Workplace Re-Entry

Protecting the Safety and Health of Workers –
Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

What is Covid-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease spread from person-to-person. The virus that causes the disease is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China. *Source CDC*

How Does Coronavirus Spread?

- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
- The virus spreads by droplets made when people with the coronavirus cough, sneeze, or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people nearby or get inhaled into their lungs.
- People who are infected often—but not always—have symptoms of illness. People without symptoms can also spread the virus**.**
- It may be possible that a person can get the coronavirus by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching his or her own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. The CDC is still learning more about the virus.

Signs and Symptoms of Infection

COVID-19 typically causes mild respiratory illness, but can cause severe disease, including pneumonia with acute respiratory distress syndrome and sometimes death. Typical symptoms include: cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell. Symptoms can begin 2-14 days after exposure.

Occupational Exposure Risks

OSHA is closely coordinating with the CDC, including the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH), and other agencies to monitor the ongoing pandemic. The risk of exposure in many workplaces likely reflects the risk to the general public in the community where the workplace is located. Risk can increase when workers have frequent, close contact with the general public or other co-workers.

Workers in some sectors may have increased risk of occupational exposure to COVID-19, including in:

- Healthcare and laboratories
- Emergency response
- Mortuary services and other death care
- Airline operations
- Border protection and passenger screening
- Critical retail operations (e.g., grocery stores, pharmacies)

Existing OSHA Standards Protect Workers from Exposure

Follow existing OSHA standards to help protect workers from exposure to SARS-CoV-2 and infection with COVID-19. Employers should also remember that OSHA can use the **General Duty Clause, S.C. Code Ann. Regs. § 71-112(A),** of the Occupational Safety and Health Act to ensure that workers are protected from recognized safety and health hazards that may cause serious harm.

Relevant OSHA Requirements

Personal Protective Equipment (29 CFR 1910 subpart I), including:

- PPE General Requirements (1910.132)
- Eye and Face Protection (1910.133)
- Respiratory Protection (1910.134)
- Hand Protection (29 CFR 1910.138)
- Bloodborne Pathogens (29 CFR 1910.1030)
- Hazard Communication (29 CFR 1910.1200)

Sectors with Exposure Risk - Very High

- Healthcare workers (e.g., doctors, nurses, dentists, paramedics, EMTs) performing or present for aerosol-generating procedures (e.g., intubation, cough induction procedures, bronchoscopies, CPR, some dental procedures and exams, invasive specimen collection) on known or suspected COVID-19 patients.
- Healthcare or laboratory personnel collecting or handling specimens from known or suspected COVID-19 patients.
- Morgue workers performing autopsies on the bodies of people who are known to have, or suspected of having COVID-19 at the time of their death.

Sectors with Exposure Risk - Medium

- Jobs that require frequent (i.e., more than a few minutes) and/or close (i.e., within 6 feet) contact with people who may be infected with SARS-CoV-2, but who are not known or suspected COVID-19 patients.
- Examples include - Critical retail workers, such as those in pharmacies and grocery stores.
- Transit workers, such as bus drivers, subway operators, and taxi drivers. Workers in other transportation operations.

Sectors with Exposure Risk - Low

- Jobs that do not require contact with people known to be or suspected of being infected with SARS-CoV-2, nor frequent close contact with (within 6 feet) of the general public.
- Workers in this category have minimal occupational contact with the public and other coworkers.

Guidance for Employers
HEALTH AND SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL BUSINESS, NON-PROFIT & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

All businesses must follow SC DHEC and CDC Guidelines, and SC OSHA Standards

Recommendations

Employees should not report to, or be allowed to remain at, work or on a job site if sick or symptomatic (with any of the symptoms listed above).

COVID-19 positive workers, whether symptomatic or not, should not be allowed on site and any worker(s) who have close contact with a worker or any other person who is diagnosed with COVID-19 should be required to quarantine for 14 days after last exposure.

Signs should be posted at all entrances clearly indicating that no one may enter if they have symptoms of COVID-19.

Employers may consider pre-screening or surveying to verify each employee has no symptoms of COVID-19 prior to the commencement of each work shift.

