Workplace Steps to Controlling and Preventing Outbreaks

Alameda County has moved Beyond the Blueprint, but COVID-19 continues to circulate in our community. It is essential that employers respond quickly and effectively to COVID-19 in the workplace. When an outbreak is suspected or confirmed, follow these steps to ensure rapid control and to prevent future transmission.

Controlling COVID-19 in the workplace will help to:

✓ Protect public health and safety
✓ Safeguard the health and well-being of your workers
✓ Promote public confidence in your business as a safe workplace
✓ Maintain usual business operations

### STEP 1: KNOW THE REQUIREMENTS

- Review Cal/OSHA Emergency Temporary Standards (ETS).
  - Specifically, review the FAQs -- pay close attention to any recent updates.
- Review CDPH’s outbreak checklist Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace for Employers Sections 1-6. Quarantine guidance changes frequently and may not be current on the checklist. For the most current quarantine guidance, use ACPHD Quarantine FAQ.
- Visit ACPHD’s Workplace Guidance webpage for local requirements, reporting instructions, and other resources.
- Revisit your COVID-19 Prevention Program to include the latest Cal/OSHA ETS updates.

### STEP 2: TRACK AND REPORT CASES

- Per Assembly Bill 685 (AB 685), effective January 1, 2021 employers are required to report three (3) or more laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases at the same worksite who reside in different households within a 14-day period to the ACPHD. See CDC’s Case Definitions.
- Report to both ACPHD and to the County public health department in which the case(s) reside as required by Cal/OSHA ETS.
- Report to ACPHD through the Cal Connect SPOT portal. If you have not yet done so, you must complete the SPOT Intake Form and follow instructions to register. Once you are registered, enter new cases and contacts within 48 hours.
- The following information is required to be entered in the SPOT portal per AB 685:
  - Name and business address of the worksite
  - Number of cases
  - Names, phone numbers, and occupations of the COVID-19 (+) workers
  - North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code for your worksite. To find your NAICS code search here.
- In accordance with HIPAA Privacy and Security Rules, all information you provide in this form will remain confidential; it will not impact immigration status.
Confirm that Health Officer Isolation Orders have been issued to all existing cases. If new cases are identified, make sure that each impacted staff member receives an isolation order immediately, available in multiple languages on the ACPHD website.

Provide cases with ACPHD Tips “When Can I Leave Isolation”

For guidance and questions, contact your Outbreak Investigator if assigned and/or COVIDOB@acgov.org. If you have urgent need after 5:00 pm weekdays or on the weekend, call Alameda County Fire Dispatch at (925) 422-7595 and ask to speak to the Public Health Duty Officer.

STEP 3: IDENTIFY AND REPORT CLOSE CONTACTS


CLOSE CONTACT:
Cumulative total of ≥15 minutes spent within 6-feet of a COVID-19 infected person over 24-hours during that person’s infectious period even if both people were wearing masks; OR unprotected direct contact with an infected person’s sneeze, saliva, or cough.

- **Infectious period** is defined as 2 days before the start of COVID symptoms through 10 days after symptoms began for those without severe COVID-19 disease. If no symptoms, the infectious period is defined as 2 days prior to the date that the test specimen was collected through 10 days after.

When doing contact tracing in your workplace, remember to:

1. Verify the shifts the cases worked during their infectious period through interviews or by reviewing the employment records.
2. Identify other workers who may have worked closely with the cases during their infectious period.
3. Identify work processes and locations where workers are <6 ft apart for at least 15 minutes.
4. Ask about carpooling or social gatherings outside of the work setting.
5. Consider close contacts that occurred onsite but were unrelated to work duties, especially activities that occurred during break times and in shared spaces. Consider:
   a. How and where do workers take meal breaks?
   b. If workers change into uniforms onsite, how do they avoid crowding?

Unvaccinated staff who meet definition as a close contact to the cases must be excluded from work and quarantine. See definition of close contact above. Issue ACPHD Health Officer Quarantine Order

Fully vaccinated workers who are close contacts are not required to quarantine or be excluded from work as long as they do not have any symptoms, but they should:
   o Monitor closely for symptoms; if symptoms develop, they must immediately leave work, isolate, and contact their health care provider.
   o Wear face coverings and avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces for 14 days following the last date of exposure.
   o Test for COVID-19 between 5 to 7 days after the last exposure and isolate for 10-days if the test is positive.

