

Worker Gets 10-Day Suspension for Ill-Advised COVID Prank



An apprentice gardener just returning to work after a 2-week COVID absence thought it would be funny to prank a co-worker by waving him down, getting him to open his car window and then coughing into the car without covering his mouth. Unfortunately, his bosses didn't get the joke and suspended him without pay for 10 days for violating a company COVID safety rule. The union conceded that some kind of discipline was in order but claimed that a 10-day suspension was excessive, especially since the apprentice didn't mean any harm and really thought he was free of COVID after serving his isolation. But the BC arbitrator sided with the employer. Yeah, there were some mitigating factors, like the apprentice's long discipline-free record, but what he did was foolish, deliberate and reckless, not to mention very distressing to the coughed-on co-worker [*Board of Education of School District No. 39 (Vancouver) v Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 407 (Markus Linde – Discipline)*, 2021 CanLII 43175 (BC LA), May 10, 2021].