

COVID-19 Toolbox Talk

What is COVID-19?



The novel coronavirus, COVID-19 is one of seven types of known human coronaviruses. COVID-19, like the MERS and SARS coronaviruses, likely evolved from a virus previously found in animals. The remaining known coronaviruses cause a significant percentage of colds in adults and children, and these are not a serious threat for otherwise healthy adults.

Patients with confirmed COVID-19 infection have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”), Chinese authorities identified an outbreak caused by a novel—or new—coronavirus. The virus can cause mild to severe respiratory illness. The outbreak began in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, and has spread to a growing number of other countries—including the United States.

COVID-19, like other viruses, can spread between people. Infected people can spread COVID-19 through their respiratory secretions, especially when they cough or sneeze. According to the CDC, spread from person-to-person is most likely among close contacts (about 6 feet). Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, like how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. It is currently unclear if a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.



How is COVID-19 Spread?

In assessing potential hazards, employers should consider whether their workers may encounter someone infected with COVID-19 in the course of their duties. Employers should also determine if workers could be exposed to environments (e.g., worksites) or materials (e.g., laboratory samples, waste) contaminated with the virus.

Depending on the work setting, employers may also rely on identification of sick individuals who have signs, symptoms, and/or a history of travel to COVID-19-affected areas that indicate potential infection with the virus, in order to help identify exposure risks for workers and implement appropriate control measures.

There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features associated with COVID-19, and investigations are ongoing.



COVID-19 Prevention and Work Practice Controls

Worker Responsibilities

- ☑ Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. When soap and running water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand rub with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands that are visibly soiled.
- ☑ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
- ☑ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- ☑ Maintain at least 6 feet of separation from others while in shared spaces.
- ☑ Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- ☑ Employees who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home—DO NOT GO TO WORK.
- ☑ Sick employees should follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.

General Job Site / Office Practices

- ☑ Clean AND disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, hand tools, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs. Dirty surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2 external icon, the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- ☑ Avoid using other employees' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- ☑ Clean and disinfect frequently used tools and equipment on a regular basis.
 - This includes other elements of the jobsite where possible.
 - Employees should regularly do the same in their assigned work areas.
- ☑ Clean shared spaces such as trailers and break/lunchrooms at least once per day.
- ☑ Disinfect shared surfaces (door handles, machinery controls, etc.) on a regular basis.
- ☑ Avoid sharing tools with co-workers if it can be avoided. If not, disinfect before and after each use.
- ☑ Arrange for any portable job site toilets to be cleaned by the leasing company at least twice per week and disinfected on the inside.
- ☑ Any trash collected from the jobsite must be changed frequently by someone wearing gloves.
- ☑ In addition to regular PPE for workers engaged in various tasks (fall protection, hard hats, hearing protection), employers will also provide:
 - Gloves: Gloves should always be worn while on-site. The type of glove worn should be appropriate to the task and compatible to the materials handled during the task. If gloves are not typically required for the task, then any type of glove is acceptable, including latex gloves. Gloves should not be shared.
 - Eye protection: Eye protection should always be worn while on-site.