

Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure/Essential Worker Suspected or Confirmed Exposure to COVID-19

Background

COVID-19, also known as the novel coronavirus, is a respiratory illness that is spread through the air via respiratory droplets from an infected person or by touching contaminated surfaces.

Requirements

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) advises that critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community.

As defined by the CDC, the critical infrastructure/essential worker sectors are:

- Federal, state, & local law enforcement
- 911 call center employees
- Fusion Center employees
- Hazardous material responders from government and the private sector
- Janitorial staff and other custodial staff
- Workers – including contracted vendors – in food and agriculture, critical manufacturing, informational technology, transportation, energy and government facilities

A potential exposure means a having close contact with another individual who is confirmed or suspected to be COVID-19 positive. [Close contact](#), as defined by CDC, is within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24 hour period starting two days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to test specimen collection). More information on when to quarantine can be found on the [CDC website](#).

Critical Infrastructure workers who have had an exposure, remain asymptomatic, and have not tested positive may be permitted to integrate back into onsite operations but should be used as a last resort and only in limited circumstances, such as when stopping the operation of a facility may cause serious harm or danger to public health or safety. Those critical infrastructure workers must follow the practices listed below **prior to and during their work shift**:

- **Pre-Screen:** Employees should pre-screen at home prior to coming to work. The employee should not come into work if experiencing symptoms, has a temperature equal to or higher than 100.4°F or is waiting for the results of a viral test.
- **Screen at the workplace:** Employers should conduct an on-site symptom assessment, including temperature screening, prior to each work shift. Ideally, screening should happen before the individual enters the facility.

- **Regular Monitoring:** As long as the employee doesn't have a temperature or symptoms, they should continue to self-monitor under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program.
- **Wear a Face Covering:** Ensure all employees wear a cloth [mask](#) in accordance with CDC and OSHA guidance.
- **Social Distance:** The employee should maintain 6 feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit in the workplace.
- **Clean and Disinfect Work Spaces:** Clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment routinely.

If the employee becomes sick during the day, they should be sent home immediately. Surfaces in their workspace should be cleaned and disinfected. Information on persons who had [close contact](#) (within 6 feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes over a 24 hour period) with the ill employee during the time the employee had symptoms and 2 days prior to symptoms should be compiled.

- Do not allow workers with new or worsening symptoms of COVID-19 to return until:
 - In the case of an employee who was symptomatic with mild to moderate illness and thinks or knows they had COVID-19, they must isolate at home. The employee may return to work when **all three** of the following criteria are met:
 1. At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared; **and**
 2. At least 1 day (24 hours) have passed since last fever without the use of fever reducing medications, **and**
 3. Symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, etc.) have improved.
 - In the case of a worker who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return until they have completed the same three step criteria listed above; if the individual has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis.
 - A worker who was diagnosed with COVID-19, but never develops symptoms must isolate at home. They may return to work after 10 days since the date of the first positive COVID-19 test.
 - A worker who had close contact with a person with COVID-19 must quarantine at home. If they do not develop symptoms and are not tested, they may return to work after 10 days from the last exposure and continue to self-monitor for symptoms through Day 14. They should continue to use face coverings at all times during work and when outside the home through Day 14 after the last close contact. If they develop symptoms, these workers must self-isolate and contact their healthcare provider.
 - Immunocompromised individuals should quarantine for 14 days as per existing recommendations.
- Businesses may use their discretion and close voluntarily when a potential exposure to COVID-19 has been identified in the workplace.
- Business closure may be mandated by Sacramento County Public Health (SCPH) on a case by case basis when a workplace outbreak has been identified. An outbreak is defined as three or more confirmed COVID-19 positive cases.

Additional Considerations

- ✓ Employees should not share headsets or other objects that would be located near the mouth or nose.
- ✓ Employers should increase the frequency of cleaning commonly touched surfaces.
- ✓ Employers should work with facility maintenance staff to increase air exchanges in rooms.
- ✓ Employees should physically distance when they take breaks together. Stagger breaks and avoid congregation in the break room. Do not share food or utensils.

Employers should implement a plan to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. CDC has published recommendations which can be found in the [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019](#). Additional information about identifying critical infrastructure during COVID-19 can be found on the [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\) Critical Infrastructure Sector website](#) or the CDC's specific [First Responder Guidance page](#).

Resources

[CDC Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) Webpage](#)

[Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

[EPA Approved Disinfectants](#)

[Sacramento County COVID-19 updates](#)

Document was prepared by Sacramento County's [Environmental Management Department](#)

Summary of Revisions

7/15/2020: Initial version

8/11/2020: Clarified employee may be permitted to continue working and must follow the practices listed in the guidance.

10/21/2020: Removed requirement for 14 days self-quarantine when exposure is from a household contact. Added requirement to wear a face covering for 14 days after exposure. Updated definition of a close contact per CDC.

11/17/2020: Updated link to CDPH website for face covering requirements.

12/14/2020: Added clarification that exposed critical infrastructure workers not experiencing symptoms and not tested positive should be allowed back at work as a last resort and only in limited circumstances. Updated requirement for these workers per guidance from CDC.

1/4/2021: Updated per CDC and CDPH guidance to return to work after 10 days if asymptomatic, tested or not tested.

Revised 1/4/2021

PHO: 12/9/2020