COVID-19 FAQs

What is COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a new strain of coronavirus.

The symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- New loss of taste or smell

Some people may have COVID-19 but show no symptoms.

How does COVID-19 spread, and what can I do to prevent it?

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads person-to-person through respiratory droplets produced from a cough or sneeze. It can also spread through a contaminated surface, but this is not the main way it spreads.

You can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by:

- Avoiding contact with sick people
- Covering your cough or sneeze
- Frequently washing your hands
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Staying home when you are sick
- Cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces with a regular household cleaning spray

Who is affected by COVID-19?

People of all ages can contract COVID-19. Young and healthy individuals may have no symptoms or simply feel like they have a cold.

Groups most seriously impacted include:

- Individuals ages 60 and older
- Individuals with chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease
- Individuals with compromised immune systems

These groups account for the majority of virus-related deaths.

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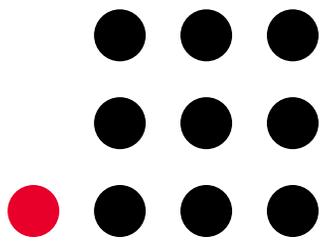
COVID-19 IN THE WORKPLACE

What impact will COVID-19 have on companies?

- Due to COVID-19, companies may experience increased worker absenteeism due to illness, the need to care for sick family members and school closures.

- The virus has caused some changes in commerce patterns, such as shoppers migrating toward unusual hours to avoid contact with the virus.

Companies may also experience interruptions of supply and delivery, including:

- Lack of supplies due to increased demand for needed medical supplies

- Company supply chains interrupted due to lack of workers

What actions can we take to protect our workforce?

These precautions can be taken:

- Encourage and enforce the need for sick employees to stay home

Consider loosening your policy regarding needs for sick notes because:

- Sick note requests can overwhelm clinics

- Clinic visits can disrupt social distancing efforts

Don't require that workers get tested for COVID-19 due to:

- A shortage of testing supplies

- A negative COVID-19 test doesn't guarantee that the individual doesn't have the COVID-19 infection

Don't send travelers to high-risk areas or passengers on cruise ships for a return-to-work exam

- Return-to-work exams can't determine if they are or are not infected with COVID-19

- Send these travelers home to self-quarantine for 14 days

What do I do if a sick employee shows up to work?

Follow these steps:

- Send them home immediately

- Advise them to call their primary care provider for further instructions

- Advise coworkers against significant contact (standing within six feet of the sick individual)

What steps should we take if an employee has COVID-19?

Keep it confidential. This is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Inform close contacts of the sick employee that they may have been close to someone with COVID-19. Direct these employees to the Department of Health webpage.

When can a sick worker return to work?

Sick employees can return to work when all three of these criteria are met:

- At least three days (72 hours) have passed since they have not had a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications such as Tylenol

- There is an improvement in their respiratory symptoms (less coughing, improved shortness of breath)

- At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared

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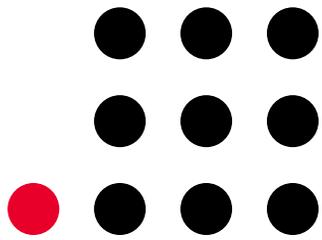
# WHAT IMPACT HAS COVID-19 HAD ON FEDERAL REGULATIONS?

Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace

Purpose: This guidance is designed to help employers protect workers who are unvaccinated (including people who are not fully vaccinated) or otherwise at-risk, including if they are immunocompromised, and also implement new guidance involving workers who are fully vaccinated but located in areas of substantial or high community transmission.

At Risk Workers: Some conditions, such as a prior transplant, as well as prolonged use of corticosteroids or other immune-weakening medications, may affect workers' ability to have a full immune response to vaccination. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), workers with disabilities may be legally entitled to reasonable accommodations that protect them from the risk of contracting COVID-19 if, for example, they cannot be protected through vaccination, cannot be vaccinated, or cannot use face coverings. Employers should consider taking steps to protect these at-risk workers as they would unvaccinated workers, regardless of their vaccination status.

