

# COVID-19

## BUSINESS INSIDER

## Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace

**On January 29, 2021, OSHA issued stronger, more detailed guidance – Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace. OSHA is also considering emergency temporary standards, and if deemed necessary, may issue an emergency rule by March 15, 2021.**

**The Guidance is intended for most workplaces outside of healthcare. It creates no new legal obligations and is not currently a standard or regulation. It states employers should implement COVID-19 prevention programs and expands on the components to be included.**

### The elements of the recommended COVID-19 prevention program include:

1. Assignment of a workplace coordinator.
2. Identification of where and how workers might be exposed to COVID-19 at work. This includes a thorough hazard assessment of each work area.
3. Identification of a combination of measures that will limit the potential spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.
  - a. Remote work and flexible/rotating schedules
  - b. Social Distancing (6 foot minimum), barriers and prohibit physical contact
  - c. Wearing a face covering is complementary to and not a replacement for physical distancing
  - d. Increased ventilation
  - e. Increased cleaning and sanitation
  - f. Health screening is not a replacement for face coverings and physical distancing
4. Consideration of protections for workers at higher risk for severe illness through supportive policies and practices which may include remote work or moving to a better ventilated area.
5. Establishment of a system for communicating effectively with workers that enables them to self-report if they are ill or have been exposed, and for the employer to offer notifications.
6. Educating and training workers on COVID-19 policies and procedures using accessible formats and in a language they understand. Minimally include:
  - Socially distance (about 2 arm lengths)
  - Hand wash thoroughly and often
  - Wear 2 layer cloth or surgical face mask fully covering the nose and mouth
7. Instructing workers who are infected or potentially infected to stay home and isolate or quarantine.
8. Minimizing the negative impact of quarantine and isolation of workers.
9. Isolating workers who show symptoms at work.
10. Performing enhanced cleaning and disinfection after people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 have been in the facility.

11. Providing guidance on screening and testing.
12. Recording and reporting COVID-19 infections and deaths as required by the OSH Act and health departments.
13. Implementing protections from retaliation and setting up an anonymous process for workers to voice concerns about COVID-19-related hazards.
14. Making a COVID-19 vaccine or vaccination series available at no cost to eligible employees. Provide information and training on the benefits and safety of vaccinations.
15. Not distinguishing between workers who are vaccinated and those who are not. Workers who are vaccinated must continue to follow protective measures because at this time it has not been determined that COVID-19 vaccines prevent transmission of the virus from person-to-person.
16. Compliance with all applicable OSHA standards. OSHA's general duty clause requires employers to provide their workers with a workplace free from recognized hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm.

**For expanded detail on each of these components, please visit <https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/safework>**

OSHA emphasizes that the CDC estimates that more than fifty percent of the recent spread of COVID-19 is from individuals with no symptoms at the time of spread.

More detail is anticipated along with likely mandatory requirements by OSHA to address COVID-19 in the workplace. Establishing these best practices early is recommended for the safety of employees and toward compliance as rulings unfold. Continue to monitor and follow CDC and OSHA guidance related to COVID-19. In conducting investigations involving COVID-19, OSHA has considered an employer's good faith efforts to comply with safety and health standards and guidance when determining whether it cites a violation.

**Need additional guidance and support?** Please direct any questions to your CoAdvantage Safety Consultant.