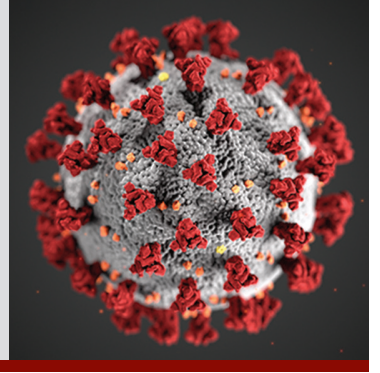


COVID-19 Prevention in the Workplace:

L&I Safety and Health Requirements and Guidance – Detailed



COVID-19 Exposure at Work

COVID-19 is still a serious workplace hazard. It is caused by the coronavirus, and can spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or comes into close personal contact with others. It can also spread when people touch their mouth, nose, or eyes after touching a contaminated surface or object, or from shaking hands with someone else.

The prevention requirements and guidance in this fact sheet can help employers reduce the risk for COVID-19 transmission in workplaces. This information is based on Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) rules, and the policy guidance in *General Coronavirus Prevention Under Stay Home – Stay Healthy Order*, updated in December 2020, at www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-rules/enforcement-policies/DD170.pdf.

In addition, Gov. Jay Inslee on Jan. 5 announced the *Healthy Washington – Roadmap to Recovery Proclamation 20-25.12 et seq.* (www.coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/safe-start) for Washington state to continue reopening some businesses safely and allow essential businesses to continue operating. The roadmap includes guidance on how to reopen and other resources for businesses and workers.

This fact sheet was updated on Feb. 11, 2021. As conditions change, please check for additional updates at www.Lni.wa.gov/CovidSafety.

Educate Workers

Employers must provide basic COVID-19 prevention education to employees in the language(s) they best understand. This includes information about:

- The signs, symptoms, and risk factors associated with COVID-19.
- How to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, including steps being taken in the workplace to establish social distancing, wearing masks, frequent hand washing, and other safety practices.
- The importance of staying at least six feet away from other people.
- Instruction on why and how to wear cloth face coverings, respiratory protection, and personal protective equipment (PPE).
- The importance of washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and not touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands or gloves.
- Instruction on why, when, and how to clean frequently touched or shared items, such as tools, cell phones, and other equipment.

Ways to meet the requirement:

- Communicate daily about safety practices.
- Hang signs or posters in prominent spots in the work site to remind employees, visitors, and customers about your required safety practices (such as social distancing, frequent hand washing, wearing face coverings and required PPE, respiratory etiquette, and illness reporting).
- Display posters or other COVID-19 prevention information from your local public health agency, the Washington State Department of Health



Division of Occupational Safety and Health



www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health



1-800-423-7233



Washington State Department of
Labor & Industries

(DOH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and other health authorities.

- Provide meaningful ways for workers to express their concerns and ideas to improve safety.

Customers and Face Coverings

Face coverings are mandatory in all public spaces in Washington, under an order issued by Gov. Inslee, to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. This means businesses cannot allow customers to enter their premises without wearing face coverings. To comply with the order and to protect workers, employers must, at a minimum:

- Post prominent signs at their entrances reminding customers of the face-covering requirement. Signs should be in the language(s) used by customers of the business.
- Communicate to customers they must wear face coverings to visit the business, under the state order. This might require posting employees at entrances or actively monitoring shared spaces and talking to customers who aren't wearing face coverings.
- Include customer face-covering policies and procedures in their COVID-19 worker safety programs.
- Designate a manager or supervisor to oversee the employer's COVID-19 safety program at each facility while workers are present.

Reasonable Accommodations for Workers with Medical Issues or Disabilities

Employers must ensure that workplaces remain safe and healthy for all, including employees with medical issues or disabilities. This may require employers to adjust rules and practices. In general, employers should follow the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) process at www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/fact-sheet-disability-discrimination.

For some workers, medical issues or disabilities make face coverings unsafe to wear. To be considered exempt from face-covering requirements, employees must provide their employer with an accommodation statement from their health care provider.

The statement must specify that the employee should not wear a face covering because of a health condition or disability. Employers with workers who are unable to wear masks must take alternative steps

to prevent the spread of the virus. For instance, accommodations could include a neck-sealed face shield or hooded, powered air-purifying respirator; both would ensure the workplace is safe for others.

