

Frequently Asked Questions

Given the evolving nature of the pandemic, OSHA is in the process of reviewing and updating this document. These materials may no longer represent current OSHA recommendations and guidance. For the most up-to-date information, consult **Protecting Workers Guidance**.

OSHA will be updating these FAQs to reflect the requirements of OSHA's COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) for Healthcare (29 CFR 1910.502). In the interim, employers with work settings covered by the ETS should consult the text of the rule and the FAQs on the ETS for information about the OSHA requirements applicable to those settings.

This page includes frequently asked questions (FAQs) and answers related to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. In States with OSHA-approved State Plans, additional guidance, provisions, or requirements may apply. Check here for a list of current State Plans and a link to their website for any additional information: <https://www.osha.gov/stateplans>

Questions are grouped by topic, and cover:

- General Information
- Cleaning and Disinfection
- Cloth Face Coverings
- Construction
- Employer Requirements
- Liability Waivers
- Posting the OSHA 300A or Equivalent Form
- Respirators and Particle Size
- Reporting
- Restrooms and Handwashing Facilities
- Retaliation
- Return to Work
- Testing for COVID-19
- Training
- Vaccine Related
- Worker Protection Concerns

General Information

Where can workers find general information about protecting themselves at work during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Where can employers find general information about, and requirements for, protecting workers during the COVID-19 pandemic?

What precautions should employers in non-healthcare workplaces take to protect workers from COVID-19?

Cleaning and Disinfection

How should I clean and disinfect my workplace?

Is OSHA providing any guidance for companies performing remediation and clean-up efforts in high-risk situations?

Cloth Face Coverings

What are the key differences between cloth face coverings, surgical masks, and respirators?

Cloth face coverings:

- May be commercially produced or improvised (i.e., homemade).
- Are worn in public over the nose and mouth to contain the wearer's potentially infectious respiratory particles produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks and to limit the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), to others.
- ▪ Are not considered personal protective equipment (PPE). ←
- Are not appropriate substitutes for PPE such as respirators (e.g., N95 respirators) or medical face masks (e.g., surgical masks) in workplaces where respirators or face masks are recommended or required to protect the wearer.
- ▪ May be used by almost any worker, although those who have trouble breathing or are otherwise unable to put on or remove a mask without assistance should not wear one. ←
- May be disposable or reusable after proper washing.

Surgical masks:

- Are typically cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as medical devices (though not all devices that look like surgical masks are actually medical-grade, cleared devices).
- Are used to protect workers against splashes and sprays (i.e., droplets) containing potentially infectious materials. In this capacity, surgical masks are considered PPE. Under OSHA's PPE standard (29 CFR 1910.132), employers must provide any necessary PPE at no-cost to workers.¹
- May also be worn to contain the wearer's respiratory particles (e.g., healthcare workers, such as surgeons, wear them to avoid contaminating surgical sites, and dentists and dental hygienists wear them to protect patients).
- May be used by almost anyone.
- Should be properly disposed of after use.

Respirators (e.g., filtering facepieces):

- Are used to prevent workers from inhaling small particles, including airborne transmissible or aerosolized infectious agents.
- Must be provided and used in accordance with OSHA's Respiratory Protection standard (29 CFR 1910.134).
 - Must be certified by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).
 - OSHA has temporarily exercised its enforcement discretion concerning supply shortages of disposable filtering facepiece respirators (FFRs), including as it relates to their extended use or reuse, use beyond their manufacturer's recommended shelf life, use of equipment from certain other countries and jurisdictions, and decontamination.
 - Need proper filter material (e.g., N95 or better) and, other than for loose-fitting powered, air purifying respirators (PAPRs), tight fit (to prevent air leaks).
 - Require proper training, fit testing, availability of appropriate medical evaluations and monitoring, cleaning, and oversight by a knowledgeable staff member.
 - OSHA has temporarily exercised its enforcement discretion concerning annual fit testing requirements in the Respiratory Protection standard (29 CFR 1910.134), as long as employers have made good-faith efforts to comply with the requirements of the standard and to follow the steps outlined in the March 14, 2020, and April 8, 2020, memoranda (as applicable to their industry).
 - When necessary to protect workers, require a respiratory protection program that is compliant with OSHA's Respiratory Protection standard (29 CFR 1910.134). OSHA consultation staff can assist with understanding respiratory protection requirements.
 - FFRs may be used voluntarily, if permitted by the employer. If an employer permits voluntary use of FFRs, employees must receive the information contained in Appendix D of OSHA's Respiratory Protection standard (29 CFR 1910.134).

→ ¹ If surgical masks are being used only as source control—not to protect workers against splashes and sprays (i.e., droplets) containing potentially infectious materials—OSHA's PPE standards do not require employers to provide them to workers. However, the General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, requires each employer to furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm. Control measures may include a combination of engineering and administrative controls, including safe work practices like social distancing. Choosing to ensure use of surgical masks for source control may constitute a feasible means of abatement as part of a control plan designed to address hazards from SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. [Back to Text](#)

Are employers required to provide cloth face coverings to workers?

