



## What to do When an Employee Tests Positive for COVID-19

*Updated on 11/24/2020*

### PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT:

This step-by-step protocol provides guidance to employers when one or more personnel at the workplace tests positive for COVID-19. This protocol applies to employees as well as volunteers, contractors, or other people who work at the worksite. In addition to this protocol, employers must comply with all applicable state and federal laws and any collective bargaining obligations.

### WHEN TO USE THIS PROTOCOL:

If the person diagnosed with COVID-19 ever had symptoms, use this protocol if they were symptomatic while at work or developed symptoms within 48 hours of being at work.

If the person diagnosed with COVID-19 never had symptoms, use this protocol if they tested positive within 48 hours of being at work.

### BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS:

#### Step One: Immediately Separate the Positive Employees from Others

Employees who are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 while in the workplace should immediately be separated from other people (e.g., coworkers, consumers, etc.) and sent home.

#### Step Two: Provide the Positive Employee with Isolation Instructions

In accordance with the [Alameda County COVID-19 Isolation Health Order](#), all individuals who have been diagnosed with or are likely to have COVID-19 must immediately isolate themselves in their home or another residence without leaving their place of isolation, except to receive necessary medical care.

Provide the positive employee with [Home Isolation Instructions](#) and ask that they not return to work until they have consulted a healthcare provider and/or met the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#).

#### Step Three: Identify and Notify Close Contacts within One Business Day of Potential Exposure

If an employer learns that an employee has tested positive for COVID-19, the employer should try to determine which, if any, employees had close contact with the positive employee during the exposure period. All close contacts must be notified, in writing (e.g., letter, email, text message, etc.) within one business day of you learning about the potential exposure.

**Close Contact Definition:** A “close contact” is considered anyone who was within 6-feet of the positive employee for 15 minutes or more. The start of the “exposure period” is defined as 2 days before the person had symptoms (or 2 days before date of first positive test for employees who are asymptomatic). The end of the “exposure period” is the last day the positive person was at work.



If anyone fits this description, please provide them with [COVID-19 Quarantine Instructions](#) and add them to your COVID-19 contact tracing roster. Please be advised that employer must maintain records of notifications for at least 3 years.

**Note:** In accordance with federal and state laws, employers must keep employees' medical information confidential. Do not disclose the identity of the COVID-19 positive employee in your effort to identify close contacts; it is strongly advised that you consult with your attorney if you have any questions about applicable employment or privacy laws.

The State of California's [COVID-19 Employer Playbook](#) provides further guidance on how to notify employees who were potentially exposed in the workplace.

#### **Step Four: Complete the Alameda County Case and Contact Reporting Form**

In accordance with California State guidelines, employers are required to report workplace-related outbreaks to their local health department within 48 hours. The [COVID-19 Workplace Case and Contact Reporting Form](#) should be used to report all cases and contacts of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Please note, in accordance with [HIPAA Privacy and Security Rules](#), all information you provide in this form will remain confidential; the information you provide will not impact immigration status.

**Note:** Long-Term Care Facilities and Children/Youth Congregate Settings should **not** complete the COVID-19 Workplace Case and Contact reporting form.

To report a case of COVID-19 related to a **Long-Term Care Facility** (e.g., skilled nursing, nursing home, etc.), please email [LTCFOutbreak@acgov.org](mailto:LTCFOutbreak@acgov.org).

To report a case of COVID-19 related to a **Children/Youth Congregate Setting** (e.g., school, daycare, camp, etc.), please complete the [COVID-19 Safe Learning Case and Contact Reporting Form](#), and email [SafeLearning@acgov.com](mailto:SafeLearning@acgov.com) with all inquiries related to children/youth congregate settings.

#### **Step Five: Clean and Disinfect**

##### **Before Cleaning and Disinfecting**

In accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), begin by closing off all areas visited by the positive employee(s), if visited within the last 48 hours. If possible, increase air circulation in the area by opening outside doors and windows—use ventilating fans if available. Wait 24 hours, or for as long as feasible, before beginning to clean and disinfect.

##### **Cleaning and Disinfecting**

When ready to clean and disinfect, use an [EPA-certified cleaning agent](#) to clean and disinfect all areas used by the positive employee(s), including workspace, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment (like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines), and all other frequently touched surfaces.



If more than 7 days since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.

### **After Cleaning and Disinfecting**

Once an area has been appropriately cleaned and disinfected, it can be reopened for use. Workers without close contact to the positive employee(s) can return to work immediately after disinfection; continue frequent cleaning and disinfection.

**Note:** Please see [Small Construction Project Safety Protocol](#) (Appendix B-1) and/or [Large Construction Project Safety Protocol](#) (Appendix B-2) for construction site specific cleaning guidance.

### **Step Six: Reiterate Prevention Messages**

Continue to provide the following COVID-19 prevention messages to all employees:

- Social distance by staying 6 feet away from others whenever in a shared space
- Frequently wash hands, or use alcohol-based (at least 60% alcohol) hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available
- Wear a face covering whenever in a shared space
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Stay home when not feeling well or if potentially exposed to COVID-19
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

### **Step Seven: Notify Cal/OSHA of COVID-19 Hospitalizations and Deaths**

Any injury, illness, or death occurring in any place of employment or in connection with any employment must be reported by the employer to the local Cal/OSHA district office immediately. For COVID-19, this includes hospitalizations and deaths among employees, even if work-relatedness is uncertain.

Full details on [what information needs to be reported](#), [contact information for district offices](#), and the [Title 8 section 342 requirement](#) are available online.

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### **ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND SAFETY MEASURES TO CONSIDER:**

Employers have an important role in slowing the community spread of COVID-19 by implementing measures to reduce the risk of workplace exposure. In accordance with [Appendix A](#), [Appendix B-1](#), and/or [Appendix B-2](#), administrative controls, such as remote work and paid sick leave, are important preventive measures for controlling the overall spread of COVID-19.



**Alameda County Health Care Services Agency  
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COVID-19 Information: (510) 268-2101

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Employers should follow [State](#), [Cal/OSHA](#), and [CDC guidance](#) regarding workplace measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19, make reasonable accommodations for people with underlying health conditions, and provide necessary equipment and supplies to prevent illness and injury—including access to cleaning and handwashing supplies and breaks for handwashing, provision of personal protective equipment if required by your industry, and appropriate training.

All employers must comply with guidance issued by the [California Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#), [Local Health Officer Orders](#), and applicable federal, state, and local provisions re: paid sick leave for individuals who cannot safely work for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic.