



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



COVID-19 Communication Plan for Select Non-healthcare Critical Infrastructure Employers

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Purpose

Due to the number of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases among select non-healthcare critical infrastructure employees across the country, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working with employers to ensure employees have available accurate, actionable, and timely disease prevention and control information.

This communication plan:

- Outlines actions all employers in select non-healthcare critical infrastructure industries (including [agriculture](#), [manufacturing](#), [meat and poultry](#), and [seafood processing](#)) can take to share key COVID-19 prevention messages with their employees ([Section 1](#)).
- Suggests key messages that employers and community leaders can use in their communication efforts to help employees protect themselves, their families, and the surrounding community to help slow the spread of COVID-19 ([Section 2](#)).
- Provides links to existing CDC communication materials which have been translated into multiple languages ([Section 3](#)).

Section 1: Methods to communicate your messages

Employers should use multiple ways to communicate to and inform employees about COVID-19 prevention measures, policies, and procedures. Communicate messages via multiple methods to increase workers' understanding of information and recommendations. Begin and/or expand COVID-19 communications with workers and third-party contractors as quickly as possible. There is little need to develop new

informational materials because many materials are already available and translated into multiple languages. Communicate in employees' preferred languages and at their reading levels. Use materials and messages that have low to moderate reading levels (i.e., sixth grade level or below) so as many workers as possible can understand them. Use alternative, verbal communication approaches (e.g., announcements, small group meetings/huddles, etc.) for employees who cannot read. Several communication methods that employers should consider using are presented here.

As part of an effective COVID-19 communication plan, it is important for employers to provide opportunities for employee feedback and questions.

- Remind employees of established communication mechanisms and how to provide feedback to supervisors and management
- Consider establishing a COVID-19 designated information channel. Examples include:
 - Telephone hotline employees can call with COVID-19 questions or concerns
 - Email account specific for COVID-19 questions and issues
- Employers may want to create a workgroup that is composed of employees, management, and union representatives. This workgroup should evaluate and provide feedback on the effectiveness of communications and develop strategies to address any gaps.

Communication channels

Letters to staff

- Consider providing a letter to all employees, written at the appropriate reading level in plain language and translated into the primary languages used by employees, to:
 - Highlight strategies and measures the employer has taken to protect employees from COVID-19 while at work including entry screening, installation of physical barriers, social distancing measures, and increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection,
 - Encourage or remind employees about what they can do while working to protect themselves and others,
 - Detail COVID-19 information, including prevention, signs and symptoms, when to seek medical care, policies and procedures for sick leave, short-term disability, and policies for returning to work after exposure to COVID-19 or illness, and
 - Provide links to employee-specific websites or social media sites where staff can obtain information on COVID-19 related topics.
- Develop new letters as needed to inform staff of new COVID-19 prevention measures, policy updates, or to provide information about workers' concerns.
- Letters can be mailed, emailed, or included with paychecks.

Small group meetings/huddles

- Consider conducting meetings or huddles with small groups of employees to verbally communicate messages in their preferred languages.

- Group employees who speak the same language together to facilitate communication.
- Consider having employees share approved safety and health messages instead of always having supervisors or managers lead the information sharing.
- Encourage employees to ask questions and share information.
- Ensure employees wear cloth face coverings or disposable masks and maintain at least 6 feet between each other during these meetings or huddles.

Post communication materials at worksites

- Communication materials can be displayed in common work areas where workers have access, visit frequently, and have enough time to review the information.
 - Communication materials should be developed in the preferred languages of most employees, written at the appropriate reading level, and expressed in plain language.
- Posted materials should be large enough so images and words can be easily seen from a distance.
- Communication messages should be rotated regularly to engage employees' interest and attention.
- Areas to post materials could include:
 - Cafeterias,
 - Locker rooms,
 - Restrooms,
 - Entries,
 - Screening areas,
 - Break rooms and outside seating/eating/smoking areas,
 - Transportation arrival/departure areas,
 - Hallways/walls,
 - Congregate housing and living spaces,
 - Onsite occupational health clinics, and
 - Other areas where staff frequently stop or pass by.
- Printable posters and other print materials can be repurposed from existing CDC materials or can be used as a starting point for development of employer-specific materials.
 - [Section 3: Communication Resources](#) provides links to materials on a variety of topics (basic COVID-19 information, disposable facemasks and cloth face coverings, keeping well at home, etc.), many of which are available in multiple languages.

Worksite television monitors

- Employers can use existing videos on a variety of COVID-19 health topics, some of which are available in multiple languages ([Section 3](#)).
- To further capture employees' attention, employers can develop their own videos. The videos should be in languages commonly spoken by employees and could

feature employees who speak these language(s).