Any worker who has had a laboratory confirmed COVID-19 (+) diagnosis in the past 90 days and is asymptomatic, does not need to quarantine after a new exposure, but should monitor for symptoms,
### Wear face coverings, and avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces for 14 days following the last date of exposure.

- Follow [ACPHD Quarantine FAQ](https://www.acgov.org/covid19-assets/docs/isolation-quarantine/20-06l-hoo-blanket-quarantine-eng-2021.11.09.pdf) to determine acceptable duration of quarantine.


ACPHD [Health Officer Quarantine Order](https://covid-19.acgov.org/covid19-assets/docs/isolation-quarantine/20-06l-hoo-blanket-quarantine-eng-2021.11.09.pdf) must be issued immediately to all close contacts that are required to quarantine. They are available in multiple languages on the ACPHD website.

### STEP 4: TEST

- View and follow [Cal/OSHA ETS testing requirements](https://www.alamedacounty.gov/Health/Prevent-Disease/Coronavirus/COVID-19/index.htm).

- In the event of an outbreak, Cal/OSHA COVID-19 ETS REQUIRES employers to make regular workplace testing available to employees who were present in exposed work areas within the previous 14 days. Depending on the size of the outbreak, frequency of testing should be at a minimum of 1 to 2 times per week until the outbreak has resolved. Review ETS sections 3205.1 and 3205.2 on responding to outbreaks and consult with ACPHD to determine the necessary frequency of testing.


- Exposed workers who remain asymptomatic and are fully vaccinated may not need to be included in screening testing depending on the size of the outbreak. Consult with yourOI.

- Exposed workers who tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 within the previous 90 days should not be retested unless symptomatic.

- If a worker has symptoms of COVID-19, they should leave work and seek medical evaluation even if fully vaccinated or previously infected with COVID-19. If COVID-19 is suspected, they must follow ACPHD Health Officer Isolation Orders. Such cases require the consultation of a medical provider and ACPHD.

### STEP 5. PROMOTE VACCINATION

Vaccination is a critical tool for protecting workers, businesses, and the public. When all or most of your workers are vaccinated, your facility will be better protected.

You are **REQUIRED** by the ETS to provide information about vaccine effectiveness and how workers can access vaccination.

- Employees should be directed to make appointments at [https://www.primarybio.com/r/alcovax-signup](https://www.primarybio.com/r/alcovax-signup) (in Alameda County) or state-wide at [My Turn](https://www.myturn.ca.gov).

- Support vaccination by allowing workers to go get vaccinated during paid work hours whenever possible.

- It is common to experience low grade symptoms for a day or two after vaccination. Institute permissive sick leave policies.

- Discuss options for setting up a mobile on-site vaccination clinic with your OI. Making vaccinations easy and accessible will increase vaccine acceptance.

- For more information on COVID-19 vaccination go to ACPHD’s [COVID-19 Vaccinations](https://www.acgov.org/health/vaccine) webpage or if you have additional questions email [covax@acgov.org](mailto:covax@acgov.org).

- You should also review [Cal/OSHA requirements for vaccine information and training](https://www.alamedacounty.gov/Health/Prevent-Disease/Coronavirus/COVID-19/index.htm).

For more information check CDC’s [Key Things To Know About COVID-19 Vaccines](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/vaccination.html).

### STEP 6: REVIEW WORKSITE PRACTICES
Per the ETS, conduct a workplace evaluation to identify possible COVID-19 hazards. You should review all relevant policies, procedures, and operations. Identify opportunities for improvement and implement changes that will control and prevent spread.

Review your COVID Prevention Program. Cal/OSHA has a sample plan that you can use and adapt to your operations.

Make sure that you are following all recommended infection control practices and that you have a system for monitoring and reinforcing compliance across your worksite. You should promote appropriate hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and, in some situations, proper PPE use.

Everyone regardless of vaccination status must wear a face covering while indoors in a public setting such as your workplace per Alameda County Health Officer Order No. 21-03 8-3-21.

