

COVID-19 AND CONTRACTORS

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency identified critical infrastructure employees, including several types of contractors essential for the operation of residences, businesses, and buildings.¹

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided guidance for implementing safe practices for critical infrastructure employees who may have had contact to a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 exposure.²

To help prevent the spread of the virus, employers can ask employees if they have flu-like symptoms.³ Checking employee temperatures is allowed, but be aware that some people with COVID-19 do not have a fever. Respect employee privacy by performing temperature checks in a private area, or ask employees to check their own temperatures. Consider the results of temperature checks confidential. Managers or supervisors should not give medical advice to employees, but can send employees home if they are not feeling well, then follow up about conditions for returning to work.

Service Contractor Job Site

There are many considerations for contractors during service, repair, installation, or construction operations.

- Determine if the scope of work may include contact with others.
- Consider evaluating the job site. Introduce your questions by saying, **“For infection-control purposes, I need to ask you a few questions:”**

YES [] NO [] Have you or any person at the service or repair location had any of the following new symptoms in the last seven days: fever or chills, cough (**either new, or different than your usual cough**), sore throat, shortness of breath, or any other flu-like symptoms?

YES [] NO [] In the past week, have you been in close (less than six feet), prolonged contact (more than three minutes) with someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 without using infection-protection precautions?

- An answer **YES** to **ANY** question during the evaluation is an increased risk. In any case, follow the necessary hygienic practices to help prevent spreading the virus. Inform your client about any necessary protective measures. Review the OSHA guidance for in-home repair services: https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html#repair_services
- For indoor work activities that involve a contractor, property owner, or tenant, all parties should consent to proceed with the work. Document all decisions made about changes to projects with third parties. If you are not sure how to proceed with activities that involve other parties, consult your legal counsel for guidance.
- Have protective gloves, a mask, and other cleaning, sanitizing, or disinfectant materials appropriate for the job.

Construction Contractor⁴

There is no one-size-fits all approach but the following are ideas to consider.

Pre-Shift — Tell everyone, “Stay at home if you are feeling sick!”

Job Site Supervisor/Foreperson:

- Ask workers to self-identify symptoms of fever, coughing, or shortness of breath each day. Employees exhibiting symptoms should be sent home.
- Ask workers if they have had close contact with a COVID-19 positive or person sick with COVID-19.
- Ask workers if they have been directed to self-isolate by a medical professional.
- Screen all visitors to the job site.

[1] <https://www.cisa.gov/publication/guidance-essential-critical-infrastructure-workforce>

[2] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html>

[3] https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/wysk/wysk_ada_rehabilitaion_act_coronavirus.cfm

[4] Presentation, SARS-CoV-2 and the Workplace. Dr. John Howard, NIOSH.

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Temperature Checks

- Temperature screening when working in close contact (confined space or inside an unventilated, closed building) when physical distancing is not possible. Consider no-touch or no-contact thermometers.
- Crew meetings/toolbox talks should be done with a six-foot separation between workers.
- Designate a COVID-19 contact person at every job site.

During Shift — Physical Distancing

- Maintain a minimum six-foot separation while working.
- Identify choke points such as hallways, hoists and elevators, break areas, and buses. Control them to maintain physical distancing.
- Minimize interactions when picking up or delivering equipment or materials.
- Modify work schedules to stagger work, or provide alternating workdays or extra shifts to reduce the total number of employees on a job site at any given time.
- Confined and enclosed spaces like job trailers should be identified, and access should be restricted to essential personnel only. Small enclosed spaces such as toilet or break areas are potential transmission areas and should be treated accordingly. Time spent in these areas should be minimized.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Gloves should always be worn while onsite. The type of glove worn should be appropriate to the task. If gloves are not typically required for the task, then any type of glove is acceptable, including latex gloves. Employees should avoid sharing gloves or any PPE.
- Eye protection should always be worn while onsite.
- If physical distancing is not possible, workers in close contact with each other or working in confined areas should wear appropriate PPE and consider mechanical ventilation.

Hygiene

- Avoid touching face — eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with arm or tissue (then throw tissue away and wash hands).
- Do not share water bottles.
- Entering a machine onsite, wipe it down with disinfectant.

Decontamination — Disinfecting

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds often during the day and at end of the shift.
- Where access to running water is not available, use hand sanitizers with at least 60–70 percent alcohol.
- Each job site should develop cleaning and decontamination procedures covering tools, trailers, gates, equipment, vehicles, door handles, handrails, and portable restrooms at least once a day — or more often if feasible.
- Consider the recommendation for cleaning and disinfection of vehicles for use on mobile equipment.⁵

Additional Information

- CDC main COVID-19 webpage <https://www.cdc.gov/covid19>
- CDC communication factsheets <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>
- OSHA COVID-19 webpage <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>

[5] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html>

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