- Transcripts for various health topics are already developed and available ([Section 3](#)).
- Content should rotate frequently to attract and maintain employees' attention.

Social media

- Employers should consider using or developing a closed/private, company-only social media page and encourage employees to follow it online.
- Routine postings that reinforce health information and infection prevention behaviors can be shared on social media.
- Employers may wish to develop their own messages, or they can use existing relevant prevention messages tailored to social media that have already been developed by CDC ([Section 3](#)).

Company text messaging programs

- Employers with a text messaging program can send workers brief text messages, which are automatically translated to preferred languages, to reinforce prevention measures and remind employees about company policies and benefits.
- Urgent messages can be sent rapidly using the same mechanism, as needed.

Community leaders/union representatives

- Employers should work with community leaders and union representatives to develop key messages and resources that can be shared by community and union members.
- As trusted sources of information, community leaders and union representatives should be involved with message dissemination through methods they have already established.
- Additional opportunities for sharing health messages with employees should be explored with these leaders. Your state and/or local health department may be able to help facilitate these community relationships.

Section 2: Key messages

Non-healthcare critical infrastructure employees are a diverse population; extra care and thought may be required to communicate effectively in culturally appropriate ways. Translation and interpretation of materials and messages into employees' preferred language(s) at appropriate reading levels using plain language is critical to ensure successful prevention and control efforts.

- Key messages should be communicated to employees on a regular basis using multiple methods and venues.
- Messages, such as those below, should be rotated to keep information fresh and attract employees' attention.

- The actions recommended via key messages work together to help control and prevent the spread of COVID-19. A single message may not include all actions that need to be taken to be fully protective.
- **Only communicate messages that apply to what is happening at your workplace.** Not all messages presented below will apply.

Primary messages

- COVID-19 has affected communities across the nation, including ours. We are working with state and local officials and CDC to protect our employees' health.
- Please follow safety guidelines **at work, at home, and in the community** to help slow the spread of coronavirus.

Messages for all employees

- If you are sick, do not go to work.
- People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of reported [symptoms](#) – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. These include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. Symptoms may appear **2-14 days after a person is exposed to the virus** that causes COVID-19.
- Some people with COVID-19 have no signs and symptoms but can still spread the virus to others.
- There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19.
- The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person through droplets produced when a sick person coughs, sneezes, or talks, and the droplets land in the mouths, noses, or eyes of people nearby.
 - These droplets can also land on surfaces like tables, chairs, or handrails, exposing a person if they touch the surface, then touch their nose, mouth, or eyes.
- Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arm lengths) from other people that are not part of your household. This is called social distancing or physical distancing.
- Use a cloth face covering or disposable facemask that covers your mouth and nose in addition to social distancing.
- Cloth face coverings are not personal protective equipment (PPE) and are not meant to replace PPE, such as respirators. If respirators were needed for your job before the current COVID-19 pandemic, continue to use them.
- Physical strength, good health, or youth does not protect you from catching the virus or prevent you from passing the virus to others.
- If you have chronic health conditions, continue seeking care for those conditions as recommended by your healthcare provider.

Messages for workers at higher risk for severe disease

- You may be at [higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#):
 - If you are an [older adult](#). As you get older, your risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases. For example, people in their 50s are at higher risk for severe illness than people in their 40s. Similarly, people in their 60s or 70s are, in general, at higher risk for severe illness than people in their 50s. The greatest risk for severe illness from COVID-19 is among those aged 85 or older.
 - If you have [underlying health conditions](#) such as cancer, chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, serious heart conditions, a compromised or weakened immune system, obesity, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, sickle cell disease, or liver disease.

Messages for workers who are sick

- If you develop any of these emergency warning signs for COVID-19, get medical attention immediately:
 - Trouble breathing,
 - Continuous pain or pressure in the chest,
 - New confusion,
 - Can't wake up or stay awake, or
 - Bluish lips or face
- Call 911 if you have a medical emergency. If you tested positive for COVID-19 or have signs and symptoms of COVID-19, be sure to tell the operator. If possible, put on a cloth face covering before medical help arrives.
- If you tested positive for COVID-19, do not return to work until you meet your workplace's return-to-work policy.
 - If you have a fever or chills, cough, or other signs and symptoms, such as shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea, you might have COVID-19. Stay home unless you are seeking medical care or testing for COVID-19.
- Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and are able to recover at home.
- As much as possible, stay in a specific room or at least 6 feet away from other people in your home. Try to use a separate bathroom, if available.
- If you need to be around other people inside or outside of the home, wear a cloth face covering or a disposable facemask that covers your nose and mouth.

Messages related to case investigation and contact tracing

- We all need to work together with health department staff to slow the spread of COVID-19.
- If you test positive for COVID-19, a case investigator from the health department may call you to check on your health, discuss whom you have been in contact with, and ask where you spent time while you may have been infectious and able to spread COVID-19 to others.

