

# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



## COVID-19 Employer Information for Rail Transit Operators

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**Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)** is a respiratory illness (see list of [symptoms](#)) caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2.

Here's what we currently know:

- The main way the virus [spreads](#) is from person to person through respiratory droplets when people cough, sneeze or talk.
- You may also be able to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then touching your face, mouth, nose, or eyes.
- The virus may be spread by people who do not have symptoms.

COVID-19 can sometimes cause serious health problems. [People at increased risk for severe illness](#) include:

- Older adults
- People of any age who have certain underlying medical conditions

**As a rail transit operator employer, your workforce might come into contact with the virus when**

- In [close contact](#) (within about 6 feet) with other people at the worksite, which can include passengers, coworkers, transit station, and maintenance workers.
- Touching or handling high-contact surfaces and equipment, and then touching their face, mouth, nose, or eyes.

### More Info for Rail Transit Operators

[Employees and Staff](#) >

How You Can Protect Your Staff and Others and Slow the Spread

Evaluate your workplace to identify scenarios where workers cannot maintain [social distancing](#) of at least 6 feet from each other and/or customers. Use appropriate combinations of controls following the [hierarchy of controls](#) to address these situations to limit the spread of COVID-19. A committee of both workers and management staff may be most effective at recognizing all scenarios.

While protecting workers, it is important to note that control recommendations or interventions to reduce risk to spreading COVID-19 must be compatible with any safety programs and personal protective equipment (PPE) normally required for the job task. Approaches to consider may include the following:

### **Create a COVID-19 Workplace Health and Safety Plan**

Review the [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#) and the [Resuming Business Toolkit](#) for guidelines and recommendations that all employers can use to protect their employees.

- Identify an on-site workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 assessment and control.
  - When developing plans, include all employees in the workplace, for example: staff, utility employees, relief employees, janitorial staff, supervisory staff, rail transit operators, transit station workers, and transit maintenance workers.
  - Develop plans to communicate with passengers entering the transit vehicle regarding modifications to work or service processes.
  - Notify all workers that any COVID-19 concerns should be directed to the identified coordinator.
- Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices.
  - Develop policies that encourage sick employees to stay at home without fear of reprisals, and ensure employees are aware of these policies.
  - If contractors are employed in the workplace, develop plans to communicate with the contracting company regarding modifications to work processes.
- Consider conducting daily in-person or virtual health checks (e.g., symptom and/or temperature screening) of employees on scheduled workdays.
  - Screening options could include having employees self-screen prior to arriving at work or having on-site screening by taking employees' temperatures and assessing other potential symptoms prior to beginning work. (see [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#))
  - Make sure employees can maintain at least 6 feet of distance while waiting for screening.
  - Make employee health screenings as private as possible and maintain confidentiality of each individual's medical status and history.

### **Take action if an employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19.**

- Immediately separate employees who report with or develop symptoms at work from other employees and arrange for private transport home. These employees should self-isolate and contact their health care provider immediately.

- Close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the sick person.
- Perform [cleaning and disinfection](#) after anyone suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 has been in the workplace. Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect offices, bathrooms, common areas, and shared electronic equipment used by the ill person, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces. If other workers do not have access to these areas or items, wait 24 hours (or as long as possible) before cleaning and disinfecting.
- Employees who test positive for COVID-19 should immediately notify their employer of their results.
  - Sick employees should follow [CDC recommended steps](#) to self-isolate or seek care. Employees should not return to work until they meet the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#), in consultation with healthcare providers.

**Develop hazard controls using [the hierarchy of controls](#) to prevent infection among workers. You may be able to include a combination of controls noted below.**

- **Engineering Controls (Isolate people from the hazards)**

Alter the workspace using engineering controls to prevent exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19.


- Where possible, establish physical barriers between coworkers and between workers and passengers.
  - Use strip curtains, plastic barriers, or similar materials to create impermeable dividers or partitions.
- Close or limit access to common areas where employees are likely to congregate and interact, such as break rooms, parking lots, and in entrance/exit areas.
- Consider making foot-traffic single direction in narrow or confined areas in the transit vehicle to encourage single-file movement at a 6-foot distance.
- Use visual cues such as floor decals, colored tape, and signs to remind workers to maintain distance of 6 feet from others, including at their workstation and in break areas.
  - Consider these cues for passengers as well, such as at the entry doors.
- Place hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol in multiple locations throughout the transit vehicle for workers and passengers.
  - Use touch-free stations where possible.
  - Make sure restrooms have accessible sinks, soap, water, and a way for people to dry their hands (e.g., paper towels, hand dryer).

