

# Implementing Safety Practices for Workplace Outbreak of 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.

Employers experiencing an outbreak of COVID-19 in the workplace will need to implement this procedure to limit the further spread of the virus. An outbreak is defined as three or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the workplace.

**This guidance is not intended for use in managing or preventing outbreaks in healthcare, congregate living settings, or other workplaces where the California Aerosol Transmissible Diseases (ATD) standard applies.**

## Authority

- Health and Safety Code sections 120175, 120175.5, 120190, and 120205
- Health and Safety Code sections 120275 through 120300 address violations of public health laws
- If applicable (HIPAA covered entities), Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulation section 164.512
- Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations sections 2500, 2501 and 2505

## Guidelines

The following are guidelines for employers to prepare for and respond to an outbreak of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Employers should be proactive and be aware that the identification of even a **single positive case** of COVID-19 in the workplace may quickly develop into an outbreak. As outbreak circumstances and work practices vary, employers may need assistance from Sacramento County Public Health to plan and coordinate a response to the outbreak that meets the needs of the workplace. Control measures should be put into place immediately to prevent an outbreak and possible closure of the business.

Employer should also consult:

- CDC guidance for [businesses](#) and [small businesses](#) for information on preventing outbreaks;
- [Cal/OSHA guidance](#) to ensure that they are complying with legal requirements for worker protection; and
- The California statewide [industry-specific guidance](#) to reduce risk during and after reopening of businesses.

## Identification of a COVID-19 Outbreak in the Workplace

- Instruct employees to stay home and report to the employer if they are having [symptoms of COVID-19](#), were diagnosed with COVID-19, or are awaiting test results for COVID-19.
- Designate a workplace infection prevention coordinator to implement COVID-19 infection prevention procedures and to manage COVID-related issues among employees.
- Develop mechanism(s) for tracking employee absences due to illness.
- Ensure sick leave policies are sufficient and flexible to enable employees who are sick to stay home without penalty.
  - California has [additional services](#) for employees, including [supplemental paid sick leave](#) for food sector workers at companies with 500 or more employees nationwide.
  - The [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) requires certain employers to provide employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19.
  - Some cities and counties require employers to provide sick leave benefits to workers.
- Contact Sacramento County Public Health (SCPH) with any questions and to report a workplace outbreak.

## Considerations for Business Closure

- Businesses may use their discretion and close voluntarily when a potential exposure to COVID-19 has been identified in the workplace.
- The business may be ordered to close by SCPH on a case by case basis when a workplace outbreak has been identified.
- Workplaces with an identified outbreak shall be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected prior to re-opening.
- Workplaces may voluntarily thoroughly clean and disinfect the premises after a potential exposure to COVID-19 has been identified.

## Prepare to Share Information

Immediately notify SCPH at (916) 875-5881 if there is a known or suspected outbreak in the workplace. A workplace outbreak is defined as three or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in a two week period.

SCPH regularly transmits and protects confidential health information. Securely sharing confidential information about employees with COVID-19 is critical for SCPH to provide comprehensive support to the employer and protect the health of the community.

- The employer should communicate with SCPH by providing timely updates on newly identified cases and symptomatic employees in the workplace. This information may be shared by telephone (916) 875-5881 or fax directed to (916) 854-9709.
- The employer may be asked by SCPH to provide a list of employees and additional information including job descriptions, locations, work schedules, city and county of residence, and other details that could help inform the investigation and determine which other employees in the workplace may be at risk of COVID-19 infection.
- Employees in a workplace may live in counties/jurisdictions outside of where the workplace is located. When there is an outbreak in a workplace, SCPH will work with local health jurisdictions where a COVID-19 positive employee resides and report the outbreak.
- If employees in a facility are unionized, identify a union contact and clarify the role the union can play in communication with employees. If employees in a facility are not unionized, identify an employee representative to serve as a point of contact for SCPH.

- If the facility uses contract or temporary employees, identify who should communicate information and instructions on the outbreak to these individuals.
  - The host employer should notify temporary, contract, or other agencies that have employees in the workplace of the outbreak.
- All employees in the workplace, regardless of employment arrangement, should follow all instructions for infection prevention and outbreak management measures from the host employer, SCPH, and the LHD where the employee resides.