- Discussions with health department staff are confidential. This means that your personal and medical information will be kept private and only shared with those who may need to know, like your health care provider.
- Your name will not be revealed to those you came in contact with. The health department will only notify your close contacts that they might have been exposed to COVID-19.
- The health department might contact your workplace to learn more about your worksite and your contacts at work if you were working when you were able to spread COVID-19 to others.
- If you have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, the health department might call you to let you know that you have been exposed.
- If you have been exposed, monitor yourself for any COVID-19 signs and symptoms, stay at least 6 feet away from others, and wear a cloth face covering when you need to be around other people or animals.

Return-to-work messages for employees with COVID-19

- If **you had symptoms** of COVID-19, you can [end your home isolation](#) and return to work when:
 - At least 10 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared
 - However, you may need to wait up to 20 days if you had a severe case of COVID-19 or if you are immunocompromised. Talk with a healthcare provider to decide how long you need to wait.
 - **AND** at least 24 hours have passed since you last had a fever without using fever-reducing medication.
 - **AND** your other symptoms have improved — for example, your cough or shortness of breath has improved.
- If you **never had any symptoms** and are not immunocompromised, you can [end your home isolation](#) and return to work when at least 10 days have passed after the date you first tested positive for COVID-19.

“Prevention practices at work” messages

- If you feel sick, **do not** come to work. Common signs and symptoms of COVID-19 include fever or chills and cough.
- If you have been sick, you should not return until you have met the criteria for returning to work established by your employer.
- Everyone entering the workplace will be screened for fever and symptoms. Those who are sick will not be allowed to enter.
- It is important to stay at least 6 feet away from other employees, especially when standing in line at entry screenings, in locker rooms, during breaks, and when waiting for transportation to and from home.
- You can spread COVID-19 to others even if you don’t feel sick. That is why all employees should stay 6 feet away from each other whenever possible and wear a cloth face covering or disposable facemask while at work, unless personal protective equipment (PPE), like a respirator, is needed for your job.
- Clean your hands often, either by washing your hands with soap and water for at

least 20 seconds or by using a hand sanitizer made with at least 60% alcohol.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands because you can become infected with the virus if it gets into your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Wash your hands before you remove your cloth face covering or disposable facemask and before you put it back on.
- Do not touch the front of the cloth face covering or disposable facemask because there may be virus (germs) on it that could get on your fingers. If you do, wash your hands. Instead, use the ear loops or straps.
- Do not leave your cloth face covering or disposable facemask hanging off one ear or hanging around your neck.
- Cloth face coverings or disposable facemasks should cover both your nose and mouth.
- Cloth face coverings should be washed in hot water in a washing machine or a sink after each use. Dry in a hot dryer if possible or in the sun before wearing it again.
- Do not wash or reuse your disposable facemask.

“Prevention practices outside of work” messages

- Stay home as much as possible and avoid travel.
- Avoid large gatherings, as defined by your local or state health department.
- Keep at least 6 feet between yourself and other people when in public and in shared spaces within employer-provided congregate housing.
- Some people may be able to spread the virus even if they don’t have signs and symptoms.
- The virus can live on different surfaces. If you touch something that has the virus on it, and then touch your face (eyes, nose, or mouth), you might become sick.
- Wash your hands with soap and water often, for at least 20 seconds.
- When using hand sanitizer, rub it all over your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home like tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, televisions, toilets, faucets, sinks, and computers.

Cloth face coverings general messages

- Everyone should wear a cloth face covering that covers their nose and mouth, especially when it is difficult to practice social distancing. At work, wear a cloth face covering or disposable facemask unless personal protective equipment (PPE), like a respirator, is needed for your job.
- You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you don’t feel sick. A cloth face covering or disposable facemask protects other people in case you are infected.
- Do not use cloth face coverings on children younger than 2 years old, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who can’t remove it by themselves.
- Even when you wear a cloth face covering, keep at least 6 feet between yourself and others. The cloth face covering is not a substitute for physical distancing, or other

preventive measures.

- You do not have to buy a cloth face covering. You can use simple materials you already have at home to [make your own cloth face covering](#).

