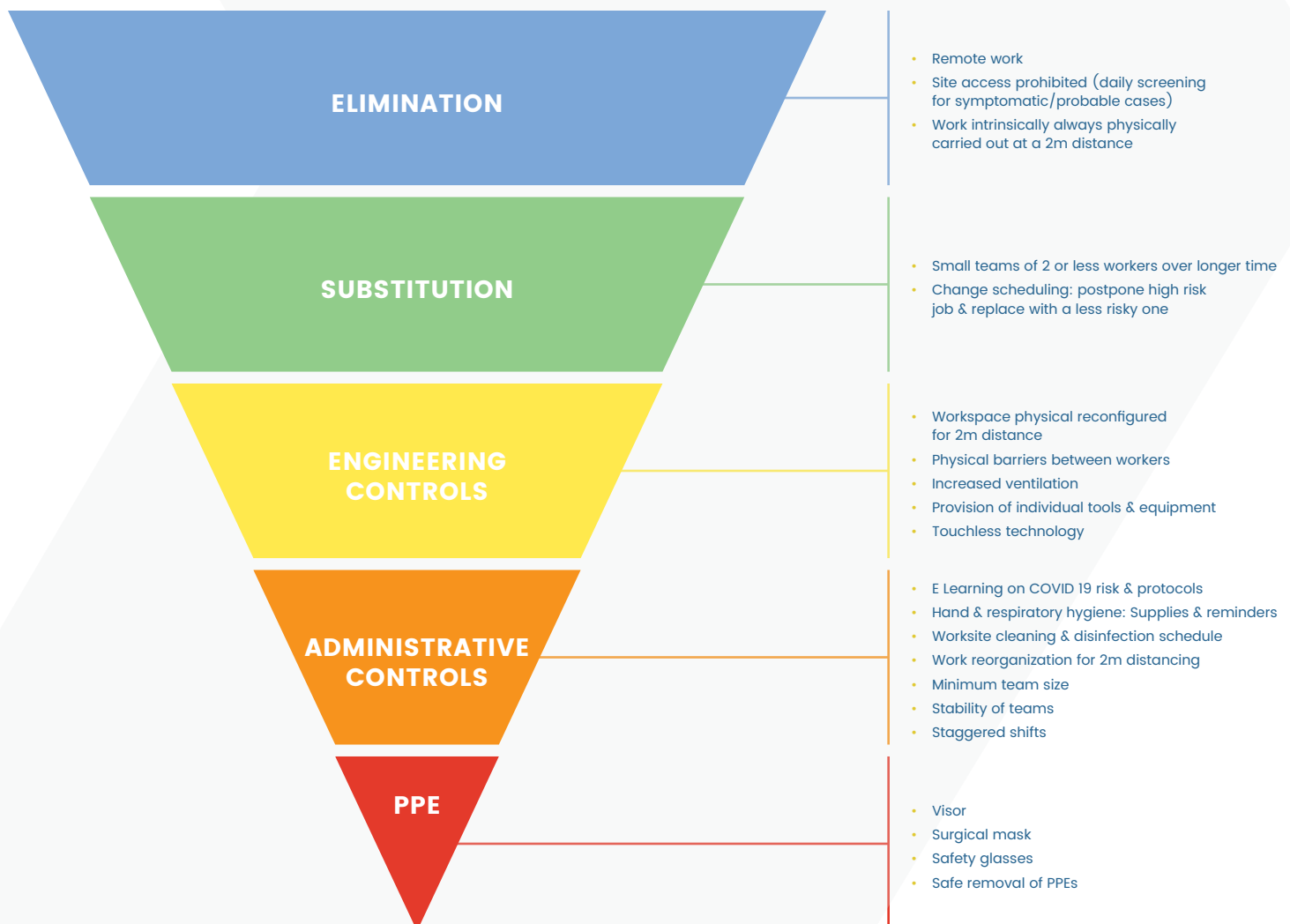
BIOLOGICAL RISK IS NOW THE MOST PREVALENT RISK TO MANAGE IN WORKPLACES AND IS TACKLED USING THE EFFECTIVE RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND A HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS

For years, most health & safety plans were silent on biological risks and associated measures to reduce the transmission of contagious diseases in the workplace; now implementing a pandemic preparedness and response action plan is a must for every organization.

Organizations that we have interviewed have now introduced biological risk in the risk assessment which they do in conjunction with their contractors prior to starting a job.

Often times this risk assessment starts even before contracting out a job, because as organizations follow the hierarchy of controls, the first question they ask themselves is “Can we postpone/cancel the job altogether,” which is the ultimate elimination measure.