- **Administrative Controls (Change the way people work)**

Provide training and other administrative policies to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- All workers should have a basic understanding of COVID-19, [how the disease is thought to spread](#), what the [symptoms](#) of the disease are, and what measures can be taken to [prevent or minimize transmission](#) of the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Trainings should include the importance of social distancing (maintaining a distance of 6 feet or more when possible), [wearing cloth face coverings or](#)

masks appropriately, [covering coughs and sneezes](#), [washing hands](#), [cleaning and disinfecting frequently](#) touched surfaces, not sharing personal items or tools/equipment unless absolutely necessary, and not touching their face, mouth, nose, or eyes.

- Workers should be encouraged to go home or stay home if they feel sick. Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance, and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Consider maintaining small groups of workers in teams (cohorting) to reduce the number of coworkers each person is exposed to.
- [Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces](#).
  - If surfaces are visibly dirty, clean them using a detergent or soap and water before you disinfect them.
  - Use products that are [EPA-registered](#) , [diluted household bleach solutions](#), or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, appropriate for surface disinfection.
- Give employees enough time to wash and dry their hands, and provide accessible sinks, soap, water, and a way to dry their hands (e.g., paper towels, hand dryer).
  - Remind employees to [wash their hands](#) often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, they should use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
  - Provide hand sanitizer, tissues and no touch waste baskets at the cash registers and in the restrooms.
- Maintain social distancing (at least 6 feet) in the transit vehicle, including at entry doors.
- Limit the number of people in the transit vehicle at one time. (Consult state and local guidance if available.)
- Remind employees that people may be able to [spread](#) COVID-19 even if they do not show symptoms. Consider all close interactions (within 6 feet) with employees, passengers, and others as a potential source of exposure.
- [Post signs and reminders](#) at entry doors and in strategic places providing instruction on social distancing, hand hygiene, use of cloth face coverings or masks, and cough and sneeze etiquette. Signs should be accessible for people with disabilities, easy to understand, and may include signs for non-English speakers, as needed.
- Communication and training should be easy to understand, in preferred language(s) spoken or read by the employees and include accurate and timely information.
  - Emphasize use of images (infographics) that account for language differences.
  - Training should be reinforced with signs (preferably infographics), placed in strategic locations. CDC has free, simple [posters available to download](#) and print, some of which are translated into different languages.
- Strongly encourage the use cloth face coverings or [masks](#) as appropriate.
  - Cloth face coverings or masks are intended to protect other people—not the wearer —by helping to keep the wearer’s respiratory droplets

from reaching others. Because they were not specifically designed and tested to protect the people wearing them, cloth face coverings or masks are not considered personal protective equipment (PPE).

- Train employees how to put on and take off cloth face coverings or [masks](#) to avoid contamination.
  - Cloth face coverings or masks should be [washed](#) after each use.
  - Employees should consider carrying a spare cloth face covering or mask.
  - Cloth face coverings or masks should not be worn if their use creates a new risk (i.e. interference with driving or vision, or contributions to heat-related illness) that exceeds their COVID-19 related benefits of slowing the spread of the virus. Cloth face coverings or masks should also not be worn by anyone who has trouble breathing or is unable to remove the covering or mask without assistance. CDC provides information on [adaptations and alternatives](#) that should be considered when cloth face coverings or masks may not be feasible.
- Consider requiring visitors to the workplace (service personnel, passengers) to also wear cloth face coverings or masks.

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

PPE is the last step in the hierarchy of controls because it is more difficult to use effectively than other measures. To be protective and not introduce an additional hazard, the use of PPE requires characterization of the environment, knowledge of the hazard, training, and consistent correct use. This is why special emphasis is given to administrative and engineering controls when addressing occupational hazards, including when applying guidance to slow the spread of SARS-CoV-2.

In the current COVID-19 pandemic, use of PPE such as surgical masks or N95 respirators is being prioritized for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current [CDC guidance](#).




## How You Can Help Your Staff and Others Cope with Stress

Mental health is an important component of worker safety and health. The COVID-19 pandemic has created new challenges in the ways many people work and interact with others, which may lead to increased feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression.

Information and resources about mental health, recognizing signs of stress, taking steps to build resilience and manage stress, and knowing where to go if you, your staff, or others need help are available [here](#).

## Where can I get more information?

You, as the employer, are responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns and informing employees of the hazards in your workplace. You can utilize these additional sources for more information on reducing the risk of exposures to COVID-19 at work:

- [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
- [CDC Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)
- [NIOSH Workplace Safety and Health Topic: COVID-19](#)
- [CDC COVID-19](#)
- [OSHA COVID-19](#) 
- [OSHA Guidelines on Preparing Workplaces for COVID](#)  
- [General Business Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- CDCINFO: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) | TTY: 1-888-232-6348 | website: [www.cdc.gov/info](http://www.cdc.gov/info)
- For passenger-related questions, please refer to the [Interim Guidance for Mass Transit Administrators](#).

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Content source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\), Division of Viral Diseases](#)