Messages to workplace managers, supervisors, and other leaders

- Create a [COVID-19 assessment and control plan](#) and identify a qualified workplace coordinator who is responsible for this plan. All employees at the worksite should know how to contact the coordinator with any COVID-19 concerns.
- Everyone should be screened for fever and other COVID-19 signs and symptoms before they enter the worksite. Visitors who have signs and symptoms should not be allowed to enter. Encourage workers who have signs and symptoms of COVID-19 to contact a healthcare provider, provide them with information on the return-to-work policy, and send them home immediately.
- Support employee physical distancing, where possible, by:
 - Modifying the alignment of workstations so that employees are more than 6 feet apart,
 - Adding physical barriers in lunchrooms, workstations, and transportation arrival/departure waiting areas,
 - Staggering start times, shifts, and breaks, and
 - Adding signs to control foot traffic flow.
- Provide additional resources on helping stop the spread of germs, hand sanitizing stations, and source control measures such as cloth face coverings and disposable facemasks, or face shields if appropriate.
- Increase cleaning and disinfection frequency. Consider the use of trained sanitation teams and reserving a shift specifically for cleaning and disinfection.
- Remind employees who report directly to you of the following:
 - Stay home when sick, and
 - About flexible attendance and leave policies to promote employees staying home when they are sick or feel ill:
 - If they will still be paid
 - If excused absence still allows for bonus pay or other incentives
- Critical infrastructure employees can continue to work if they have had potential exposure to COVID-19 if they remain asymptomatic and take [additional precautions](#). Potential exposure means having close contact within 6 feet of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more starting 48 hours before that individual became symptomatic.

Section 3: Communication resources

The resources below provide communication materials, often already translated into multiple languages. Other sites may provide additional useful communication materials; however, it is important to verify sources and only use those that are reputable.

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19](#) (materials in multiple languages)
- [State-based Occupational Health Surveillance Clearinghouse](#) (materials in multiple languages)

Social media & videos

- To begin developing a COVID-19 social media communications plan, consider using the [CDC Social Media Toolkit](#).
- To add a button to your social media site that links users to the latest CDC COVID-19 information, [go here](#).
- To maximize reach using social media
 - In addition to Facebook, using other social media options or platforms used by specific groups may be effective ways to reach your audience, and
 - Collaborate with community organizations (for example, multicultural centers, faith communities, local unions) and ask them to post communications on their sites.
- Videos are available on CDC's [YouTube Channel](#) as well as CDC's [Social Media Toolkit](#). Videos featured in the social media toolkit are typically shorter and can be downloaded.

Links to select CDC communications materials in multiple languages, by topic

English versions of all CDC COVID-19 print materials can be accessed [here](#). Select materials in multiple languages are below.

Basic prevention messages / Help prevent disease / Stop the spread of germs

Amharic  | Arabic  | Burmese  | Dari  | English  | Español  | Farsi  | French  | Haitian Creole  | Kinyardwanda  | Karen  | Korean  | Nepali  | Pashto  | Portuguese  | Russian  | Simplified Chinese  | Somali  | Swahili  | Tigrinya  | Ukrainian  | Vietnamese 

Signs and symptoms of COVID-19

Amharic  | Arabic  | Burmese  | Dari  | English  | Farsi  | French  | Haitian Creole  | Karen  | Kinyarwanda  | Korean  | Nepali  | Oromo  | Pashto  | Portuguese  | Russian  | Simplified Chinese  | Somali  | Spanish  | Swahili  | Tagalog  | Tigrinya  | Thai  | Ukrainian  | Vietnamese 











Facts about COVID-19

Amharic  | Arabic  | Burmese  | Dari  | Farsi  | French  | Haitian Creole  | Karen  | Kinyarwanda  | Korean  | Nepali  | Pashto  | Portuguese  | Russian  | Simplified Chinese  | Somali  | Spanish  | Swahili  | Tagalog  | Tigrinya  | Ukrainian  | Vietnamese 

What to do if you are sick

Amharic  | Arabic  | Burmese  | Dari  | Farsi  | French  | Haitian Creole  | Karen  | Kinyarwanda  | Korean  | Kunama  | Nepali  | Oromo  | Pashto  | Portuguese  | Russian  | Simplified Chinese  | Somali  | Spanish  | Swahili  | Tagalog  | Thai  | Tigrinya  | Ukrainian  | Vietnamese 

What you should know about COVID-19 to protect yourself and others

Amharic  | Arabic  | Burmese  | Chuukese  | Dari  | English  | Farsi  | French  | Haitian Creole  | Karen  | Kinyarwanda  | Korean  | Marshallese  | Nepali  | Pashto  | Portuguese  | Russian  | Simplified Chinese  | Somali  | Spanish  | Swahili  | Tagalog  | Thai  | Tongan  | Tigrinya  | Ukrainian  | Vietnamese 

Guidance for large or extended families living in the same household

Amharic  | Arabic  | Burmese  | Dari  | Farsi  | French  | Haitian Creole  | Karen  | Kinyarwanda  | Korean  | Nepali  | Pashto  | Portuguese  | Russian  | Simplified Chinese  | Somali  | Spanish  | Swahili  | Tagalog  | Tigrinya  | Thai  | Ukrainian  | Vietnamese 

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