

WASH Pledge and COVID-19

Summary brief for business

The provision of safe water, sanitation, and hygienic conditions is essential to protecting human health during all infectious disease outbreaks, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHO recommendations on obligatory hand hygiene against transmission of COVID-19:

Current evidence indicates that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted through respiratory droplets or contact. Contact transmission occurs when contaminated hands touch the mucosa of the mouth, nose, or eyes; the virus can also be transferred from one surface to another by contaminated hands, which facilitates indirect contact transmission. Consequently, hand hygiene is extremely important to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. It also interrupts transmission of other viruses and bacteria causing common colds, flu and pneumonia, thus reducing the general burden of disease.

- [Interim recommendations from WHO \(dated April 2020\)](#)
- [WHO guidance on getting your workplace ready for COVID-19](#)

As international organizations, governments and public health authorities take action to contain the pandemic, all sections of society – including businesses and employees will play a crucial role in combatting COVID-19. One of the most low-cost but effective methods against the transmission of the virus is to encourage proper hygiene and regular and thorough

hand washing by employees, contractors and customers.

The **WBCSD Pledge for Access to Safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)** is an opportunity for business to implement international best practices on WASH at the workplace. We encourage businesses to commit to the Pledge to ensure appropriate access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene for their employees, thus making a direct contribution to addressing one of the most pressing public health challenges of our times.

What is the WASH Pledge?

- The WASH Pledge was launched in 2013, and to date, over 50 companies have signed up. In 2020, an updated WASH Pledge is introduced, with an improved [guidance](#) and [assessment tool](#) and an expansion of scope to include value chains and communities.
- By signing the WASH Pledge, companies commit to implementing access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene at the workplace at an appropriate level of standard for all employees in all premises under their control within three years of signature.
- As a signatory to the Pledge companies will:
 - **Demonstrate leadership** and influence other businesses by setting higher standards for the health and safety of employees.
 - **Generate impact** by contributing to the implementation of [UN Sustainable Development Goal 6](#).
 - **Gain business** benefits by investing in a healthier and productive workforce and strengthening your license to operate.
 - **Be connected** to peers and partners active in this space through the [WASH4Work Initiative](#) and other [Pledge signatories](#).

Next steps

1. Familiarize yourself with the **scope, risks and requirements** for WASH facilities in the workplace by reading the [WASH Pledge Guiding Principles](#).
2. Undertake a rapid assessment of WASH facilities in the workplace by using the [WASH Pledge assessment tool](#).
3. Based on the assessment, **prioritize high-risk settings and/or facility improvements that need urgent action**.
4. Raise awareness of the **importance of good WASH practices and behaviors to all employees**. You can find useful resources here:
 - [Sanitation and water for all Global Partnership](#)
 - [WASH4Work](#)
5. Expand your **WASH Pledge assessment to the value chain and community** and reach out to see how you can engage and support them.
6. Establish a plan to **periodically review** progress, incidences, and practices to ensure WASH facilities remain accessible and safe.
7. Make a commitment to improving and maintaining WASH facilities at the workplace, value chains and communities by **signing the WASH Pledge**.

About the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

WBCSD is a global, CEO-led organization of over 200 leading businesses working together to accelerate the transition to a sustainable world. We help make our member companies more successful and sustainable by focusing on the maximum positive impact for shareholders, the environment and societies. Our member companies come from all business sectors and all major economies, representing a combined revenue of more than USD \$8.5 trillion and 19 million employees. Our Global Network of almost 70 national business councils gives our members unparalleled reach across the globe. WBCSD is uniquely positioned to work with member companies along and across value chains to deliver impactful business solutions to the most challenging sustainability issues. Together, we are the leading voice of business for sustainability: united by our vision of a world where more than nine billion people are all living well and within the boundaries of our planet, by 2050.

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