

# Protecting the Safety and Health of Workers Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

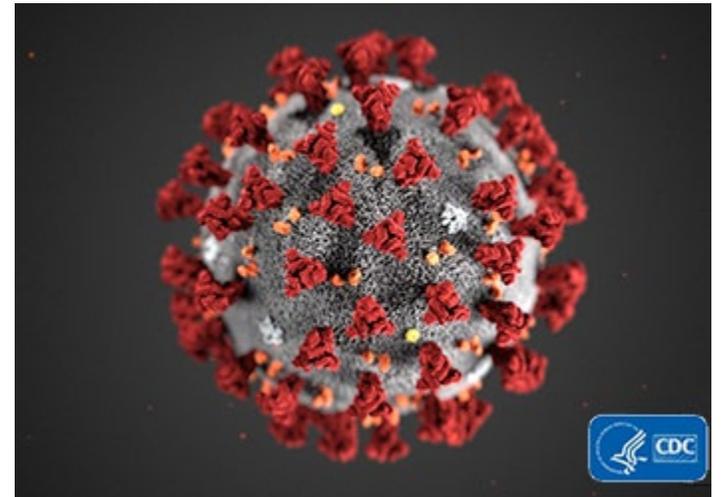
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Occupational Safety and Health Administration**

# Protecting workers from risk of exposure to COVID-19

- OSHA is coordinating closely with CDC, including NIOSH, and other federal agencies to monitor the ongoing pandemic.
- OSHA's message is clear:
  - Employers should have a plan for protecting workers and preventing further spread of disease, as well as maintaining the employer's day-to-day functions.



[www.osha.gov/coronavirus](https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus)

# Existing OSHA standards protect workers from exposure

- Follow existing OSHA standards to help protect workers from exposure to SARS-CoV-2 and infection with COVID-19.
- Employers should also remember that OSHA can use the General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1), of the Occupational Safety and Health Act to ensure that workers are protected from recognized safety and health hazards that may cause serious harm.

## Relevant OSHA requirements

- Personal Protective Equipment (29 CFR 1910 subpart I), including:
  - PPE General Requirements (1910.132)
  - Eye and Face Protection (1910.133)
  - Respiratory Protection (1910.134)
  - Hand Protection (29 CFR 1910.138)
- Bloodborne Pathogens (29 CFR 1910.1030)
- Hazard Communication (29 CFR 1910.1200)
- Recordkeeping (29 CFR part 1904)



# OSHA enforcement

- **Implemented interim enforcement plan for investigating COVID complaints, while ensuring the safety of workers, employers, and inspectors.**
  - Issued April 13; revised plan effective since May 26
- **Provided enforcement discretion for some of its requirements, including:**
  - Respiratory Protection standard (29 CFR 1910.134)
  - Recording and Reporting Occupational Injuries and Illness (29 CFR Part 1904)
- **Issued five guidances to ensure that healthcare workers have full access to needed respiratory protection.**

# OSHA enforcement

## OSHA guidances issued to address access to respiratory protection

Memorandum	Effective
Healthcare Respiratory Protection Annual Fit-Testing for N95 Filtering Facepieces During the COVID-19 Outbreak	March 14, 2020 - present
Enforcement Guidance for Respiratory Protection and the N95 Shortage Due to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic	April 3, 2020 – present
Enforcement Guidance for Use of Respiratory Protection Equipment Certified Under Standards of Other Countries or Jurisdictions During the COVID-19 Pandemic	April 3, 2020 - present
Expanded Temporary Enforcement Guidance on Respiratory Protection Fit-Testing for N95 Filtering Facepieces in All Industries During the COVID-19 Pandemic	April 8, 2020 - present
Enforcement Guidance on Decontamination of Filtering Facepiece Respirators in Healthcare During the COVID-19 Pandemic	April 24, 2020 – present

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# OSHA Guidance – Recordkeeping and Reporting Cases of COVID-19

- **COVID-19 is a recordable illness and must be recorded if the case:**
  - Is a confirmed case of COVID-19, as defined by the CDC;
  - Is work-related as defined by 1904.5 ; and
  - Involves one or more of the general recording criteria listed in 29 CFR 1904.7 (e.g., days away from work, medical treatment beyond first aid).

