
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2021HLTH0186-002010
Oct. 21, 2021

Ministry of Health
Vancouver Coastal Health

B.C. launches first accredited PPE testing lab in Western Canada

VANCOUVER – The Province is further protecting health-care workers, patients, families and frontline workers during COVID-19 with Western Canada’s first accredited personal protective equipment (PPE) lab, specializing in testing and validating PPE.

The lab is a pandemic-driven innovation by Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), with support from the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA).

“The safety of our health-care and frontline workers continues to be a top priority as we prepare our health-care system and our province for long-term management of COVID-19,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “This collaborative effort demonstrates B.C.’s leadership in innovative solutions in the face of challenges brought on by the pandemic, and dedication to staff and patient safety.”

PPE, which includes medical gloves, gowns, surgical masks and N95 respirators, works as a barrier between an individual’s skin, mouth, nose, or eyes and viral and bacterial infections. When used properly and with other infection-control practices, such as hand washing, PPE minimizes the spread of infection from one person to another.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an immediate increased demand for PPE around the world and it severely disrupted global supply chains. VCH recognized the need for a local lab that could quickly test and validate the effectiveness of PPE to provide assurance to health-care workers and patients in the province.

“Mobilizing a multidisciplinary team across several organizations to establish a PPE testing laboratory in a short few months is no small feat, especially during a global pandemic,” said Vivian Eliopoulos, president and CEO, Vancouver Coastal Health. “This initiative truly speaks to the VCH team’s commitment to innovation and dedication to providing safe, quality care to staff and patients. These tests are now available to any organization looking to test the safety and efficacy of PPE.”

The scope of the lab has expanded since it opened last year. The PPE testing lab now offers seven tests, including tests for gowns (such as fluid resistance and hydrostatic pressure) and surgical masks (such as flammability and synthetic blood resistance) and is now available to any Canadian organization.

VCH’s PPE testing laboratory was completed in June 2020 and accredited in October 2020. Initially, the lab’s mandate was to ensure the safety of health-care workers and patients by providing testing for priority pieces of PPE, such as N95 respirators.

VCH’s PPE testing laboratory team continues to work closely with PHSA supply chain to ensure

the supply of PPE obtained from new local, national and international suppliers meets all Health Canada and WorkSafeBC regulatory requirements as well as certification requirements for the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Located on the Vancouver General Hospital campus, the PPE testing laboratory was established by a multi-disciplinary team led by Vancouver Coastal Health and supported by Public Health Agency of Canada, National Research Council Canada, Standards Council of Canada, B.C.'s Ministry of Health, University of British Columbia, Provincial Health Services Authority and Providence Health Care.

Additional funding for the lab has been provided by VGH and UBC Hospital Foundation, Lions Gate Hospital Foundation and with the support of the Chan Better World Foundation, Teck Resources Limited, and Patricia and Kevin Huscroft.

Quotes:

Titus Wong, regional medical director of infection prevention and control at VCH; medical director for the PPE testing laboratory –

“We are so proud of the multidisciplinary team that has worked tirelessly to bring the PPE testing laboratory from concept to a fully functional, ISO-accredited laboratory serving our province and country. In addition to ensuring that PPE is safe for British Columbians, we are so grateful that we can support Canadian PPE manufacturers and researchers in strengthening the Canadian PPE supply chain.”

Todd Cooper, chief supply chain officer, PHSA –

“Having a fully accredited laboratory in the region provides us the ability to test products locally to ensure the PPE for our health-care employees is safe, effective and approved. A local lab provides improved turnaround on testing products from new vendors we have purchased PPE from during this pandemic. The lab provides safety for our frontline workers, security for B.C. residents as users of our provincial health-care system, and gives provincially and nationally based manufacturers a local independent lab to test their products to ensure any new PPE fully meets national and provincial standards for use.”

Learn More:

For photos, visit: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bcgovphotos/51615772769/in/photostream/>

For more information about VCH's PPE testing laboratory, including tests available, visit: <http://www.vch.ca/for-health-professionals/ppe-testing-laboratory>

A backgrounder follows.

Contacts:

Ministry of Health
Communications
250 952-1887 (media line)

April Penney
Communications Leader
Vancouver Coastal Health
april.penney@vch.ca
604 290-7482

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: news.gov.bc.ca/connect

BACKGROUND

For Immediate Release
2021HLTH0186-002010
Oct. 21, 2021

Ministry of Health
Vancouver Coastal Health

Vancouver Coastal Health PPE testing laboratory

Lab accreditation

- Tests offered by the Vancouver Coastal Health Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Testing Laboratory are accredited by the Standards Council of Canada (SCC), one of Canada's national accreditation providers.
- The SCC provides accreditation to international standards to organizations, indicating competency in performing specific tasks. Accreditation is awarded based on internationally recognized standards.

Current tests

- The VCH PPE testing laboratory has received SCC accreditation to International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 17025 – General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration for the following tests:
- N95 NaCl Particulate Filtration Testing (TEB-APR-STP-0059)
- N95 Quantitative Fit Testing (CSA Z94.4-18 Section 9, Annex C)
- Surgical/Isolation Gown Water Impact Testing (AATCC TM42-2017e)
- Standard for the Flammability of Clothing Textiles (16 CFR Part 1610)
- N95 inhalation and exhalation resistance (NIOSH TEB-APR-STP-0007 and NIOSH TEB-APR-STP-0003)
- Resistance to penetration by synthetic blood (ASTM F1862/F1862M-17)
- Test Method for Water Resistance: Hydrostatic Pressure (AATCC - TM127)

PPE certification

- Testing results from the PPE testing lab meet all regulatory requirements for PPE certification from national and international organizations, such as the CSA Group, NIOSH and Health Canada.

Contacts:

Ministry of Health
Communications
250 952-1887 (media line)

April Penney
Communications Leader
Vancouver Coastal Health
april.penney@vch.ca
604 290-7482