Coronavirus tips to avoid spreading the virus among waste pickers³

Prepare work areas:

- Provide soap and water supply so that workers can frequently wash their hands.
- Frequently clean (with 70% alcohol or 1% bleach) objects that are used often, like banisters, tables, bathrooms,door handles, personal safety equipment and cushions and handles inside vehicles and cafeterias.
- Inform workers that collected and sorted material can be contaminated with the virus. Recent studies show that the virus can survive hours and up to days on materials such as aluminium or paper. Treat collected materials as though they are contaminated.
- Ensure work spaces are properly ventilated.

For workers:

- Do not greet people with handshakes, hugs or kisses. Try to maintain one meter or more distance from anyone.
- Cover your face with the inside of your elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Wear masks and change them frequently during the course of the day. Never touch the front of your mask and wash your hands before and after handling masks.
- Do not share personal objects.
- Never touch your face with your hand or glove.
- Avoid storing gloves inside your bag or pockets.
- Tie your hair back to avoid contaminating your face.

Tips for clean hands:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You should clean all parts of your hands and flaps.
- Always wash your hands:
  - before starting your workday
  - during breaks
  - after removing gloves,
  - before and after meals when you get home
  - after coughing or sneezing
  - after touching objects that are used a lot (banister, door handle, bus or subway handle).

- You can also use 70% alcohol to clean your hands. But remember it is not as effective as washing your hands with soap and water and may not work if your hands are too dirty or greasy.

- Always remember if the collected and sorted materials may be contaminated with the virus.

- If a colleague develops symptoms of illness or her to stay home.

- Wash your hands with water and soap as often as possible.

When to get help?

If you develop symptoms such as fever, coughing and shortness of breath, follow the guidelines from your local authorities.

Team up with supporting allies and ask government officials or trade unions to provide basic conditions for safety such as water fountains, soap supply, protective equipment.

In some countries “social grants” are being provided to compensate for livelihood losses. Reach out to your allies and ask for support.

1 These recommendations are based on “Recommendations for the prevention of the spread of Coronavirus among solid waste workers”, a technical note prepared by the National University of Brasília (UNB) and WIEGO’s Cuidar Project (Brasil) with additional based on input from waste pickers’ organizations through the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers. They also consider recommendations from the World Health Organisation, Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) and Brazil’s National Waste Pickers Movement.


3 Please note: These tips and recommendations are based on the situation of the COVID-19 outbreak as of March 23, 2020 and the nature of solid waste services in Brazil. You may need to adjust these recommendations based on your local conditions.