# OSHA Guidance – Recordkeeping and Reporting Cases of COVID-19

- **What does OSHA mean by *a confirmed case of COVID-19*?**
  - A confirmed case of COVID-19 means an individual from whom at least one sample tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
- **What does OSHA mean by *work-related COVID-19*?**
  - An event or exposure in the work environment caused or contributed to the resulting condition, or significantly aggravated a preexisting injury or illness.

# OSHA Guidance – Recordkeeping and Reporting Cases of COVID-19

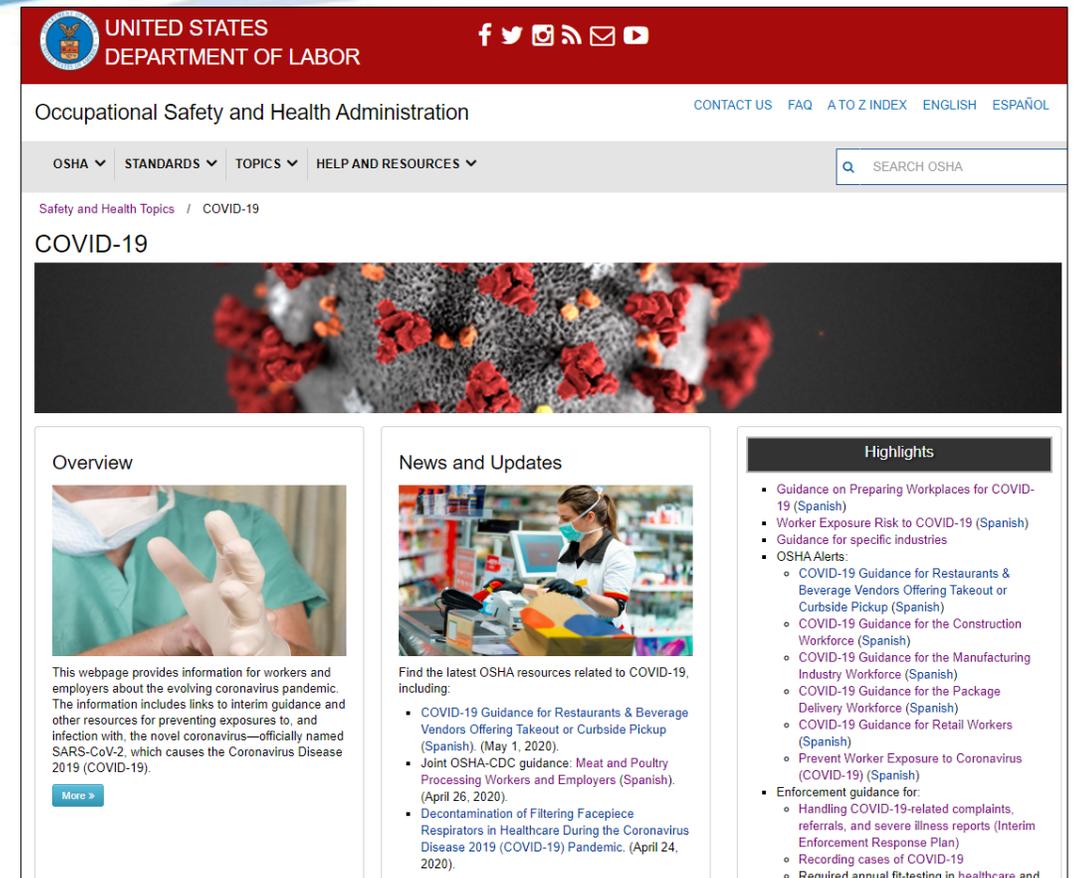
- **Does an employer need to report when a worker has died of a work-related, confirmed case of COVID-19?**
  - An employer must report the fatality within eight hours or if the death occurred within 30 days of confirmation of knowing both that the worker has died and that the cause of death was COVID-19.
  - If required to keep records under [29 CFR Part 1904](#), all such fatalities must be recorded on the OSHA injury and illness records regardless of the number of days between case confirmation and death.

# OSHA Guidance – Recordkeeping and Reporting Cases of COVID-19

- **Does an employer need to report if a worker has been hospitalized with a work-related, confirmed case of COVID-19?**
  - An employer must report the hospitalization within 24 hours of knowing both that the employee has been hospitalized and that the reason for hospitalization was COVID-19.
  - If required to keep records under [29 CFR Part 1904](#), all such in-patient hospitalizations must be recorded on the OSHA injury and illness records regardless of the number of days between case confirmation and hospitalization.

