



BIE SAFETY ADVISOR

Coronavirus Control and Prevention in the Workplace

OSHA has developed *Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19* to help prevent worker exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). “Protecting the health and safety of America’s workforce is a key component of this Administration’s comprehensive approach to combating the coronavirus,” said Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Occupational Safety and Health Loren Sweatt. “This guidance outlines practical ways that employers and workers can address potential health risks from the Coronavirus in their workplaces.”

Measures for protecting workers from exposure to, and infection with SARS-CoV-2, depend on the type of work being performed and exposure risk, including potential for interaction with people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and contamination of the work environment. Employers should adapt infection control strategies based on a thorough hazard assessment using appropriate combinations of engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and personal protective equipment based on the risk level of exposure. Some OSHA standards that apply to preventing occupation exposure to SARS-CoV-2 also require employers to train workers on elements of infection prevention, including PPE.

Steps for Employers to Reduce Workers’ Risk of Exposure to SARS-CoV-2

- Develop an infectious disease preparedness and response plan
- Implement basic infection prevention measures
- Develop policies and procedures for prompt identification and isolation of employees who have signs and/or symptoms of COVID-19.
- Develop, implement, and communicate about workplace flexibilities and protections.
- Implement workplace controls: engineering controls, administrative controls, and PPE.

To help employers determine appropriate precautions, OSHA has divided job tasks into four risk

exposure levels: very high, high, medium, and lower risk.

Most construction operations would be considered to be lower exposure risk (caution) jobs; those that do not require contact with people known to be, or suspected of being, infected with SARS-CoV-2 nor frequent close contact with the general public. Workers in this category have minimal occupational contact with the public and other coworkers.

Protecting Workers with Lower Exposure Risk

For workers who do not have frequent contact with the general public, employers should implement basic infection prevention measures, including:

- Promoting frequent and thorough hand washing, including providing all on your worksites with a place to wash their hands. If soap and running water are not immediately available, provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Actively encourage any workers who are sick to stay home.
- Encouraging respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes.
- Explore whether you can establish policies and practices, such as working from home and staggered shifts to increase the physical distance between employees.
- Discouraging workers from using other workers’ phones, plan tables, hand tools, desks, etc.
- Maintain regular housekeeping practices, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, equipment, and tools.
- Replacing face-to-face meetings with virtual communications
- Provide workers with up-to-date education and training on COVID-19 risk factors and protective behaviors.

For More Information:

- www.osha.gov
- www.cdc.gov
- www.cdc.gov/niosh