In addition, workers may remove their masks to communicate with people who are deaf or hard of hearing so they can read facial cues or lip-read. When doing so, they must keep at least six feet of distance or a physical barrier between them and the employer must ensure alternative protections are in place to prevent the spread of the virus.

Keep at Least Six Feet Between People

Employers must ensure all employees stay at least six feet away from co-workers and the public. When strict social distancing is not possible for a specific task, other prevention measures **are required**. Those could include physical barriers to block droplets from sneezes and coughs, negative-pressure ventilation, or other measures.

Ways to meet the requirement in indoor work areas:

- Control the number of people entering the building or office.
- Stagger work schedules so workers don't crowd when they arrive at and leave work.
- Move workstations at least six feet apart or use fewer workstations at the same time.
- Move certain tasks or meetings to times and locations with fewer people present.
- Change how work is done to prevent close contact among workers, the public, and others. For example, require one-at-a-time access when transferring items, tools, or materials at designated drop-off and pickup points.
- Use dividers or floor markings to communicate appropriate spacing for people waiting in line or at service counters.
- Designate at least one employee as a "social distance monitor" to ensure distancing practices are consistently followed.

Ways to meet the requirement in break rooms and meeting spaces:

- Stagger break and lunch schedules to minimize occupancy, or limit and monitor occupancy based on the size and layout of the room.
- Hold meetings online, in larger spaces, or outdoors so workers can spread out.

- Set up rooms to facilitate appropriate distancing. For example, provide a limited number of chairs and spread them out.
- Use online meetings, phone calls, and text messaging instead of in-person meetings.

Ways to meet the requirement in mobile or outdoor work areas:

- Have workers take separate vehicles when the passenger space in vans or trucks does not allow for six feet between people.
- Discontinue or reduce in-person visits with clients and customers. Use email, text, and online meetings.
- Arrange for clients and customers to drop off or pick up packages or materials at a location that ensures one-at-a-time access.
- Contact clients to ask about potential COVID-19 symptoms before your employees visit their premises. This helps ensure the worker can use necessary PPE and take other precautions.
- Set up outdoor work and break areas to accommodate social distancing. For example, ensure covered break areas are large enough to allow at least six feet between workers.

Regular and Frequent Cleaning

Employers must:

- Establish a housekeeping schedule that details regular, frequent, and periodic cleaning, depending on how the area is used.
- Wash and rinse visible dirt and debris from equipment, tools, and other items before disinfecting.
- Provide appropriate and adequate supplies for scheduled cleaning, spot cleaning, and cleaning after suspected or confirmed coronavirus cases.
- Ensure floors, counters, workbenches, and other surfaces are regularly cleaned with water and soap or other cleaning liquids to remove dirt and residue that can harbor viruses.
- Make sure high-touch surfaces are properly and frequently disinfected using an Environmental Protection Agency-approved product. See www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19.

- Make sure employees follow effective cleaning procedures and wear gloves and eye-and-face protection (goggles and/or face shields) when mixing, spraying, and wiping with liquid products, such as diluted bleach.
- Make sure shared work-vehicle interiors are cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Cover fabric and rough surfaces with smooth materials so they're easier to clean.
- Make sure Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) for all disinfectants on-site are available to workers.
- Ensure that your chemical hazard communication program under WAC 296-901 Hazard Communication covers disinfectants that you use, and that employees are trained on safe and proper use of the chemicals.
- Make sure workers don't mix chemicals; many are incompatible. Dilute and use chemicals according to the manufacturers' directions.

Hand Washing and Facilities

Employers must require workers to wash their hands frequently. The employer must provide readily available fixed or portable hand washing stations with soap and either hot and cold running water, or tepid running water.

Ways to meet the requirement for all workplaces:

- Provide washing stations for transient outdoor and delivery workers and at nonfixed work sites. Provide portable stations if necessary.
- To facilitate frequent cleaning of hands, provide secondary washing or sanitizing stations with hand sanitizer, wipes, or towelettes.
- Create a schedule to ensure that hand-washing supplies are restocked and trash is emptied.
- Create and implement procedures so workers always wash their hands:
 - When they arrive at work.
 - After touching any surface or tool suspected of being contaminated.
 - Before and after eating, drinking, using the restroom, using tobacco products, and touching their face.
- Employers can provide gloves to workers whose hands are irritated by frequent washing and sanitizing. But gloves must be washed regularly, too.