### **Identify Additional Employee Cases and Close Contacts**

The employer should identify additional employee cases and close contact cases to further control the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

- Conduct contact tracing and quarantining of close contacts of confirmed cases in the workplace.
  - Employer should provide information to SCPH on the confirmed COVID-19 cases for employees in the workplace, including job titles, work areas, close contacts in the workplace, dates of symptom onset, and shifts worked while infectious.
  - SCPH contact tracing will lead with conducting interviews of the cases to determine close contacts.
  - Close contacts will be instructed to quarantine at home for 14 days from their last known contact with the employee with COVID-19. Close contacts should be tested for COVID-19 when possible.
    - A close contact is someone who spent 15 minutes or more within 6 feet of an individual with COVID-19 infection during their infectious period, which includes, at a minimum, the 48 hours before the individual developed symptoms.
  - Employment records may be used to verify shifts worked during the infectious period and other employees who may have worked closely with them during that time period.
  - Employees with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 will be interviewed by SCPH by phone to determine when their symptoms began, the shifts they worked during their infectious period, and to identify other employees with whom they had close contact during their infectious period.
  - While quarantining at home, close contacts should self-monitor daily for [COVID-19 symptoms](#).
- Testing all employees in a workplace may be considered, resources permitting for identification of additional cases. Testing may be done at a single point in time or at repeated intervals.
  - Contact SCPH at (916) 875-5881 for guidance when developing a testing strategy, including how testing can be arranged and to prioritize testing of employees (i.e., testing close contacts of laboratory-confirmed cases first).
  - Employers may offer on-site COVID-19 testing of employees or otherwise arrange for testing through the company's occupational or general medical services provider.
  - Employers should also provide information to employees who may prefer to contact their personal medical provider or visit a [CA Coronavirus Testing Task Force site](#) for testing.
  - When testing all employees is not feasible or not recommended by SCPH, consider alternative methods for controlling the outbreak, including but not limited to offering

testing to all identified close contact of confirmed cases and instructing those individuals to quarantine or temporality closing the workplace.

## **Notification and Management of Employees**

- Employers must maintain confidentiality of employees with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection when communicating with other employees.
- Employers should notify all employees who were potentially exposed to the individuals with COVID-19.
- Close contacts of cases will be given instructions on how to home quarantine, monitor for symptoms and where/how to access COVID-19 testing.
- Provide employees who are sent home before or during a shift with information about what to expect after they are sent home (e.g., instructions about testing, sick leave rights under federal, state, and local laws and company policies, return-to-work requirements, etc.).
- In some outbreaks, but not all, employees who were never symptomatic and did not have close contact with any of the laboratory confirmed cases may continue to work, as long as the employer has implemented all control measures as recommended by public health authorities, Cal/OSHA, or other regulatory bodies. SCPH will make this determination based on strategies being used to control the outbreak and identify new cases.
- Be aware that testing reflects an employee's status at a single point in time only. If an employee tests negative, they may still develop COVID-19 infection from a recent or subsequent exposure and should be instructed to quarantine at home if that occurs. Testing may be needed at repeated intervals to capture all positive cases, especially if an outbreak is ongoing.
- Employees shall take appropriate measures to reduce ongoing transmission in the workplace, including appropriate infection control and physical distancing measures. Additional detail on recommended measures, both in general and by industry are available at the end of this guidance. General principals include:
  - Modifying work process to maximize physical distancing between employees.
  - Enhanced cleaning and disinfection of work areas.
  - Supporting respiratory and hand hygiene for employees.
  - Screening employees for illness, through symptoms screening and/or temperature checks, periodic testing or SARS-CoV-2, or request employees to self-check temperature and symptoms and self-attest when reporting to work.
  - Providing employees with adequate sick leave to allow them to stay home from work if symptomatic.
  - Communication with employees regarding the importance of staying home when sick, physical (social) distancing both at home and at work, appropriate hand and respiratory hygiene, etc.

## Return to Work

The minimum criteria to return to work listed below is based on the most recent Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance. If this guidance differs from the most recent CDC guidance, the most recent should be used.

