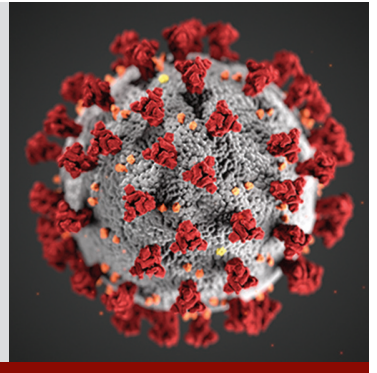


# COVID-19 Prevention in the Workplace:

*L&I Safety and Health Requirements and Guidance – Detailed*



## COVID-19 Exposure at Work

COVID-19 continues to pose a serious workplace hazard for many workers who are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated. It is caused by the coronavirus, and can spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or comes into close personal contact with others who aren't fully vaccinated. 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 who might be infected.

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 on May 21, 2021, and found at [www.Lni.wa.gov/DD170](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/DD170).

In addition, Gov. Jay Inslee on May 21 announced the *Healthy Washington – Roadmap to Recovery Proclamation 20-25.13 et seq.* ([www.coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/safe-start](http://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 June 14, 2021. As conditions change, please check for additional updates at [www.Lni.wa.gov/COVIDSafety](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/COVIDSafety).

## Educate Workers

Employers must continue to provide basic COVID-19 prevention education to all 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, encouraging vaccination, and other safety practices.
- The importance of staying at least six feet away from other people unless fully vaccinated.
- Instruction on why, when, and how to wear cloth face coverings, respiratory protection, and personal protective equipment (PPE) for workers who are not fully vaccinated.
- 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



Division of Occupational Safety and Health



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(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 (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.

## Keep at Least Six Feet Between People

Employers must ensure unvaccinated employees, partially vaccinated employees, and those of unknown vaccination status stay at least six feet away from co-workers and the public.

Fully vaccinated workers are generally no longer required to stay at least six feet away from others at work, except when required by their employer or local health jurisdiction, or when working in the following business categories:

- Health care (including long-term care, doctor's offices, hospitals)
- Public transportation (aircraft, train, road vehicles)
- K-12 schools, childcare facilities, and day camps in locations where children and/or adolescents are present
- Correctional facilities
- Homeless shelters

When strict social distancing is still required, but 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.

## Respirators, Face Coverings, and Face Shields for Workers

Under Gov. Inslee's recent order, employees who are fully vaccinated are no longer required to wear masks (i.e., cloth face coverings, non-cloth disposable masks) or respirators to prevent

COVID-19 unless their employer or local health jurisdiction requires it or they work in one of the business categories listed above.

Masks or respirators are still required for employees who work or travel with others and are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, or of unknown vaccination status.

When required, mask and respirator selection still must be based on the level of:

- Risk for transmission outlined in L&I's Coronavirus Hazard Considerations for Employers (except COVID-19 care in hospitals and clinics) at [www.Lni.wa.gov/MaskConsiderations](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/MaskConsiderations), and
- Protection 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](http://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>.

When cloth face coverings are required, 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/DD1180](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/DD1180). See the Respirators Rules at [www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-rules/rules-by-chapter/?chapter=842](http://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](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html).

## **Reasonable Accommodations for Workers with Medical Issues or Disabilities**

Employers must continue to 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](http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/fact-sheet-disability-discrimination).

For some workers required to wear face coverings, medical issues or disabilities may make face coverings unsafe to wear. To be considered exempt from face-covering requirements, employees required to wear face coverings 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.

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, workers who are not fully vaccinated 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.

In addition, employers may not discharge, permanently replace, or in any manner discriminate against employees who are at high risk of contracting COVID-19 and seeking accommodation that protects them from COVID-19 exposure.

## **Customers and Face Coverings**

Customers are required to wear face coverings unless fully vaccinated or otherwise exempt, as provided in the Department of Health's May 15, 2021, updated

face-covering order ([www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Secretary\\_of\\_Health\\_Order\\_20-03\\_Statewide\\_Face\\_Coverings.pdf](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Secretary_of_Health_Order_20-03_Statewide_Face_Coverings.pdf)).

Businesses must post signage in a prominent location visible to patrons at each entry informing customers of the face-covering requirement.

Businesses can assume that any customer who enters a business without a face covering is fully vaccinated and refrain from inquiring about the customer's vaccination status. Businesses also have the option of choosing to engage with customers who enter a business without wearing a face covering. More information on this option is available at "Updated COVID-19 Facial Covering Guidance for Employers and Business" ([www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/COVID19%20Facial%20Coverings%20Guidance.pdf](http://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/COVID19%20Facial%20Coverings%20Guidance.pdf)).

## Hand Washing and Facilities

Employers must continue to 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.

## Regular and Frequent Cleaning

Employers must continue to:

- 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 cleaned at least daily. Disinfecting using an Environmental Protection Agency-approved product provides additional protection. See [www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19](http://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.

## 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 starting 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.
- Notify all employees and the employees of subcontracted employers of potential exposure to COVID-19.

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](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Employervisitorscreeningguidance.pdf).

## Verification of Workers' Vaccination Status

L&I's guidance on vaccination verification methods are from the perspective of the worker safety and health laws. There may be other laws that apply like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that employers should consider when implementing the verification process.

Employers must first verify employees are fully vaccinated before they reduce social distancing practices for those employees or allow them to stop wearing masks (i.e., cloth-face coverings or non-cloth disposable masks) or respirators for COVID-19 prevention at work.

Employers are not required to verify vaccination status if they choose to maintain physical distancing

and masking for all employees in their workplace(s).

Examples of acceptable verification methods include:

- Creating a log of the names of workers who have been verified as fully vaccinated and the date that the verification was done, OR
- Checking vaccination status each day as workers enter a job site, OR
- Documented worker attestations of vaccination, OR
- Other methods that demonstrate an employer has verified a worker has been fully vaccinated.

Acceptable types of verification of vaccination status are:

- Proof of vaccination such as a CDC vaccination card (or a printed or electronically-stored photo of the card), OR
- Documentation of vaccination from a health care provider or state immunization information system record, OR
- A hard copy or electronically signed self-attestation from the employee.
- Employers do not need to save actual copies of employee vaccination cards.

## Other Protective Measures

Employers should continue to train workers 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](mailto:DOSHConsultation@Lni.wa.gov) or [www.Lni.wa.gov/DOSHConsultation](http://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](http://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](http://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.

This right also applies to employees seeking accommodation due to age or an underlying health condition that puts them at high risk for severe illness as defined by the CDC, from COVID-19. The employer has the right to ask high-risk employees to verify their medical status, but such verification must not disclose any diagnosis or other medical information about the employee.

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](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/WorkplaceDiscrimination)

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