



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

# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



## COVID-19 Critical Infrastructure Sector Response Planning

Updated Nov. 16, 2020

[Print](#)

## Summary of Changes



Below are changes as of November 16, 2020

- Public health recommendations have been updated to accommodate new scientific evidence, evolving epidemiology, and the need to simplify the assessment of risk. Updated recommendations are based on:
  - Growing evidence of transmission risk from infected people without symptoms (asymptomatic) or before the onset of recognized symptoms (pre-symptomatic);
  - Ongoing community transmission in many parts of the country;
  - A need to communicate effectively to the general public;
  - Continued focus on reducing transmission through social distancing and other [personal prevention strategies](#).
- Combined “Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19” and “COVID-19 Critical Infrastructure Sector Response Planning” documents to consolidate and clarify this information.
- Clarified that reintegrating exposed critical infrastructure workers who are not experiencing any symptoms and have not tested positive back into onsite operations should be used as **a last resort and only in limited circumstances**, such as when cessation of operation of a facility may cause serious harm or danger to public health or safety.
- Added that employers are encouraged to work with state, tribal, local, and territorial (STLT) public health officials to determine the safest way to reintegrate exposed workers who are not experiencing any symptoms and have not tested positive back into onsite operations.
- Clarified that all workers should wear a cloth [mask](#) in accordance with CDC and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidance and any state or local requirements.

## Purpose

To ensure the continuity of essential functions, CDC advises that critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue working following potential exposure to a person with confirmed COVID-19, under certain circumstances. Critical infrastructure workers conduct a range of operations and services that are typically essential to continued critical infrastructure viability, including staffing operations centers, maintaining and repairing critical infrastructure, operating call centers, working construction, and performing operational functions. This interim guidance is intended to assist with the assessment of risk and application of work restrictions for critical infrastructure workers who may have had exposure to a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, but are **not experiencing symptoms** and have **not tested positive for SARS-CoV-2**. Separate guidance is available for [healthcare personnel](#), [international travelers](#), and individuals with [community-related exposure](#).

# Critical Infrastructure Sectors


Functioning [critical infrastructure](#)  is imperative during the response to the COVID-19 emergency for both public health and safety as well as community well-being. These workers perform job tasks across critical infrastructure sectors, such as the [16 sectors](#)  recommended by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, which may be used by state, tribal, local, and territorial jurisdictions to help inform the scope of critical infrastructure sectors in their communities. Examples of industries they support include medical and healthcare, telecommunications, defense, food and agriculture, transportation and logistics, water and wastewater, and law enforcement.

## COVID-19 Response Plan

**Create or update your COVID-19 response plan** to prevent or slow the spread of COVID-19 in your workplace. Employers should be ready to update or refine response plans according to changes in local disease transmission risk. This may include activities in one or more of the following areas:

- Maintain critical business operations;
- Reduce transmission among employees and the public; and
- Maintain a healthy work environment.

**When creating or updating your COVID-19 response plan, be sure to:**

- **Implement the CDC recommendations in the [Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)** to help prevent or slow the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. While guidance for specific critical infrastructure workers and employers has been developed, such as guidance for [meat and poultry processing, manufacturing, agriculture, and seafood processing](#), employers should still review the [resources for businesses and employers](#), as these recommendations are also applicable to protecting the critical infrastructure workforce.
- **Comply with applicable OSHA requirements** for protecting critical infrastructure workers who remain on the job during the COVID-19 pandemic. [OSHA](#)  has published guidance and enforcement information for workplaces.

## Critical Infrastructure Workers Exposed to Individuals with COVID-19

Current CDC guidance recommends that, with possible exception noted below, individuals (including critical infrastructure workers) exposed to a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be quarantined for 14 days, consistent with [Public Health Guidance for Community-Related Exposure](#).

**Critical infrastructure workers who are symptomatic**

Critical infrastructure workers who develop a temperature equal to or higher than 100.4 °F<sup>1</sup> or [symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#) should immediately [separate themselves from others](#), inform their established point of contact at their workplace (e.g., supervisor or occupational health program), and arrange for medical evaluation and testing.

### **Critical infrastructure workers who are not symptomatic**

Employers may consider allowing exposed and asymptomatic critical infrastructure workers to continue to work in select instances when it is necessary to preserve the function of critical infrastructure workplaces. **This option should be used as a last resort and only in limited circumstances, such as when cessation of operation of a facility may cause serious harm or danger to public health or safety.** In such instances:

- Employers are encouraged to work with state, tribal, local, and territorial public health officials in managing the continuation of work in a way that best protects the health of their workers and the general public.
- Critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue work following exposure to a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 provided they remain asymptomatic and have not tested positive. Additionally, the following risk mitigation precautions should be implemented prior to and during the work shift:
  - **Pre-Screen:** Encourage employees planning to enter the workplace to self-screen at home prior to coming onsite. Employees should not attempt to enter the workplace if any of the following are present: [symptoms](#) of COVID-19; temperature equal to or higher than 100.4 °F<sup>1</sup>; or are waiting for the results of a viral test.
  - **Screen at the workplace:** Employers should conduct an on-site symptom assessment, including temperature screening, prior to each work shift. Ideally, screening should happen before the individual enters the facility.
  - **Regularly monitor:** As long as the employee doesn't have a fever or symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program or their workplace COVID-19 coordinator or team.
  - **Wear a cloth mask:** Ensure all employees wear a cloth [mask](#) in accordance with CDC and OSHA guidance and any state or local requirements.
  - **Social Distance:** Employee should stay at least 6 feet apart from others and practice [social distancing](#) as work duties permit in the workplace.
  - **Clean and disinfect workspaces:** [Clean and disinfect](#) all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared equipment routinely.

