



Interim guidance –

Early return to work for asymptomatic workers in critical infrastructure who are quarantined following COVID-19 exposure

August 18, 2020

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released [guidance](#) that allows asymptomatic workers in critical infrastructure to return to work during their 14-day quarantine period, with certain caveats. Considering this guidance, the Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) recommends that asymptomatic workers ONLY in the following critical infrastructure sectors be allowed to return to work before their quarantine ends, but ONLY when critical staffing shortages, which cannot be otherwise alleviated, pose an immediate risk to public safety:

- Federal, state, & local law enforcement
- 911 call center employees
- Hazardous material responders from government and the private sector.

In order to limit community transmission, ACPHD advises that all close contacts of COVID-19 cases [quarantine](#) themselves for 14 days, and monitor themselves for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during this period. All employers, including those in critical infrastructure, should support their employees' efforts to comply with quarantine instructions by all practical means. Employers should (1) support workers' time away from work for the protection of others through flexible leave policies, (2) provide remote work accommodation whenever possible, and (3) provide information on benefits the worker may be entitled to receive that would make it financially easier to stay at home.

The benefits for workers impacted by COVID-19 include disability insurance, paid or sick leave, disability insurance, and workers' compensation. The California Labor & Workforce Development Agency has summarized these benefits in this [document](#). Additionally, the US Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) has provided relevant COVID-19 guidance that can be accessed [here](#).

Employers should make every effort to maintain critical infrastructure functions with alternative staffing while workers are in quarantine. Quarantined workers should remain in quarantine for as much of the recommended 14-day period as possible. This is especially important for workers who have experienced a household exposure to COVID-19, and for those whose job duties bring them frequently into contact with other employees or the public.



Whenever employers in the above named critical infrastructure sectors are unable to accommodate critical staffing shortages which pose an immediate risk to public safety, they may allow quarantined employees to return to work while exercising all additional [precautions advised by CDC](#). These additional precautions should be observed throughout the 14-day quarantine period. Employees returning to work under these circumstances should also be reminded to follow all applicable ACPHD [quarantine](#) instructions while off duty.

Please note that this guidance does not apply to healthcare workers, including firefighters (who are EMTs), whose return-to-work restrictions are addressed elsewhere. See CDC guidelines for risk [assessment](#) and [mitigation](#) of staffing shortages in health care settings.