The Role of Employers:

1. Facilitate employees getting vaccinated:

    a. Grant paid time off to receive vaccine and recover from side-effects of the vaccine

    b. Provide workplace vaccinations for the unvaccinated

    c. Consider mandating workers get vaccinated or undergo regular COVID-19 testing

2. Instruct employees to stay home from work if:

    a. all workers who are infected

    b. unvaccinated workers who have had close contact with someone who tested positive for SARS-CoV-2

    c. all workers with COVID-19 symptoms

3. Employees exposed to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 individuals

    a. Fully vaccinated may remain at work — get tested 3-5 days after exposure, wear masks for 14 days or until they receive a negative test

    b. Non-fully vaccinated are taken off work- test immediately and if negative, test again in 5-7 days after last exposure, or immediately if symptoms develop during quarantine, may return to work with a negative test on days 5-7

4. Continue physical distancing in all communal areas for unvaccinated and otherwise at-risk workers

5. Provide unvaccinated workers with face coverings or surgical masks. In high transmission areas fully vaccinated people are recommended to wear face coverings in public indoor areas.

6. Maintain ventilation systems per CDC's Ventilation in Buildings document

7. Perform routine cleaning and disinfection

8. Report and record COVID-19 related infections and deaths

9. Implement protections from retaliation and set up an anonymous process for workers to voice concerns about COVID-19-related hazards

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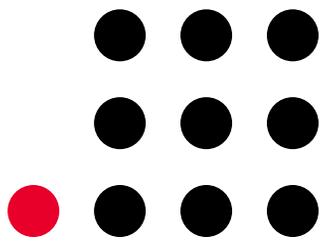
- **Drug Testing** If an employee refuses to complete a drug test, it is the employer's responsibility to evaluate the circumstances and determine if the worker's actions should be considered a refusal. The Department of Transportation (DOT) recommends employers be sensitive to workers who may not feel comfortable visiting a clinic or collection site because of COVID-19 concerns.

- **Service Agents** The DOT recognizes that service agents such as collectors, maintenance, repair and operating supplies personnel (MROs), breath alcohol technicians and substance abuse professionals (SAPs) may not be able to find the necessary resources to meet their re-qualification requirements. In this event, the DOT is considering these service agents qualified per Part 40 to continue providing services while this policy is in effect. DOT COVID-19 Drug & Alcohol Testing Statement of Enforcement Discretion for Substance Abuse Professionals and Service Agents

Fit Testing

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recommends that employers supply respirators for health care workers who provide direct care to patients who may have COVID-19. This includes respirators such as:

- N99 or N100 face masks that contain a filtering face piece

- Powered air-purifying respirators

- Reusable elastomeric respirators with appropriate filters or cartridges

It is also recommended that health care employers change from a quantitative fit testing method to a qualitative fit testing method to preserve the integrity of N95 respirators. If there is a shortage of N95s, please check with the manufacturer for recommendations on masks that fit similarly to fit tested masks. Temporary Enforcement Guidance – Healthcare Respiratory Protection Annual Fit-Testing for N95 Filtering Facepieces During the COVID-19 Outbreak

Expanded Temporary Enforcement Guidance on Respiratory Fit-Testing for N95 Filtering Facepieces in All Industries During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic

Additionally, the suspension of annual fit testing requirements for health care workers is extended to include all industries.

Recordkeeping

OSHA has published new guidance beginning on May 26, 2020, requiring all employers to record COVID-19 cases that are:

- Confirmed by at least one positive test

- Work-related

- Causing employees to seek medical treatment beyond first aid, resulting in lost workdays, restricted duty or loss of consciousness or death

These new requirements replace earlier guidance that did require recordkeeping of cases for general industry.

OSHA Issues Guidance Clarifying Recording Obligations for COVID-19 Cases

https://www.oshalawblog.com/2020/05/articles/osha-issues-guidance-clarifying-recording-obligations-for-covid-19-cases/

Spirometry

Spirometry for employment exams has been suspended until further notice.

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