All employees should observe strict social distancing of 6 feet while on the job, unless noted, and should refrain from touching their faces.

No congregation of employees is allowed. Close or block off common areas to the extent feasible. All necessary common areas, such as break rooms and cafeterias, should be arranged to permit social distancing.

When feasible, stagger employee lunch breaks to reduce the number of employees in the area. When working inside, open doors and windows to promote air flow to the greatest extent possible, and limit the number of people occupying a single indoor space.

For work travel, limit the number of people to the smallest number possible when occupying one vehicle. If more than one person is in the vehicle, all occupants should wear face coverings.

Employees should be encouraged to wear masks or cloth face coverings, especially when in settings where social distancing is not feasible. Cloth face coverings should be optional for employees with underlying respiratory illness, but if not worn, social distancing must be performed.

All common spaces and equipment, including bathrooms, frequently touched surfaces, doors, tools, equipment, and vehicles, should be cleaned and disinfected at the beginning, middle, and end of each shift and, when possible, prior to transfer from one person to another.

Employees must have easy and frequent access to soap and water or hand sanitizer during the duration of work, and handwashing or hand sanitization is required frequently including before entering, and leaving, job sites.
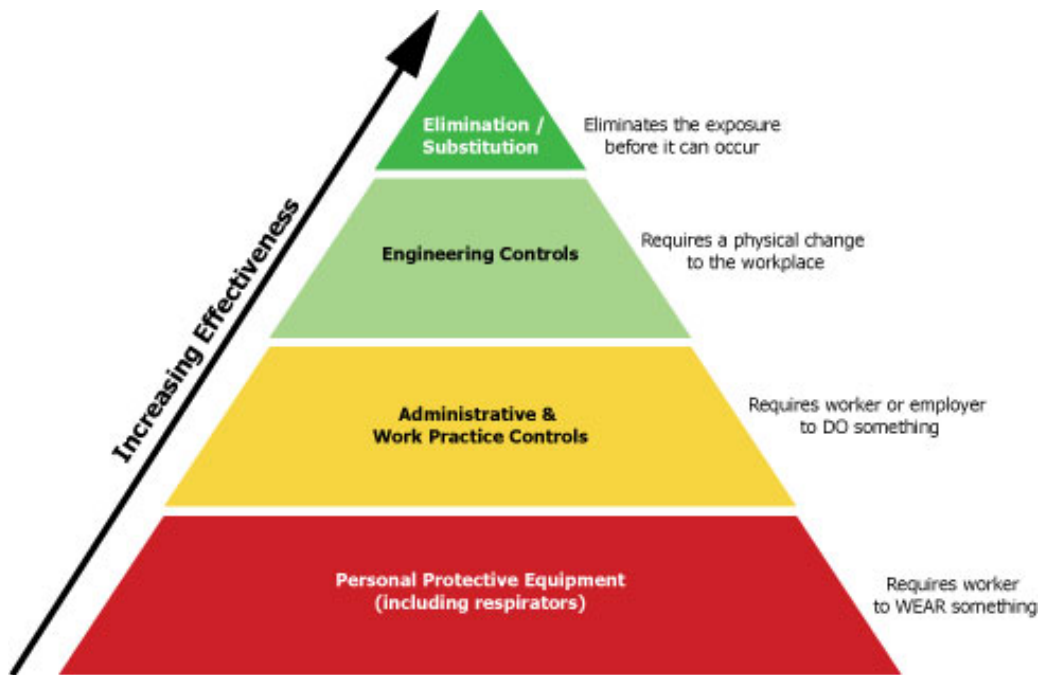
Businesses shall ask customers and the public in general, to wear face coverings any time they are interacting with others from outside their household.

Pre-Entry for Workers

- Establish procedures for building re-entry and occupation.
- Consider pre-screening or surveying of employees prior to allowing them into the facility.
- Strongly encourage masks or cloth face coverings.
- Minimize entry/access into the facility.
- Post signs at designated entry/access points addressing symptoms of COVID-19 and advising people to stay home if sick.
- Post signs addressing required protective gear such as masks, gloves, etc.
- If possible, stagger work shifts. Utilize tele-working to the extent possible.

