

Corona Virus (COVID-19) Prevention

General Requirements and Prevention Ideas for Workplaces

SC OSHA requires employers to provide a safe and healthy workplace and to implement practices that ensure coronavirus prevention. Employers must ensure social distancing for employees and customers; frequent and adequate employee handwashing; and that sick employees stay home. Employers must also provide basic workplace hazard education about coronavirus and how to prevent transmission in the language best understood by the employee.

Workplace Discrimination

It is against the law for any employer to take any adverse action such as firing, demotion, or otherwise retaliate against a worker they suspect of exercising safety and health rights such as raising safety and health concerns to their employer, participating in union activities concerning safety and health matters, filing a safety and health complaint or participating in an investigation.

General Requirements

Employers must ensure social distancing practices for employees and control customer flow; frequent and adequate employee handwashing, facilities and surface sanitation; and ensure sick employees stay home or go home if they feel ill. Employers must also provide basic workplace hazard education about coronavirus and how to prevent transmission in the language best understood by the employee.

Mandatory Social Distancing

Employers must ensure all employees keep at least six feet away from coworkers and the public, when feasible. Other prevention measures are required such as use of barriers to block sneezes and coughs, and ventilation improvements when social distancing isn't feasible.

Ideas for indoor work areas:

- Move workstations farther apart.
- Reduce the number of workstations in use at a given time.
- Move certain tasks or meetings to times and/or locations with fewer people present.

- Make provisions to prevent close contact between workers and others (e.g., coworkers and the public) when transferring items, tools, or materials. For example, require one-at-a-time
- Control the number of people entering the building or office.
- Stagger work schedules so workers don't crowd when they arrive and leave work.
- Use dividers or floors markings to distinguish appropriate spacing for people waiting in lines or in front of service counters.
- Designate one or more employee(s) as a "physical distance monitor" — similar to a safety monitor to ensure social distancing practices are consistently followed.

Ideas for break areas and meeting rooms:

- Stagger break and lunch schedules to minimize occupancy; or limit and monitor occupancy based on the size and layout of the room.
- Hold gatherings in larger spaces or outdoors — where workers can readily spread out.
- Set up rooms to facilitate appropriate distancing; for example, provide a limited number of chairs and spread them out.
- Utilize virtual online meetings and text messaging instead of in-person meetings.

Ideas for mobile or outdoor work areas:

- Have workers take separate vehicles when the

passenger space in vans and trucks doesn't allow for social distancing.

- Reduce in-person visits with clients and customers; rely on email, text, and online meetings.
- Pre-arrange with clients and customers to drop off or pick up packages, materials, etc. at a location that ensures one-at-a-time access.
- Contact clients to inquire about COVID-19 symptoms before making a house visit; this helps ensure the worker can make necessary provisions for PPE and other precautions.
- Set up outdoor work and break areas to accommodate social distancing; for example, ensure shaded break areas are large enough to allow a minimum distance of six feet between workers.

Frequent and Adequate Handwashing is Required

- Provide enough fixed or portable hand washing facilities or stations at workplaces and jobsites so employees can wash their hands frequently with soap and hot and cold (or tepid) running water.
- Ensure an adequate supply of soap, water, and towels; set up a schedule for frequent restocking of supplies and emptying of trash.
- Require workers to wash hands frequently and effectively when they arrive at work, leave their workstations for breaks, use the bathroom; before and after they eat or drink or use tobacco products; and after touching any surfaces suspected of being contaminated.
- Provide supplemental hand sanitizer stations, wipes or towelettes, or clean water and soap in portable containers to facilitate more frequent handwashing after handling objects touched by others.
- Gloves may be provided, but also must be washed regularly to prevent the spread of the virus. This may help for workers whose hands are bothered by frequent washing and sanitizing.

Routine and Frequent Cleaning is Required

Employers must:

- Establish a housekeeping schedule to address regular, frequent, and periodic cleaning.
- Provide appropriate and adequate cleaning supplies for scheduled and, when necessary, spot cleaning and cleaning after a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case.
- Ensure floors, counters, and other surfaces are regularly cleaned with water and soap,

or other cleaning liquids to prevent build-up of dirt and residues that can harbor contamination.

- Make sure high-touch surfaces are properly disinfected on a frequent or periodic basis using a bleach solution or other EPA-approved disinfectant (see link to CDC cleaning guidelines below).
- Ensure employees follow effective cleaning procedures and use protective gloves and eye/face protection (e.g. face shields and/or goggles) when mixing, spraying, and wiping with liquid cleaning products, like diluted bleach.
- Make sure shared work vehicles are regularly cleaned and disinfected.
- Keep Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) for all disinfectants on site.
- Don't mix chemicals — many are incompatible; and be sure to dilute and use chemicals per manufacturer specifications.

Ideas for all workplaces:

- Follow cleaning guidelines set by the CDC. www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html
- Be sure to wash and rinse visible dirt/debris from equipment, tools, and other items before disinfecting.
- Cover fabric and rough surfaces with smooth materials so they are easier to clean.

Procedures to Address Sick Employees

Employers must establish procedures to:

- Require sick workers to stay home or go home if they feel or appear sick.
- Identify and isolate workers who exhibit signs or symptoms of COVID-19 illness.
- Follow cleaning guidelines set by the CDC (see link above) to deep clean after reports of an employee with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 illness.
- Keep workers away from areas being deep cleaned.

Ideas for all workplaces:

- Encourage workers to report concerns and use paid sick leave.
- Conduct daily COVID-19 symptoms checks of employees, contractors, suppliers, customers and visitors entering the worksite; for example, use a brief questionnaire.

Employee Education is Required

Employers must establish procedures to: Basic workplace hazard education about coronavirus must be provided to employees in a language they best understand. Ensure employees know:

- The signs, symptoms, and risk factors associated with COVID-19 illness.
- How to prevent the spread of the coronavirus at work; including steps being taken in the workplace to establish social distancing, frequent handwashing, and other precautions.
- The importance of hand washing and how to effectively wash hands with soap and water for at least twenty seconds.
- Proper respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes and not touching eyes, noses, or mouths with unwashed hands or gloves.

Ideas for all workplaces:

- Regularly communicate important safety messages and updates.
- Post readable signs prominently throughout the worksite with messages about social distancing, frequent hand washing, required PPE, respiratory etiquette, and illness reporting.
- Post relevant information from SC OSHA, OSHA, local and state health departments, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other similar COVID-19 authorities.
- Provide ways for workers to express any concerns and ideas to improve safety.

Personal Protective Equipment

Personal protective equipment may be helpful when social distancing and other protective measures are infeasible or not effective.

- Face shields can prevent direct exposure to sneezes or coughs; they also provide protection from cleaning chemicals and disinfectants.
- Approved respirators such as N95s are not normally recommended, but may be appropriate where workers must remain in very close proximity to others. Employers must establish a Respiratory Protection Program per the Respiratory Protection standard (1910.134) to ensure proper use and care when respirators are necessary.
- Loose-fitting face masks or cloth face covers (e.g., scarves and homemade masks) may be voluntarily worn by workers as a best practice measure to prevent the wearer from transmitting droplets from coughs and sneezes; but they do not prevent inhalation of fine aerosols and are not protective in close proximity.

- Workers should not touch their mouth, nose, eyes, and nearby surfaces when putting on, using, and removing PPE and masks.

Other Protective Measures

- Businesses are strongly encouraged to coordinate with state and local health officials so timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses.

Other Resources

- Employers should reference the CDC's, Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers, found at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html
- Control and Prevention webpage from OSHA: www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19; www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA-FS-3747.pdf; www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html

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