

HOW TO RESPOND TO POSITIVE COVID-19 IN THE WORKPLACE



The following steps for responding when an employee tests positive for the coronavirus are based on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Guidance for Businesses and Employees.

1

Isolate/Quarantine Infected Employee

Employees who have COVID-19 symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home.

Employees who appear to have symptoms upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, vendors, and visitors, and sent home.

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.

Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow [CDC recommended precautions](#).

The CDC issued new guidelines July 22 recommending that affected employees can return to work and resume other normal activities provided they meet each of these criteria: at least 10 days have passed since they first had symptoms, or 10 days have passed since an initial positive test if they had no symptoms; they have been fever-free for 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen; all other COVID-related symptoms continue to improve.

2

Conduct Contact Tracing to Identify [Exposed Individuals](#)

After learning that one or more employees has been diagnosed with COVID-19, act quickly to have the infected employee identify all other employees and/or third parties who might have been exposed during the infectious period. Ask the infected employee to identify all individuals who fall in the "6-15-48" zone: those who worked in "close proximity" (within six feet) for a prolonged period of time (15 minutes or more) with the infected employee during the 48-hour period before the onset of symptoms.

3

Notify Employees Who Were in Close Proximity to Infected Employee

Under CDC guidance, you should notify all non-critical infrastructure workers who worked in close proximity to the infected employee that they may have been exposed and send them home for 14 days to ensure the infection does not spread. While quarantined, you should instruct employees to self-monitor for symptoms, avoid contact with high-risk individuals, and seek medical attention if symptoms develop. Maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The SIA Group Consulting Team can help with COVID-19 communication templates. A sample message may be:

Someone in our workplace has tested positive for Covid-19, and they have identified you as a close contact according to the CDC definition. We are here to support you. As an immediate response to protect the health and safety of our workforce, we are [notifying all employees/insert preventative action taken, such as temporary closure or other action].

We are also taking the following steps (as applicable):

- [Instituting remote workforce]
- [Sanitizing and closing workplace]
- [Notifying building management]

4

Recording, Reporting, And Investigating Work-Relatedness

OSHA recordkeeping requirements mandate covered employers record certain work-related injuries and illnesses on their OSHA 300 log. OSHA released guidance May 19 that employers are responsible for recording a COVID-19 case if it is confirmed as a COVID-19 illness; is work-related; and involves one or more of the general recording criteria, such as medical treatment beyond first aid or days away from work.

If you make a reasonable and good faith inquiry but cannot determine whether it is more likely than not that exposure in the workplace played a role in the confirmed case of COVID-19, the agency says that you do not need to record the illness.

5

Clean and Disinfect Your Workplace

After a confirmed COVID-19 case, follow the CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting the workplace. The cleaning staff or a third-party sanitation contractor should clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms, and common areas) used by the ill person, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.

If using cleaners other than household cleaners with more frequency than an employee would use at home, ensure workers are trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals used in the workplace and maintain a written program in accordance with OSHA's Hazard Communication standard. Simply download the manufacturer's Safety Data Sheet (SDS) and share with employees as needed, and make sure the cleaners used are on your list of workplace chemicals used as part of a Hazard Communication Program.

6

Determine Eligibility for Paid Time Off

Finally, determine if the employee is eligible for paid time off under company policy, local, state, or federal guidelines. If you are a covered employer under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), the infected employee may be eligible for emergency paid sick leave. Other potentially exposed employees may also be eligible for emergency paid sick leave. Make sure you maintain appropriate documentation for employees on leave.

This an evolving area, with new guidance being issued constantly. SIA Group will continue to monitor the rapidly developing COVID-19 situation and provide updates as appropriate. Make sure you subscribed to our newsletters to get the most up-to-date information. For further information, contact your SIA Group consultant. You can also review our Pandemic Preparedness Resource Center.