Have a Plan

Start with assessing the hazards in your workplace. Just as in all other hazards, the "Hierarchy of Controls" is an important concept.

Elimination and Substitution (perform to the extent feasible)

- Tasks should be evaluated for the possibility of working remotely.
- Meetings/conferences and trainings should be done via the internet/virtually.
- Client/patient services should be done via the internet/virtually.
- Employee-to-employee contact should be eliminated by spreading out workstations.
- Employees should be encouraged to stay home if they feel ill in any way.

THIS SHOULD BE UNIFORMLY COMMUNICATED

Engineering Controls

Consider physical barriers to prevent spread. Examples are:

- Workstation barriers.
- Sneeze guards for cashiers.
- Isolation of tasks should be considered where possible.
- Increase ventilation, air exchanges and percent outside air.

Administrative and Work Practice Controls

Work practice controls can be very effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19.
Understand the basic principles of prevention:

Social Distancing

- The **most** effective means of protection from exposure and spread.
- Stay at least 6 feet from others.
- Do not gather in groups.
- Any face-to-face contact less than 6-feet should be done in conjunction with wearing a mask
- Limit close contact (less than 6 feet) to 10 minutes or less.
- Avoid close contact and stay at home as much as possible. Remember some people without symptoms may be able to spread virus.

Personal Cleanliness

- Hand-washing facilities and hand sanitizer must be provided, readily available, and their use must be encouraged.
- Hand washing for all workers regardless of exposure risk is one of the best ways to protect yourself. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching nose, eyes, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol when soap and water are not available.

Work Surface Cleanliness

- Employers should implement protocols for regularly cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces in the work environment.
- Develop and implement a cleaning schedule for all areas of the workplace.
- Frequently disinfect surfaces such as door push bars, shopping carts, points of sale machines, chairs in waiting areas, and other areas that customers, visitors, or workers frequently touch with an EPA-approved disinfectant against COVID-19. See list at https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2).

Employee Training

- Train all workers about the risk of exposure to COVID-19, the sources of exposure to the virus, the hazards associated with that exposure, and appropriate workplace protocols in place to prevent or reduce the likelihood of exposure.
- Train on appropriate ways to prevent or reduce the likelihood of exposure, including use of engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and PPE.
- Training should include information about how to isolate individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or other infectious diseases, and how to report possible cases.
- **Training must be offered during scheduled work times and at no cost to the employee.**

Additional Training

When employees have been out of work for extended periods of time or are new to your worksite, initial and/or refresher training may be needed for the following standards:

- Hazard Communications
- Lockout/Tagout
- Powered Industrial Trucks/Forklift
- Electrical
- Noise
- Permit Required Confined Spaces

Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

Make sure there is a good understanding of what is and what is not considered PPE.
Things that are PPE:

- **Gloves**: Various gloves protect against varying hazards. Most commonly, medical grade Nitrile or latex gloves are used to protect against pathogenic hazards.
- **Masks and Respirators**: Know the difference in masks versus respirators and apply appropriately.
- **Body Protection:** Most often, varying forms of protective suits or gowns are worn to protect from pathogenic hazards. In the case of facilities with direct contact of known or suspected COVID-19 infectious subjects, Tyvek, full-body suits can be worn. However, to be impervious to the maximum of the design, all seams should be sealed.
- **Eye/face protection:** Eye protection should also be worn for those involved in the direct contact of known or suspected COVID-19 infectious subjects. Eye protection should provide side protection at the least. Face shields make excellent protection, especially when used in conjunction with eye protection.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Training

Employees required to wear and use PPE MUST be trained. The training MUST include the following:

- When to use PPE
- What PPE is necessary
- How to properly don (put on) and doff (take off) PPE
- How to properly dispose of or disinfect, inspect for damage, and maintain PPE
- The limitations of the PPE

Applicable OSHA PPE standards

- General Requirement (29 CFR 1910.132)
- Eye and Face Protection (29 CFR 1910.133)
- Hand Protection (29 CFR 1910.138)
- Respiratory Protection (29 CFR 1910.134)

If employers are unable to provide the necessary protections listed, including access to PPE, resuming operations is not recommended.

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