



# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



## COVID-19 Employer Information for Offshore Oil and Gas

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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.

### More Info for Offshore Oil and Gas

[Employees](#)



Here is 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 mouth, nose, or eyes.
- The virus may be spread by people who are not experiencing symptoms.

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

- Older adults
- People of any age who have [underlying medical conditions](#)

**As an offshore oil and gas employer, your workforce might come into contact with the virus when:**

- In [close contact](#) (within less than 6 feet) at the worksite with other people, which can include rig workers, engineers, technicians, managers, maintenance, galley staff, and housekeeping staff.
- Touching or handling frequently touched surfaces and equipment, and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.

### 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 visitors. Use appropriate combinations of controls following the [hierarchy of controls](#) to address these situations to limit the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. A committee of workers and management may be most effective at recognizing all scenarios.

While protecting workers, it is important to note that control recommendations or interventions to reduce risk of 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 and implement 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, maintenance, supervisory staff, rig workers, engineers, technicians, managers, maintenance, galley staff, and housekeeping staff.
  - Identify areas that may lead to close contact among employees, including work areas, break rooms, mess and galley areas, locker rooms, living quarters, and transportation vessels, such as helicopters.
  - If contractors enter the workspace, develop plans to communicate with them regarding modification to work or service processes.
  - Notify all workers that any COVID-19 concerns should be directed to the identified coordinator.
- Consider standing up a virtual incident command system capable of providing telemedicine consultation, assisting with the management of suspected COVID-19 cases, and coordinating the evacuation of suspected cases to an appropriate onshore medical facility for testing or treatment.
- Maintain a daily log of approved visitors. This log should include the date and time the visitor entered and exited the offshore facility as well as their contact information. Regular crew are not considered visitors.
- Determine if some tasks can be done remotely to reduce the number of employees on the offshore facility.
- Consider reducing personnel on board (POB) to essential personnel only while ensuring workers get enough rest and recovery.
- 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 and visitors before arrival.

- [Screening options](#) could include having employees self-screen before 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 if done on-site.
- Make employee health screenings as private as possible and maintain the confidentiality of each individual's medical status and history.


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

- Immediately separate employees or visitors 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.
  - Establish an isolation area on the facility that is separate from other personnel and managed by designated health and safety personnel for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases.
  - Field managers should coordinate medevac arrangements with clients and other offshore stakeholders to ensure helicopters and boats are available and equipped to safely transport ill personnel, if necessary.
  - Facility medical personnel or an onshore advisor should notify appropriate authorities before non-emergency medevac begins.
- Perform enhanced [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 equipment used by the sick person, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces or objects. 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.
- Modify the alignment of workstations where feasible. For example, redesign workstations so workers are not facing each other.
- Where possible, establish physical barriers between workers. This includes all areas of the facilities, including work areas, break rooms, the galley, locker rooms,

and living quarters.

- Install cleanable transparent shields or other barriers to physically separate employees where distancing is not an option.
- 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 gather and interact, such as break rooms and in entrance/exit areas.
  - Encourage social distancing of at least 6 feet between employees in all areas of the facilities.
- Consider making foot traffic single direction in narrow or confined areas, such as aisles and stairwells, 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 at least 6 feet from others, including at their workstation and in break areas.
- Place handwashing stations or hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol in multiple locations throughout the workplace for workers and visitors.
  - Use touch-free stations where possible.
  - Make sure restrooms are well stocked with soap and paper towels.
- Make sure the workspace is [well ventilated](#)  .
  - Work with facilities management to adjust the ventilation so that the maximum amount of fresh air is delivered to occupied spaces while maintaining the humidity at 40-60%. If possible, increase filter efficiency of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) units to highest functional level.
  - Portable high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration units may be considered to remove contaminants in the air of poorly ventilated areas.
  - Additional considerations for improving the building ventilation system can be found in the [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#) [and COVID-19 Employer Information for Office Buildings](#).
- **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 spread](#), what the [symptoms](#) of the disease are, and what measures can be taken to prevent or minimize the 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 high-touch 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.
- Conduct health checks (e.g., screening for temperature and/or other [symptoms](#)) for all personnel and visitors before they check-in to board any marine vessels or helicopters (shorebases and heliports) to go offshore.

- Consider maintaining small groups of workers in teams (cohorting) to reduce the number of coworkers each person is exposed to.
  - Limit mixing of cohort groups, if possible.
- Consider extending the duration of work shifts, for example from 21 to 28 days, on offshore facilities to reduce turnover and give workers sufficient time to self-quarantine when they are not working.
- **Clean and disinfect** frequently touched surfaces.
  - If surfaces are 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.
  - Provide cleaning materials and conduct targeted and more frequent cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (workstations, tools, equipment, galley tables and chairs, railings, countertops, doorknobs, toilets, tables, light switches, phones, faucets, sinks, keyboards, etc.).
- Provide employees adequate time and access to soap, clean water, and single use paper towels for handwashing.
  - 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.
- Limit the number of people gathered at one time. (Consult state and local guidance if available.)
  - Stagger shifts, start times, break times, and mealtimes as feasible.
  - Consider limiting employees' movements between floors to only essential work functions and limit staff entering employees' living quarters unless it is necessary.
- Eliminate shared living quarters to the extent possible. If this is not possible, then workers should practice [CDC recommended precautions](#) for preventing the spread of COVID-19, and the employer should conduct targeted daily cleaning of these shared spaces.
  - Consult [CDC Guidance on Shared and Congregate Housing](#) for special considerations for preventing COVID-19 in shared housing situations.
- 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 and others as a potential source of exposure.
- **Post signs and reminders** at entrances 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 (e.g., large print), 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.
- Use cloth face coverings or [masks](#) as appropriate.
  - Cloth face coverings or masks are intended to protect other people around you—not the wearer. They are not considered to be personal protective equipment.
  - Emphasize that care must be taken when putting on and taking off cloth face coverings or masks to ensure that the worker or the cloth face covering or mask does not become contaminated.
  - Cloth face coverings or masks should be routinely laundered.
  - Do not wear cloth face coverings or masks if their use creates a new risk (e.g., interferes with driving or vision, or contributes 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 it without assistance. CDC provides information on [adaptations and alternatives](#) that should be considered when cloth face coverings or masks may not be feasible (e.g., people who are deaf or hard of hearing, have intellectual or developmental disabilities, or sensory sensitivities).
- Consider requiring visitors to the workplace (e.g., service personnel) 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 the virus that causes COVID-19.

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, unless they were required for your job before the pandemic. Offshore oil and gas workers should continue to wear all PPE required for their normal jobs.






## 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](#).

## How To 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](#)
- [COVID-19 Employer Information for Office Buildings](#)
- [CDC COVID-19](#)
- [OSHA COVID-19](#) 
- [OSHA Guidelines on Preparing Workplaces for COVID](#)  
- [National Ocean Industries Association \(NOIA\) COVID-19 and Offshore Safety](#) 
- [Offshore Operators Committee COVID-19 Mitigations](#) 
- CDCINFO: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) | TTY: 1-888-232-6348 | website: [cdc.gov/info](https://cdc.gov/info)

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