## **Adapting Your COVID-19 Business Response Plan**

When following these recommendations, consider adapting your COVID-19 business response plan with the following elements:

### **Maintain critical business operations**

- Reintegrating exposed workers who are not experiencing any symptoms and who have not tested positive back into onsite operations carries considerable risk to other workers because many people with COVID-19 are asymptomatic but can still spread disease, and tests are imperfect. Bringing exposed workers back should not be the first or most appropriate option to pursue in managing critical work tasks. Quarantine for 14 days is still the safest approach to limit the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the chance of an outbreak among the workforce.
- Reduce the need to reintegrate exposed critical infrastructure workers by:
  - Identifying and prioritizing job functions essential for continuous operation,
  - Cross-training employees to perform critical job functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent, and
  - Matching critical job functions with other equally skilled and available workers who have not experienced an exposure to a person with confirmed COVID-19.
- Analyze sick leave policies and consider modifying them to make sure that ill workers are not in the workplace. Make sure that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Analyze any incentive programs and consider modifying them, if warranted, so that employees are not penalized for taking sick leave if they have COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Minimize the number of workers present at worksites, as much as possible.

Consider special accommodations (e.g., telework, reassignment of duties to minimize contact with others) for employees who are at [increased risk for severe illness](#) from COVID-19.

### **Reduce transmission among employees and the public**

- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home. Employees who have [symptoms](#) should notify the appropriate point of contact at their workplace.
- Immediately send any employee who shows up to work sick or becomes sick during the day home or to seek further care from a healthcare provider.
- Have sick employees follow CDC-recommended guidance on [what to do if you are sick](#). Employees should not return to work until the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#) are met, in consultation with their healthcare providers.
- Encourage employees planning to enter the workplace to self-screen (measure temperature and assess symptoms) at home prior to coming onsite. Also, employers should pre-screen employees onsite (e.g., measuring the employee's temperature and assessing symptoms of COVID-19) prior to each work shift.
- Employees should self-monitor during each work shift under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program or their workplace COVID-19 coordinator or team.
  - Consult with an occupational health provider and [state and/or local health officials](#) to ensure that medical monitoring is conducted appropriately.
- Implement [social distancing](#) to minimize the chances of workers exposing one another.
- Ensure all workers wear a cloth [mask](#) in accordance with CDC and OSHA guidance and any state or local requirements.

- [Test the use of cloth masks](#) to ensure they do not interfere with safe work practices. People who work in a setting where masks may increase the [risk of heat-related illness](#) or cause safety concerns due to introduction of a hazard (for instance, straps getting caught in machinery) may consult with an occupational safety and health professional to determine the appropriate mask for their setting.
- Do not share objects between workers, or if shared tools are required, ensure appropriate cleaning and disinfection is performed between use.
- Put in place policies and supervision practices to reinforce messages on reducing COVID-19 transmission.
- Educate employees about how they can reduce the spread of COVID-19. Use multiple [communication methods](#) to remind employees of prevention practices, provide updates, and increase workers' understanding of information and recommendations.

## Maintain a healthy work environment

- Base worker infection prevention recommendations on an approach known as the [hierarchy of controls](#). This approach groups actions by their effectiveness in reducing or removing hazards. In most cases, the preferred approach is to eliminate a hazard or processes; install engineering controls; and implement appropriate cleaning, sanitation, and disinfection practices to reduce exposure or shield workers.
- Modify workstation layouts to ensure all employees maintain social distancing of at least six feet.
- Enforce social distancing protocols and use other methods to physically separate employees.
- Close or limit access to common areas where employees are likely to congregate and interact.
- Work with facility maintenance staff to [enhance ventilation](#) by increasing air exchanges in rooms.
- Promote hand washing often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use of hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Increase the frequency of [cleaning and disinfection](#) of frequently touched surfaces and shared objects to minimize the potential for cross contamination; for example, clean before and after shifts and immediately before and after the use of shared objects.
- Put in place policies and supervision practices to reinforce stress-reduction messages.
- Communicate with your employees about [job stress related to COVID-19 and ways to cope with that stress](#).

- 
1. A measured temperature of 100.4°F or higher is used for the purpose of screening employees who have been exposed to COVID-19. Note that a temperature of 100.4°F or higher may be intermittent or may not be present in some people, such as those who are elderly, immunocompromised, or taking certain fever-reducing medications (e.g., nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs [NSAIDs]).

Last Updated Nov. 16, 2020

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