<b>Minimum Criteria for Return to Work</b> <i>(as of July 20, 2020)</i>		<b>CDC Reference Page</b> <i>(the most recent CDC guidance should be consulted prior to allowing the employee to return to work)</i>
<p><b>Symptomatic Positive</b></p> <p>Employees with symptoms who are laboratory confirmed to have COVID-19</p>	<p>At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appears, <b>and</b> at least 24 hours have passed since last fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, <b>and</b> symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved.</p>	<p><a href="#">For employee cases who did not require hospitalization</a></p> <p><a href="#">For employee cases who required hospitalization</a></p>
<p><b>Asymptomatic Positive</b></p> <p>Employees who never had symptoms and are laboratory confirmed to have COVID-19</p>	<p>A minimum of 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 test. If they develop symptoms, then the criteria for laboratory confirmed cases with symptoms apply.</p>	<p><a href="#">For employee cases who did not require hospitalization</a></p>
<p><b>Symptomatic Negative</b></p> <p>Employees who had symptoms of COVID-19 but test result returned negative</p>	<p>Use the same criteria for return to work as laboratory confirmed cases.</p>	
<p><b>Asymptomatic Negative</b></p> <p>Employees who never had symptoms but were tested due to close contact with a laboratory-confirmed case patient and were negative</p>	<p>Employees should quarantine at home for 14 days after the last known close contact with the case patient. Symptoms can develop even after testing negative within 14 days after exposure.</p> <p>SCPH allows earlier return to work only for an employee in a critical infrastructure industry in which the essential operations of the workplace would be compromised by quarantine of the employee and no alternate staff can perform the same role. See section titled <b>Critical Infrastructure/Essential Employee</b> for additional precautions.  <i>Note: If the close contact is from the same household, the employee is to quarantine at home for 14 days after exposure.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Identification of Critical Infrastructure During COVID-19</a></p> <p><a href="#">CDC Critical Infrastructure Response Planning</a></p>

<p><b>Symptomatic Untested</b></p> <p>Employees who had symptoms of COVID-19 but were not tested</p>	<p>Testing is highly recommended. If the employee cannot be tested, use the same criteria for return to work as laboratory confirmed cases.</p>	
<p><b>Asymptomatic Untested</b></p> <p>Employees who had close contact to a laboratory-confirmed case patient at work, home, or in the community and do not have symptoms.</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Employees who refuse or are unable to be tested after close contact with a laboratory-confirmed case, despite recommendation for testing from SCPH or healthcare provider, and do not have symptoms.</p>	<p>Employees should be quarantined at home for 14 days after the last known close contact with the case patient. Testing is highly recommended.</p> <p>Employees who develop symptoms of COVID-19 while in quarantine should contact their healthcare provider. Even if they are not tested, the same criteria for return to work should be used as laboratory-confirmed cases.</p>	<p><a href="#">For employee cases who did not require hospitalization</a></p> <p><a href="#">Critical workers implementing safety practices</a></p>

### Critical Infrastructure/Essential Employees

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

An exposure is defined as someone who has had close contact (less than 6 feet) for at least 15 minutes. More information on when to quarantine can be found on the [CDC website](#).

If the potential exposure is a household contact, the employee should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for [symptoms](#) of COVID-19.

Critical infrastructure workers who have had an exposure outside of a household contact and remain asymptomatic may be permitted to continue work and must follow the practices listed below **prior to and during their work shift**:

- **Pre-Screen:** Employers should have a protocol for screening by measuring the employee's temperature and assess symptoms before starting work. The best practice is to perform a temperature check before the employee enters the facility or begins their work shift. Employees with a fever of 100.4°F or greater should be sent home. If onsite temperature screening is not feasible, an acceptable alternative is for employers to require employees to self-screen for symptoms, including fever. Prior to each shift, employers should ask employees to attest that they 1) are not exhibiting any symptoms of illness; 2) do not have a fever of 100.4°F or greater; and 3) have not had recent contact with someone who is suspected or known to be infected with COVID-19.
- **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:** The employee should wear a [face covering](#) at all times while in the workplace. Employers can issue facemasks or can approve employees' supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.
- **Social Distance:** The employee should maintain 6 feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit in the workplace. Physical barriers may be used between fixed employee work locations to supplement distancing.
- **Disinfect and clean 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 contact with the ill employee during the time the employee had symptoms and 2 days prior to symptoms should be compiled. Others at the facility with close contact within 6 feet for 15 minutes of the employee during this time are considered to be exposed.

### Frequent Cleaning and Disinfection

Perform more frequent cleaning and disinfection as well as deep/enhanced cleaning and disinfection after employees with COVID-19 have been at work.