Procedures for Sick Workers and Those with COVID-19 Symptoms

Employers must have practices in place to:

- Require workers to stay home or go home if they feel or appear sick. Common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Other symptoms include loss of smell and/or taste, body aches, fatigue, and diarrhea.
- Identify, isolate, and send home workers who become ill at work.
- Identify and collect contact information for everyone who had contact with an ill employee for two days before their symptoms began.
- Immediately shut down areas occupied by sick workers to keep others away. Keep those areas closed until they can be cleaned and disinfected.
- Clean and disinfect all surfaces in areas touched by the sick employee, following normal safety procedures if equipment or mechanical systems will be cleaned.

Ways to meet the requirement in all workplaces:

- Monitor employees, contractors, suppliers, customers, and visitors entering the workplace for COVID-19 symptoms. Consider using a touchless thermometer and/or a short questionnaire to identify symptoms.
- Notify employees who had close contact with any sick co-worker at work (without disclosing the person's identity). Inform co-workers about cleaning, disinfecting, and other efforts underway in response to possible exposure.

Get tips on how to screen staff and guests for COVID-19 symptoms in this publication from the Washington State Department of Health at www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Employervisitorscreeningguidance.pdf.

Respirators, Face Coverings, and Face Shields for Workers

Under Gov. Inslee's order, all employees are required to wear face coverings, except when working alone in an office, vehicle, or at a job site when there is no interaction with people.

When the risk of infection is higher, a higher level of protection is required under L&I's *Coronavirus Hazard Considerations for Employers*

(except COVID-19 care in hospitals and clinics) at www.Lni.wa.gov/MaskConsiderations. Employers must also consider whether a higher level of protection is necessary against other airborne contaminants, such as lead or asbestos.

Employers must provide and pay for cloth face coverings, masks, and respirators for employees when their use is required. Employees may choose to wear their own cloth face covering at work, if it meets minimum requirements. See L&I's *Which Mask for Which Task?* at www.Lni.wa.gov/go/F414-168-000 or use the mobile-friendly *eTool Selection Guide for Face Coverings, Masks, and Respirators* at <http://wisha-training.Lni.wa.gov/training/articulate/maskselection/story.html>.

Face shields can be used with cloth face coverings to prevent direct exposure to sneezes or coughs; they also provide splash protection from cleaning chemicals and disinfectants. Cloth face coverings are still required when using face shields.

When respirators approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) are required, consider alternatives to N95 filtering facepiece-style respirators. This helps reserve use of filtering facepiece styles for health care workers and first responders. For example, employers can provide elastomeric (rubber-like) half- or full-facepiece respirators.

When respirators are required, follow L&I's Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) Directive 11.80 and the program requirements in the Respirators Rule (Chapter 296-842 WAC) to ensure proper selection, fit, use, and care.

See the directive at www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-rules/enforcement-policies/DD1180.pdf. See the Respirators Rules at www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-rules/rules-by-chapter/?chapter=842.

Find tips on how to make, properly use, and clean cloth face coverings in guidance from the CDC at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html.

Other Protective Measures

Workers should be trained to avoid touching their mouth, nose, eyes, and nearby surfaces when putting on, using, and removing PPE and masks.

Employers should update their Accident Prevention Program (APP) to include awareness and prevention measures for transmissible diseases and viruses.

Businesses should check with L&I and state and local public health agency websites for coronavirus updates.

Resources

Free safety and health assistance for employers from L&I's Consultation Program
DOSHConsultation@Lni.wa.gov or
www.Lni.wa.gov/DOSHConsultation

DOSH COVID-19 webpage and fact sheets for specific industries. Includes resources from the CDC, DOH, and U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration
www.Lni.wa.gov/CovidSafety

Gov. Inslee's COVID-19 Reopening Guidance for Businesses and Workers
www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources/covid-19-reopening-guidance-businesses-and-workers

Protecting workers from retaliation or discrimination

It is against the law for employers to fire, demote, retaliate, or discriminate against employees for exercising their safety and health rights. Those include the right to:

- Raise safety and health concerns with employers.
- Participate in union activities related to safety and health.
- File safety and health complaints.
- Participate in DOSH investigations.

Workers can file retaliation complaints with DOSH and/or OSHA within 30 days of the alleged incident.

Learn more at www.Lni.wa.gov/WorkplaceDiscrimination

Upon request, foreign language support and formats for persons with disabilities are available. Call 1-800-547-8367. TDD users, call 711. L&I is an equal opportunity employer.