



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™

# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



## What Utility Workers Need to Know about COVID-19

Updated Nov. 13, 2020

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

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

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

### More Info for Utility Workers

[Employers](#)



## How COVID-19 Spreads

COVID-19 is a new disease and we are still learning about it. Here's what we currently know:

- The virus that causes COVID-19 mainly [spreads](#) from person-to-person:
  - Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
  - Through respiratory droplets produced when a person who has COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, or talks.
- You can get COVID-19 from people who don't seem sick or have symptoms.
- You might be able to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus that causes the disease on it and then touching your face, mouth, nose, or your eyes.

**As a utility worker, you might be exposed to the virus at your job when:**

- In [close contact](#) with customers or coworkers.
- Touching or handling frequently touched surfaces, equipment, or tools and then touching your face, mouth, nose, or eyes.
- Entering a building with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases.

## How You Can Protect Yourself and Others

**Stay home if you are having [symptoms](#) of COVID-19.**

- Follow [CDC recommended steps](#) if you are sick.
- Do not return to work until you meet the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#).
  - Talk with your healthcare provider about when it's safe for you to return to work.
- Follow [CDC recommended precautions](#) and tell your supervisor if you are well but someone you live with or someone you have had recent [close contact](#) with has COVID-19.

**Stay at least 6 feet away from customers and coworkers, when possible.**

- Before traveling to a worksite, consult with your scheduler regarding the COVID-19 related phone assessment of worksite occupants.
- If entering a building, tell all people in the immediate area that you will be practicing safe social distancing and ask that they keep a minimum of 6 feet away from you while you do your work.
- If entering a building, ask the building supervisor if anyone in the building has been diagnosed with COVID-19, has had recent contact with someone who has

COVID-19, or is currently experiencing [symptoms](#).

- If someone in the building is ill and located in the work area, postpone any work that requires you to go into the building, if possible.
  - If work cannot be postponed and someone in the building is ill or has been confirmed to have COVID-19 and you must interact with them or they cannot be physically separated from the work area, follow your organization's established [infection control protocols](#).
- If no one in the building is ill or reports having symptoms, wear a cloth face covering or mask and your normal personal protective equipment (PPE) required for the job.

**Wear a cloth face covering or [mask](#) in public and at work if permitted by your employer, when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.** Face coverings or masks may prevent people who do not know they have the virus from spreading it to others.

- Be careful when putting on and taking off cloth face coverings or masks:
  - Do not touch the face covering or mask while wearing it.
  - Do not touch your face, mouth, nose, or eyes while taking off the covering or mask.
  - Wash your hands before putting on and after taking off the face covering or mask.
  - [Wash](#) the covering or mask after each use.
- Consider carrying a spare cloth face covering or mask. If the cloth face covering or mask becomes wet, visibly soiled, or contaminated at work, it should be removed and stored to be laundered later.
- Cloth face coverings or masks should not be worn if their use creates a new risk (for example, 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. 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).
- If you are concerned about the use of cloth face coverings or masks at your workplace, discuss them with your employer.

### **Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.**

- Clean the following items on a routine basis or when leaving a worksite, at the end of a shift, or when it will be used by a new crew:
  - Tools, equipment, steering wheel, handles, levers, dashboard, non-porous seat coverings, keys, etc.
- Use products that are [EPA-registered](#) [↗](#), [diluted household bleach solutions](#), or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, appropriate for surface disinfection.
- Follow the directions on the cleaning product's label.
- Wash your hands afterwards with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

**Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.** You do not need to wear gloves if you wash your hands regularly (unless they are already required for your job).

- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Wash your hands at these key times:
  - Before, during, and after preparing food
  - Before eating food
  - After using the toilet
  - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
  - After putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings or masks
  - Before and after work and work breaks
  - Before and after entering an occupied facility for service
  - When leaving the jobsite, and before entering or exiting a crew vehicle

**Do not touch your face, mouth, nose, or eyes.**

**Cover your coughs and sneezes.**

- Use tissues to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
- Throw used tissues in the trash.

## How to Cope with Stress

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





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

## How Your Employer Can Protect You

Your employer should develop a COVID-19 response plan and share it with you. We created a [fact sheet to help your employer](#).

## How to Get More Information

Talk to your employer or supervisor, or whoever is responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Use these sources for more information on reducing the risk of worker exposures to COVID-19:

- [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](#)  
- [Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council Assessing and Mitigating the Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) 
- 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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