This course of action worked well at the beginning of the pandemic, as organizations were concentrating on essential tasks as per their business continuity plan. Over the medium term, it has now been replaced by other measures down the hierarchy of controls.



➤ Implementing a pandemic preparedness and response action plan is a must for every organization.



Organizations realize that implementing these controls make the working conditions less comfortable for the workers and less productive for the contractors. However, there is no other way around until immunity is achieved, so organizations that are truly strict about the application of these controls will have the risk assessment plan and associated controls signed by all workers, and automate gate access to screening and E-Learning.

In addition to this, job sites are inspected, and deviations are brought to the attention of contractors for their immediate attention. Systemic nonconformance must be addressed with corrective action and can eventually lead to disqualification, closing the loop.

➤ KEY INSIGHT #2

KNOWLEDGE, EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS ARE CHANGING FAST; COMMUNICATION WITH ALL KEY STAKEHOLDERS NEEDS TO BRING AGILITY AND REACH

Looking back, we knew so little about what was about to hit us at the beginning of 2020. A new decade. A rebirth of sorts slowly ravaged by a virus that has spread globally. The medical science, applied science, regulators, and supply chains had to and are still adjusting their plans to keep up with advances in science and what we have learned that both does and does not work to limit the transmission of the virus.

One of the managers from a Canadian aluminum company interviewed for this whitepaper has created a “War Room” in his organization. This implementation has brought together managers, executives, and a crisis team to discuss actions and processes to ensure minimal risk in deploying solutions.

Unlike the war room for other types of emergencies, like a fire in a production facility or a natural disaster, that have a specific start time and end time, the pandemic is a scenario with the Emergency Response Plan dragging on

for months, and for which the book of best practices took some time to write, and is not finished. As the popular expression goes, we are “**building the plane as we fly.**” The consequence for organizations is that they need to not only speak frequently amongst their executives on what to do next and what to keep or revise, but they also need to communicate the up-to-date rules and words of reassurance quickly to every person working on their site, whether an employee or a contractor.

Organizations that had already made the shift to digital platforms of communication and systems for their operations saw almost no downtime when switching to remote work. Less common were those also managing their communications and processes with their contractors digitally. The pandemic makes it clear that digitalizing business processes on the Cloud is a need, not only for internal processes, but also with the entire supply chain.



➤ A new decade. A rebirth of sorts slowly ravaged by a virus that has spread globally.

► KEY INSIGHT #3

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS ARE LIMITING AVAILABLE WORKFORCE; FOCUS IS TO NOW HIRE LOCALLY AND STRENGTHEN COMPETENCIES



Physical distancing measures have left organizations scrambling to plan transport logistics for contractors and subcontractors, as well as develop strategies to maximize the productivity of its available workforce.

With the return to the workplace, organizations are under extraordinary pressure to meet governmental regulations to minimize the risk of COVID-19 propagation to protect their employees, contractors and customers. This is not only to maintain a social obligation or productivity, but to also avoid potential closures. Physical distancing guidelines have brought upon obstacles in outsourcing workforce, as the transport of contractors and subcontractors has become a daily logistical nightmare. **Hiring locally is now more important than ever** according to a remote mining organization that participated in our COVID-19 roundtable. Between transportation vehicles at a percentage of full capacity, OHS COVID-19 trainings, daily health screenings and temperature checks, travel expenses are soaring. In the same vein, according to a health and safety manager in the iron industry that took part in our COVID-19 roundtable, “with border closures and travel bans¹ in place, outsourcing employees is no longer a choice.”

As organizations deal with budget limitations and a lower transport capacity, they are struggling to

staff their projects with extensive and specialized workforces. As new virus-related hygiene and physical distancing measures have become mandatory, available employees are required to multitask further in their work protocols and the potential risk of work-related accidents has increased. By coupling this with the widespread difficulty organizations are currently experiencing in controlling available subcontractor qualification, safety risks are climbing. Health and safety managers in the mining, food and aluminum industries interviewed for this whitepaper expressed that the prequalification of contractors and subcontractors, along with employee training development and certification management is paramount to ensure a safe environment moving forward.

To mitigate both the additional health and safety risks brought upon by the current pandemic and attempt to boost productivity, organizations stress the importance of certification and skill development of contractors and their employees. Resources available online through E-Learning and web conferences that are subsidized by government programs provide the workforce with a betterment option during the downtime caused by regulatory confinement, as well as during the current return to work. This program provides some solace to organizations struggling with the availability of qualified employees.

