

COVID-19 - Field Work Precautions



During the COVID-19 pandemic, entities are providing only the most essential services. Those performing essential services are at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19 than those employees who are either working from home or are temporarily furloughed. The health and safety of those employees who provide the services deemed essential must be protected.

In an office setting, this involves proper social distancing, use of PPE as necessary, increased cleaning and sanitation efforts, efforts to minimize the number of employees who must work together, minimizing contact with non-employee visitors, personal hygiene, and employees' self-monitoring for signs and symptoms of illness.

Similar efforts can be made for those employees who must work in the field with some slight changes to fit the particular needs of the work being done. The measures used should be reviewed to ensure they can be readily implemented, provide the level of protection necessary, and will not unnecessarily impede the task or work being performed.

Social Distancing

As much as possible, employees should maintain a separation distance of at least 6 feet. There are, however, many field tasks that require more than one person

to accomplish. In these instances, contact distance should be as far apart as possible and contact time should be as short as possible.

Use of PPE

Employers should check their industry regulations and may be required to select and provide employees with properly fitting and sanitary PPE that will effectively protect them against hazards.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends wearing cloth face covering in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

If a task or work requires an employee to contact or be contacted by a person of unknown health or if the work or task requires touching a surface of unknown sanitary condition, a face mask and disposable gloves should be worn.

All employees must be trained in the proper donning, use, removal, and disposal of single-use gloves. Hands should be washed or sanitized immediately after glove removal. The CDC has resources on using cloth face coverings at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/DIY-cloth-face-covering-instructions.pdf> and removing disposable gloves at <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/poster-how-to-remove-gloves.pdf>

All other PPE normally required to complete a task must still be worn.



SAFETY COMMUNICATION

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Increased Cleaning and Sanitation

Frequent handwashing is one of the best ways to avoid infection with the virus. However, soap and running water are often unavailable in the field. Using hand sanitizer is an acceptable alternative until hands can be washed with soap and running water. The hand sanitizer should contain at least 60% alcohol.

Frequently touched surfaces such as handles, switches, and equipment should be disinfected. Do not forget to disinfect vehicles. Sanitizing can be done by wiping the surface with commercially available wipes or cleaning solutions. For more information on disinfecting surfaces, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's web page, [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#).

Minimizing the Number of Employees

Assign only the minimum number of employees required to complete a task. It may be necessary to delay other work in the immediate vicinity to minimize the number of employees working near each other.

If possible, staggering work shifts may reduce the number of employees working in the area at any time.

To maintain proper social distancing, it is recommended that multiple vehicles be used to transport employees to the work site or allow employees to drive their own vehicles.

Visitors

Unless absolutely necessary for purposes of the work being done, visitors should not be allowed.

Any visitors who are allowed should be asked to maintain a distance of 6 feet when possible. If practical, the work area should be cordoned off and visitors asked to stay outside the work perimeter. Entrance to the work area should be strictly monitored and controlled.

Personal Hygiene

Encourage frequent handwashing and respiratory etiquette. Coughs and sneezes should be covered with the inside of the elbow. Garments that may be contaminated should be washed in hot water. Garments that cannot be hot water washed can be placed in a dryer running on high heat for 15 minutes prior to normal washing.

Health Self-Monitoring

All employees should self-monitor for the symptoms of the COVID-19 infection. These symptoms are cough, fever, fatigue, and difficulty breathing (in severe cases). If these symptoms are present, the employee should stay at home and seek medical care. No employee who shows symptoms should be compelled to come to work. Employers should not ask employees for a doctor's note to be able to use sick leave.

Contracted Work

In most cases, a contractor is required to perform the work under contract in a safe and healthy manner. It falls upon the entity to enforce proper health and safety practices. Any contractor failing to work in a safe and healthy manner can be asked to stop work until the proper health and safety practices are utilized. It is recommended that this matter be discussed with legal counsel prior to demanding a work stoppage.