# OSHA guidance

- OSHA has developed a variety of guidance materials for workers and employers on how to stay healthy during the pandemic.
- [OSHA.gov/coronavirus](https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus) includes information on implementing the hierarchy of controls when workers have specific exposure risks.



The screenshot shows the OSHA website's COVID-19 guidance page. The header includes the United States Department of Labor logo and navigation links. The main content area is titled "COVID-19" and features a large image of a coronavirus particle. Below this, there are three columns: "Overview" with a photo of a person in scrubs and gloves, "News and Updates" with a photo of a worker in a grocery store, and "Highlights" with a list of key guidance documents and alerts.

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Safety and Health Topics / COVID-19

## COVID-19

### Overview

This webpage provides information for workers and employers about the evolving coronavirus pandemic. The information includes links to interim guidance and other resources for preventing exposures to, and infection with, the novel coronavirus—officially named SARS-CoV-2, which causes the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

### News and Updates

Find the latest OSHA resources related to COVID-19, including:

- COVID-19 Guidance for Restaurants & Beverage Vendors Offering Takeout or Curbside Pickup (Spanish), (May 1, 2020).
- Joint OSHA-CDC guidance: Meat and Poultry Processing Workers and Employers (Spanish), (April 26, 2020).
- Decontamination of Filtering Facepiece Respirators in Healthcare During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic, (April 24, 2020).

### Highlights

- Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19 (Spanish)
- Worker Exposure Risk to COVID-19 (Spanish)
- Guidance for specific industries
- OSHA Alerts:
  - COVID-19 Guidance for Restaurants & Beverage Vendors Offering Takeout or Curbside Pickup (Spanish)
  - COVID-19 Guidance for the Construction Workforce (Spanish)
  - COVID-19 Guidance for the Manufacturing Industry Workforce (Spanish)
  - COVID-19 Guidance for the Package Delivery Workforce (Spanish)
  - COVID-19 Guidance for Retail Workers (Spanish)
  - Prevent Worker Exposure to Coronavirus (COVID-19) (Spanish)
- Enforcement guidance for:
  - Handling COVID-19-related complaints, referrals, and severe illness reports (Interim Enforcement Response Plan)
  - Recording cases of COVID-19
  - Required annual fit-testing in healthcare and

[www.osha.gov/coronavirus](https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus)

# OSHA guidance: Worker Exposure Risk

- **Four exposure risk levels:**
  - Lower (or caution)
  - Medium
  - High
  - Very high
- Most are likely in lower or medium exposure risk level
- Employers should carefully examine the specific risks in their workplaces and plan accordingly
- Workers' risks in many industries may reflect the risk to the rest of the public in a particular community

## Worker Exposure Risk to COVID-19

**Classifying Worker Exposure to SARS-CoV-2**

Worker risk of occupational exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, during an outbreak may depend in part on the industry type and need for contact within 6 feet of people known to have, or suspected of having, COVID-19.

OSHA has divided job tasks into four risk exposure levels, as shown below. Most American workers will likely fall in the lower exposure risk (caution) or medium exposure risk levels.

**Occupational Risk Pyramid for COVID-19**

**VERY HIGH EXPOSURE RISK**

Jobs with a high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19 during specific medical, postmortem, or laboratory procedures. Workers include:

- Healthcare and morgue workers performing aerosol-generating procedures on or collecting/handling specimens from potentially infectious patients or bodies of people known to have, or suspected of having, COVID-19 at the time of death.

**HIGH EXPOSURE RISK**

Jobs with a high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19. Workers in this category include:

- Healthcare delivery, healthcare support, medical transport, and mortuary workers exposed to known or suspected COVID-19 patients or bodies of people known to have, or suspected of having, COVID-19 at the time of death.

**MEDIUM EXPOSURE RISK**

Jobs that require frequent/close contact with people who may be infected, but who are not known or suspected patients. Workers in this category include:

- Those who may have contact with the general public (e.g., schools, high-population-density work environments, some high-volume retail settings), including individuals returning from locations with widespread COVID-19 transmission.

**LOWER EXPOSURE RISK (CAUTION)**

Jobs that do not require contact with people known to be, or suspected of being, infected.

- Workers in this category have minimal occupational contact with the public and other coworkers.

For more information, see the *Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19*.



The four exposure risk levels represent probable distribution of risk.