➤ KEY INSIGHT #4

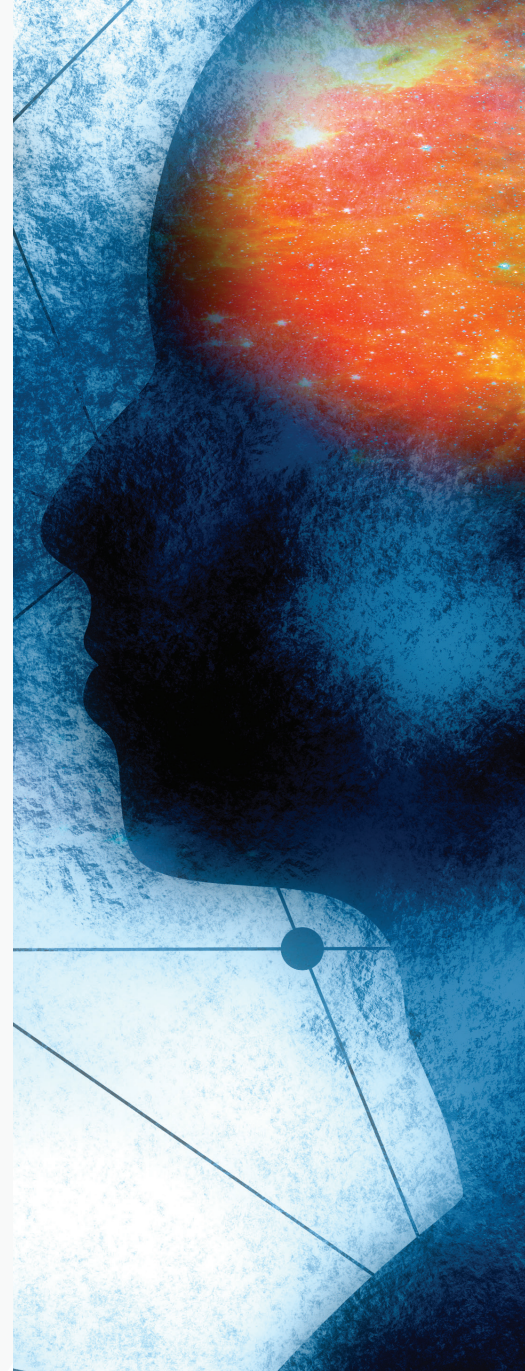
MENTAL ILLNESS STRUGGLES HAVE BECOME A WIDESPREAD OBSTACLE; IMPLEMENTATION OF FREELY AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND BENEFIT PROGRAMS HAS BECOME PARAMOUNT

As the threat of job loss, fear of the virus and limited financial or social support have been plaguing the population, stress and anxiety levels are rising rampantly in the workforce. Organizations are rushing to offer tools to help their employees cope and feel reassured to maintain their health, safety, and productivity.

With the return to the workplace, organizations are working tirelessly to combat the emotional side effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on their employees. Although there is comfort for employees in knowing that they can now report to work and earn a living, entering the worksite has left workers unbalanced. Granted that worksites do typically pose health and safety risks, but with potential life and death risks associated with the transmission of COVID-19, an added layer of stress and fear has affected the workforce and subsequently their hiring organizations.

