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

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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
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)
- Bloodborne Pathogens (29 CFR 1910.1030)
- 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 guidances issued to address access to respiratory protection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Memorandum</th>
<th>Effective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare Respiratory Protection Annual Fit-Testing for N95 Filtering Facepieces During the COVID-19 Outbreak</td>
<td>March 14, 2020 - present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforcement Guidance for Respiratory Protection and the N95 Shortage Due to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic</td>
<td>April 3, 2020 – present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforcement Guidance for Use of Respiratory Protection Equipment Certified Under Standards of Other Countries or Jurisdictions During the COVID-19 Pandemic</td>
<td>April 3, 2020 - present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanded Temporary Enforcement Guidance on Respiratory Protection Fit-Testing for N95 Filtering Facepieces in All Industries During the COVID-19 Pandemic</td>
<td>April 8, 2020 - present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforcement Guidance on Decontamination of Filtering Facepiece Respirators in Healthcare During the COVID-19 Pandemic</td>
<td>April 24, 2020 – present</td>
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</tbody>
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[www.osha.gov/coronavirus](http://www.osha.gov/coronavirus)
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).
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.

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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 with 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.

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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.

www.osha.gov/coronavirus
OSHA has developed a variety of guidance materials for workers and employers on how to stay healthy during the pandemic.

OSHA.gov/coronavirus includes information on implementing the hierarchy of controls when workers have specific exposure risks.
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

www.osha.gov/coronavirus
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.
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.
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
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

www.osha.gov/coronavirus
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
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

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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

- Follow OSHA on social media
  - Twitter: @OSHA_DOL
  - Facebook: Follow the Department of Labor page

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