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# OSHA guidance

**What should standard, contact, and airborne precautions consist of in workplaces where workers may be exposed to COVID-19?**

- **OSHA guidance breaks this down by worker type:**

- Engineering controls, such as isolation rooms and other physical barriers, can limit most workers' exposures.
- Administrative controls and safe work practices include measures such as limiting access to patient care areas, effective sharps management, and worker training.
- PPE may include gloves, gowns, goggles or face shields, and N95 or better respirators.

[www.osha.gov/coronavirus](https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus)

# OSHA guidance

## For all workers, regardless of specific exposure risks:

- Practice good and frequent hand hygiene.
- Follow good cough/sneeze etiquette.
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Photo: U.S. Department of Defense

# Joint OSHA and CDC guidance

**Adapts OSHA and CDC recommendations for COVID-19 preparedness and response planning for:**

- Meat and poultry processing
- Manufacturing
- Agriculture
- Seafood processing (with FDA)

[www.osha.gov/coronavirus](https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus)

# OSHA Guidance: Returning to Work

**OSHA's booklet on returning to work emphasizes infection prevention strategies appropriate for reopening workplaces:**

- Hazard Assessment
- Hygiene
- Social distancing
- Identification and isolation of sick employees
- Employee training
- Other workplace controls and flexibilities
- Anti-retaliation practices

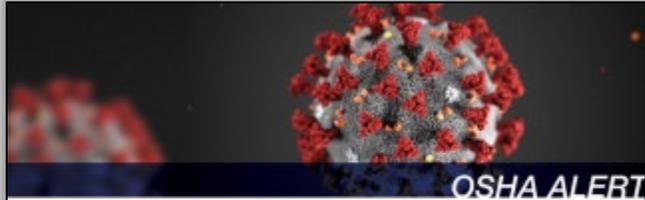
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# OSHA Alerts

## Recent Alerts

- Guidance for Stockroom and Loading Dock Workers
- COVID-19 Guidance for the Construction Workforce
- COVID-19 Guidance for the Manufacturing Industry Workforce
- COVID-19 Guidance for the Package Delivery Workforce
- COVID-19 Guidance for Retail Workers
- Prevent Worker Exposure to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

[www.osha.gov/coronavirus](http://www.osha.gov/coronavirus)



**OSHA ALERT**

### Prevent Worker Exposure to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The novel coronavirus (officially called COVID-19) is believed to spread from person-to-person, primarily through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus is also believed to spread by people touching a surface or object and then touching one's mouth, nose, or possibly the eyes.

Employers and workers should follow these general practices to help prevent exposure to coronavirus:

- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- If soap and running water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Employers of workers with potential occupational exposures to coronavirus should follow these practices:

- Assess the hazards to which workers may be exposed.
- Evaluate the risk of exposure.
- Select, implement, and ensure workers use controls to prevent exposure, including physical barriers to control the spread of the virus; social distancing; and appropriate personal protective equipment, hygiene, and cleaning supplies.

For the latest information on the symptoms, prevention, and treatment of coronavirus, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention coronavirus webpage](#).

For interim guidance and other resources on protecting workers from coronavirus, visit OSHA's [COVID-19 webpage](#).

OSHA issues alerts to draw attention to worker safety and health issues and solutions.

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# OSHA guidance: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## FAQ topics include:

- General Information
- Cleaning and Disinfection
- Construction
- Cloth Face Coverings
- Employer Requirements
- Healthcare
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Restrooms and Handwashing Facilities
- Retaliation
- Return to Work
- Testing for COVID-19
- Training
- Worker Protection Concerns

# Worker Rights

## All workers have the right to:

- Raise a safety or health concern with their employer or OSHA, request personal protective equipment, or report a work-related injury or illness, including COVID-19.
- Receive information and training on job hazards in their workplace.

# Whistleblower Protections under the OSH Act

- **Employers cannot retaliate (fire, lay off, demote, etc.) against employees for engaging in activity protected under the OSH Act.**
- **Protected activity includes:**
  - Requesting personal protective equipment;
  - Wearing personal protective equipment;
  - Reporting a work-related injury or illness, including COVID-19, to employer or OSHA;
  - Reporting an unsafe condition to an employer or OSHA; and
  - Requesting guidance on workplace safety from an employer, OSHA, or other government entity.

# For continual updates

- **Visit OSHA's website to sign up to receive OSHA information:**
  - QuickTakes biweekly newsletter
  - Tip of the Day
  - [www.osha.gov/contactus](http://www.osha.gov/contactus)
- **Follow OSHA on social media**
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