Should workers wear a cloth face covering while at work, in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendation for all people to do so when in public?

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If workers wear cloth face coverings, do employers still need to ensure social distancing measures in the workplace?

If I wear a reusable cloth face covering, how should I keep it clean?

Are surgical masks or cloth face coverings acceptable respiratory protection in the construction industry, when respirators would be needed but are not available because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Does wearing a medical/surgical mask or cloth face covering cause unsafe oxygen levels or harmful carbon dioxide levels to the wearer?

Since the CDC has determined that some cloth face coverings may both serve as source control and provide some personal protection to the wearer, will OSHA consider them to be personal protective equipment under 29 CFR 1910.132?

Not at this time.

The recent CDC scientific brief shows that some cloth face coverings have the potential to provide personal protective benefits. However, the CDC also noted that additional "research is needed to expand the evidence base for the protective effect of cloth masks and in particular to identify the combinations of materials that maximize both their blocking and filtering effectiveness." Factors such as design, construction, and fabric selection will have a substantial impact on the overall effectiveness of a face covering for personal protection. At this time, OSHA does not think enough information is available to determine whether a particular cloth face covering provides sufficient protection from the hazard of COVID-19 to be personal protective equipment under OSHA's standard (29 CFR 1910.132). OSHA has typically considered protective equipment designed and constructed to meet a recognized consensus standard to meet the requirements of its PPE standards.

Construction

Has OSHA changed its respiratory protection requirements for the construction industry?

Employer Requirements

Which OSHA standards apply to employer protection of workers during the COVID-19 pandemic?

What should an employer do to assess the risk of employees being exposed to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in the workplace?

Has OSHA waived any requirements of its standards in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

In light of some professional organizations' recommendations to suspend certain types of testing required under OSHA standards, what should employers do to remain in compliance?

Liability Waivers

My employer is requiring me to sign a liability waiver upon returning to work. Does this prevent me from filing a complaint about safety, health, or retaliation?

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Posting the OSHA 300A or Equivalent Form

What are the requirements for posting the *OSHA 300-A Summary of Work-related Injuries and Illnesses*?

Respirators and Particle Size

Will an N95 respirator protect the wearer from the virus that causes COVID-19?

Reporting

How do I report the fatality or in-patient hospitalization of an employee with a confirmed, work-related case of COVID-19?

An employee has been hospitalized with a work-related, confirmed case of COVID-19. Do I need to report this in-patient hospitalization to OSHA?

An employee has died of a work-related, confirmed case of COVID-19. Do I need to report this fatality to OSHA?

Restrooms and Handwashing Facilities

Does OSHA require employers to make restrooms and handwashing facilities available to workers?

I work as a delivery driver. Many shippers/receivers have changed their policies regarding driver access to their facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic and have forbidden use of their restrooms. Is there an OSHA requirement that shippers/receivers provide restrooms for truck drivers?

Retaliation

What can I do if my employer fires me or takes other action against me for raising workplace safety and health concerns related to COVID-19?

Return to Work

When can employees who have had COVID-19, or may have had COVID-19, return to work?

Testing for COVID-19

Where can I learn more about COVID-19 testing?

What should employers do when an employee tests positive for COVID-19?

Is an employer required to notify other employees if a worker gets COVID-19 or tests positive COVID-19?

Where can I learn more about what information employers can collect from workers about COVID-19?

Training

What COVID-19 training resources are available for employers?

What topics should employers cover in COVID-19 training for workers?

Can OSHA 10- or 30-hour trainers conduct virtual trainings (e.g., via web conference software)?

Vaccine Related

Are adverse reactions to the COVID-19 vaccine recordable on the OSHA recordkeeping log?

Worker Protection Concerns

What can I do if I believe my employer is not protecting me from exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, on the job?

Can my employer force me to work if I have concerns about COVID-19, including a coworker having tested positive, personal medical concerns, or a high-risk family member living at my home?

Can I file an OSHA complaint?

My workplace is running out of hand soap, wipes, and other sanitation products for workers. What can I do to stay safe?

My workplace does not typically use disinfectants to clean and disinfect our workplace but has implemented those practices in the wake of COVID-19. Are there any rules or guidance about using these types of chemicals (other than following the instructions on the product's label)?

This guidance may not be applicable in State Plans. <https://www.osha.gov/stateplans>. This guidance is not a standard or regulation, and it creates no new legal obligations. It contains recommendations as well as descriptions of mandatory safety and health standards. The recommendations are advisory in nature, informational in content, and are intended to assist employers in providing a safe and healthful workplace. The Occupational Safety and Health Act requires employers to comply with safety and health standards and regulations promulgated by OSHA or by a state with an OSHA-approved state plan. In addition, the Act's General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1), requires employers to provide their employees with a workplace free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm.

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OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH

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