- Work areas of infected workers should not be entered by employees until they have been cleaned and disinfected with products [approved by the EPA for COVID-19](#). Work should be performed by cleaning staff trained on their safe use and supplied with all required and recommended PPE.
- Perform ongoing enhanced cleaning/disinfection of work areas when an employee with COVID-19 is identified, following [CDC recommendations](#).
- Continue to identify and regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces throughout the workplace, such as doorknobs, equipment, and handrails.
- Employees should not share headsets or other objects that may come into contact with their face, mouth, or nose.
- Minimize sharing of other equipment between employees; for equipment that must be shared, conduct frequent cleaning between employee use.
- Train employees on safe use of cleaners and disinfectants and provide necessary protective equipment.

### Requirements for Reporting Employee Cases to Cal/OSHA

- Any serious injury, illness, or death occurring in any place of employment or in connection with any employment must be reported by the employer to the local Cal/OSHA district office immediately. For COVID-19, this includes inpatient hospitalizations and deaths among employees.
- Employers should report serious injury, illness, and death, including hospitalization and death from COVID-19, even if work-relatedness is uncertain.
- Cal/OSHA prefers calls by phone but will also accept email reports ([caloshaaccidentreprot@tel.us.com](mailto:caloshaaccidentreprot@tel.us.com)). Full details on what information needs to be reports (<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/report-acciednt-or-injury.html>), contact information for district offices (<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/districtoffices.html>), and the Title 8 section 342 requirement (<https://dir.ca.gov/title8/342.html>) are available online.

## Regularly Check For and Follow New and Updated Guidance

Employers should routinely check for and follow up on new and updated guidance on their specific industry. The following sources may be used:

- **Governor's Office Resilience Roadmap**  
Guidance for Most Industries: <https://covid19.ca.gov/industry-guidance/>  
Guidance for Other Industries Allowed to Open in Some Counties: <https://covid19.ca.gov/roadmap-counties/>
- **Cal/OSHA**  
General Industry Guidance: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/General-Industry.html>  
Guidance for Specific Industries: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/Health-Care-General-Industry.html>
- **CDC**  
Landing page for workplaces: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>  
Landing page for industry specific worker safety guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/worker-safety-support/index.html>

## Additional Resources

### CDC Guidance

- For Employers: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>
- For Office Buildings: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/office-buildings.html>
- Worker Safety and Support For Small Businesses: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-small-business.html>
- Workplace outbreak testing: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/worker-safety-support/hd-testing.html>
- For Childcare, Schools, and Youth Programs: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>
- Grocery and Food Retail: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/grocery-food-retail-workers.html>
- Transportation and Delivery: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/transportation/index.html>
- Conserving and Extending Filtering Face Piece Respirator Supply in Non-Healthcare Sectors: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/conserving-respirator-supply.html>
- Communities, Schools, Workplaces, and Events - Guidance for Where You Live, Work, Learn, Pray, and Play: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>
- First Responders and Law Enforcement: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/first-responders.html>
- For Meat and poultry processing employers: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/meat-poultry-processing-workers-employers.html>

### Cal/OSHA Guidance

- For general industry: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/General-Industry.html>
- For agricultural employers: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Infection-Prevention-in-Agriculture.pdf>
- For childcare programs: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Infection-Prevention-in-Childcare-Programs-Guidance.pdf>
- For construction: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/COVID-19-Infection-Prevention-in-Construction.pdf>



- For grocery stores: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Infection-Prevention-in-Grocery-Stores.pdf>
- For logistics employers: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/COVID-19-Infection-Prevention-in-Logistics.pdf>
- For mortuaries and funeral homes: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/COVID-19-Infection-Prevention-in-Mortuaries.pdf>
- Interim Guidance on COVID-19 for Health Care Facilities: Severe Respirator Supply Shortage: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/Cal-OSHA-Guidance-for-respirator-shortages.pdf>

**Employers should also consult:**

- CDC guidance for [businesses](#) and [small businesses](#) for information on preventing outbreaks;
- [Cal/OSHA guidance](#) to ensure that they are complying with legal requirements for worker protection; and
- The California statewide [industry-specific guidance](#) to reduce risk during and after reopening of businesses.

**Other**

- [List of cleaning contractors](#) in Sacramento County
- EPA List of [approved disinfectants](#) against COVID-19

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

**Summary of Revisions**

**7/15/2020:** Initial version

**8/11/2020:** Update to definition of a workplace outbreak. Wording added for employers to provide information to employees who prefer to use personal medical provider, summarize alternative methods to control the outbreak may be considered, and added wording for a self-assessment prior to reporting to work.

Updated infrastructure/essential employee may be permitted to work and must follow the practices outlined in the guidance. Added wording employers should have a protocol for pre-screening employees prior to starting work.

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