

COVID-19 Case Response – Updated 03/04/24

The following protocols were developed based on the current information available from the CDC. The outlined steps provide guidance for supervisors and managers to deal with various work scenarios. The Safety and Human Resources Departments should always be contacted and consulted for specific details and direction.

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are a fever, cough, and shortness of breath/difficulty breathing. Other potential symptoms could be chills, fatigue, headache, muscle or body aches, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. The CDC March 1st update brings a unified approach to addressing risks from a range of common respiratory viral illnesses, such as COVID-19, flu, and RSV.

If an employee tests positive for COVID-19 (regardless of vaccination status):

- The employee can return to normal activities when, for at least 24 hours, symptoms are improving overall, and if a fever was present, it has been gone without use of a fever reducing medication.
- Upon returning to normal activities employees are encouraged to take additional prevention strategies for the next 5 days to curb the disease spread, such as: enhancing hygiene practices, wearing a well-fitting mask, and keeping a distance from others.

COVID-19 fundamentals and information:

- Close contact (exposed) is being within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.
- A NAAT (PCR) test is preferred for confirmation. An Antigen (rapid) test is less reliable, especially for people without symptoms. A single rapid test does not rule out infection. A second test should be done at least 48 hours later to confirm the results, or a NAAT test conducted. There are special test protocols for people who have had COVID-19 within 90 days of testing.
- Tools and equipment used by a positive employee should be disinfected, if they will be used in less than 24 hours by another employee.

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick or tested positive:

- Stay home and separate yourself from others in your household. Use a separate bathroom if possible.
- Don't share cups, utensils, towels, TV remotes, etc. with other people in your home.
- Wear a mask whenever you must be around other people or pets inside your home.
- Inform any close contacts, so they can begin the necessary steps noted above.

- Seek emergency medical attention if you have trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or have pale gray or blue colored skin, lips, or nail beds.

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Immediately close off the area used by the infected person.
- All surfaces, tools, equipment, etc. should be cleaned / disinfected if they will be used by another person within a 24 hour period of contact with the infected person.

How to clean and disinfect

- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent / soap and water prior to disinfection.
- A household bleach solution, health care grade disinfectant, or EPA registered household cleaner should be utilized. A 70% alcohol solution could be used on some solid surfaces.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for application, PPE, and proper ventilation. Check the container to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Do not pre-mix household bleach. It should be mixed fresh with clean water before each use.
- Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:
 - 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) of bleach per gallon of water, or 4 teaspoons of bleach per quart of water
 - Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens are expected to be effective against COVID-19, based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method contact time, etc.).
 - For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present, and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces.
 - Contaminated clothing should be removed as soon as possible and laundered. Bleach or a cleaner discussed above should be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions - using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and then dry the items completely.

Personal Protective Equipment / Hand Hygiene

- Cleaning/ disinfecting personnel should wear disposable rubber gloves, a face covering, and safety glasses. A disposal gown or Tyvek suit is an option.
 - Gloves and gear should be compatible with the disinfectant products being used.
 - Additional PPE might be required based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used, and whether there is a risk of a splash.
 - Gloves and gear should be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area. Hands need to be thoroughly washed after glove removal.

- Gloves should be removed after cleaning a room or area occupied by infected individuals. Remember to wash hands immediately after gloves are removed.
- Any breaches in PPE and/or possible contamination (e.g., tear in gloves, splash on skin or eyes) should be immediately reported, and the impacted area thoroughly washed.
- Cleaning personnel should wash their hands often, including immediately after removing gloves, and after contact with an ill person. Hands should be washed with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water is not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol should be used. This should be followed by hand washing as soon as possible.
- Cleaning personnel should be trained on standard preventative measures. This would include proper hand washing, proper use and inspection of PPE, and avoiding touching the eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.