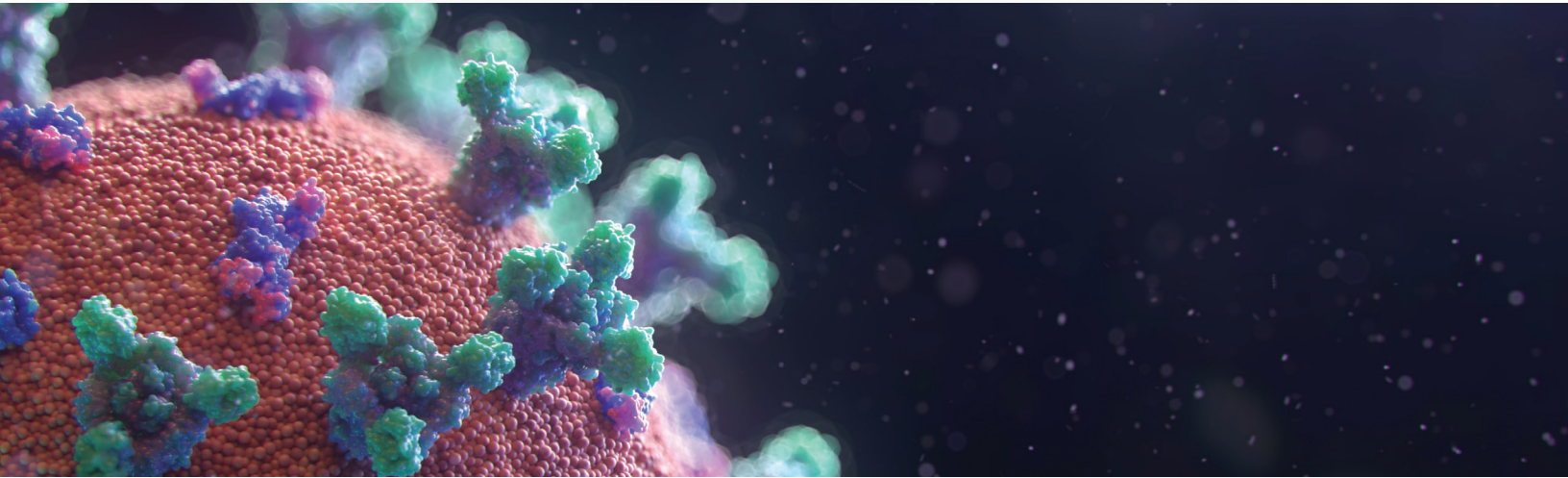
Organizations recognize that these additional stressors can be a distraction on-site leading to even further health and safety risks. They are now on high alert for the impact this may have on their business and are creating wellness and holistic teams to monitor and protect the health of their workers. These curated teams prioritize each employee's physical and mental health through consistent in-person or virtual communication and follow ups, specially-designed exercise programs, mental health practitioner recommendations and further education on policies and procedures to take to minimize the risk and fear of propagating COVID-19. Employee benefit programs are also being revised and expanded to include further physical and mental health coverage.

Now, more than ever, **human resource managers are focusing on the importance of compassion and patience in the workplace** for employees and between employees. Although the added dangers on-site attributed to COVID-19 and the physical distancing measures promote separation between employees, the current trials and tribulations have also brought a kinship and a further environmental awareness for both one's own safety and that of one's colleagues. No one is ultimately 100% safe on-site. Organizations are sympathetic to current circumstances, but in reality, they do not have any other option. Biological risks are more prominent than ever, and any health-related issue whether physical or mental will affect productivity at a dire time in the economy. It is no longer just about potential lawsuits and delays in production. **The population is in survival mode physically, mentally, and financially.**



► COGNISAFE

COGNISAFE² IS A 4-STEP WORK SAFETY AND PREVENTION TOOL CREATED BY COGNIBOX TO HELP ORGANIZATIONS REDUCE THE RISK OF SPREADING COVID-19 IN THE WORKPLACE



As organizations gradually resume on-site operations, the overwhelming breadth of work and government mandates to follow coupled with personal pandemic-related worries have increased discomfort and anxiety in the workplace. Cognibox created CogniSafe to **assist companies to find a way to sustainably manage the risk of COVID-19 propagation and its impact on the workplace.**

THE COGNISAFE RESOURCE INCLUDES:

- A training focused on best practices, preparatory measures, and rule implementation
- A screening questionnaire to measure preparedness and to suggest best practices for idea development and protocol
- A daily audit and checklist to assess work site adherence
- A daily screening of each employee to evaluate their contamination risk prior to them arriving on-site. The daily health risk screening will be available in the new Cognibox mobile app

At this current time, the COVID-19 virus is still rampant and knows no bounds. Organizations of all sizes are managing the impact and are holding out hope that the tide will soon turn, and prosperity is in our future. Cautious optimism, coupled with implementing technological advances that help organizations better respond to the crisis and reduce their exposure, are two invaluable strategies that companies can employ to help them tackle the current reality and plan for the future.

► REFERENCES

1. “*Travel ban in Canada*”, sourced from:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html>

2. “*Cognisafe*”, a Cognibox application, sourced from:

<https://www.cognibox.com/en/cognisafe>



COGNIBOX™

► ABOUT COGNIBOX

Cognibox develops end-to-end solutions for training, contractor management, and employee compliance. Our products and services connect businesses by facilitating the relationship between contractors and client corporations. We help organizations worldwide—like Finkl Steel, Rio Tinto, and Alcoa—focus on their core business by providing greater control over their daily operations.

- **Cognibox CMS** is a flexible cloud-based contractor Compliance Management System. This modular solution allows for the efficiently and cost-effectively management of contractor compliance from pre-selection all the way to performance evaluation.
- **Cognibox LMS** is a web-based, integrated Learning Management System that centrally manages the training, skills, work procedures, and professional requirements for all employees.
- **Cognibox OTP** is an Online Training Platform that offers everything required, including an extensive course catalogue, to create and deliver effective training.

To learn more, visit www.cognibox.com

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