In addition, CalOSHA ETS has strict requirements for face coverings.
- You must provide workers who are not fully vaccinated with face coverings that are at least 2 layers thick.
- You must monitor to ensure that they are worn over the nose and mouth while indoors except in certain situations (see Cal/OSHA ETS FAQ).
- You must provide face coverings to any worker who requests one regardless of vaccination status.
- You must provide well fitted respirators for voluntary use by workers who work in close proximity to others < 6 foot distance.
- You must evaluate the need for additional PPE like gloves, eye protection, and respiratory protection.
- You must allow workers to wear face coverings if they wish to unless wearing a face covering would create a safety hazard.
- Additionally, you must require that employees wear face coverings indoors regardless of vaccination status per Alameda County Health Officer Order 21-03.

Per the ETS, implement ventilation changes to mechanical ventilation systems including increasing filtration efficiency to at least MERV-13, or the highest efficiency compatible with the ventilation system. Evaluate whether HEPA air filtration units are needed. See CDPH Interim Guidance For Ventilation, Filtration, and Air Quality in Indoor Environments.

Consider instituting stable work cohorts (by shifts, locations, and/or work duties). Do not float staff to different areas of the facility if at all possible.

Pay careful attention to staff break times and locations!
- Stagger break times
- Encourage using outside space for breaks if weather permits
- Encourage staff to use personal vehicles when removing their masks to eat/drink
- If staff must take breaks together indoors, make sure to use a space where people can safely maintain a minimum 6-foot distance and space tables accordingly
- Provide EPA approved disinfectant wipes so that staff can clean between uses
- Provide hand sanitizer or handwashing stations
- Post signage to remind workers to follow prevention practices

Minimize sharing of other equipment between workers; for equipment that must be shared, conduct frequent cleaning between worker use. Workers should not share headsets or other objects that may come into contact with their face, mouth, or nose.

Provide education as well as a plan for monitoring and daily reminders to address gaps in prevention practices.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

View CDC Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities.
When a worker tests COVID-19 (+), close off areas visited by the ill persons and carefully clean and disinfect all areas they touched using EPA approved cleaning agents.

- See [List of EPA approved cleaning agents](#). Pay close attention to dilution instructions and contact time on the product label.
- Wait at least one hour or as long as possible before cleaning or reopening for use.
- Open outside doors and windows and use fans in the area to increase circulation.
- Make sure that staff who are doing the cleaning wear the proper PPE and follow safety instructions.
- Clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, breakrooms and other common areas or shared electronic equipment used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.

If cleaning is performed by staff provided by a contracted agency, it is your responsibility to confirm:

- Use of proper cleaning products, disinfectants, and equipment
- Adequate training has been provided
- Cleaning staff are following all recommended practices

### MONITORING FOR ILLNESS & EXPOSURE

Place signs at all entrances that direct the public not to enter if they are experiencing signs and symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in close contact with a person who tested positive or who has experienced symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days.

Before each shift, preferably before entering the facility, workers should confirm that they have NOT:

- Tested COVID-19 (+) in the past 10 days
- Been in close contact with someone who tested COVID-19 (+) within the last 14 days
- Experienced symptoms suspicious for COVID-19:
  - Fever or chills
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Fatigue
  - Muscle or body aches
  - Headache
  - New loss of taste or smell
  - Sore throat
  - Congestion or runny nose
  - Nausea or vomiting
  - Diarrhea
- Actively encourage workers to self-monitor, to report symptoms immediately, and to NOT report to work if symptoms develop or if they are a close contact to a COVID-19 (+) case.

### WORKER EDUCATION

- Follow [AB 685 notification requirements](#) when there has been a potential exposure.
- Always maintain strict confidentiality regarding the identity of the COVID-19 (+) case(s) in all communications. Avoid messaging that stigmatizes a site or group of people.
- ACPHD has a [list of worker resources](#) that should be shared with affected employees.
- Workers who test COVID-19 (+) and have certain high-risk conditions may qualify for treatment to prevent serious illness. Workers who are close contacts of a COVID-19 case and have a high-risk condition may qualify for postexposure therapy. Share the [ACPHD’s Monoclonal Antibody Treatment flyer](#) with your workers so that they can learn more and, if eligible, get access to treatment that could prevent life-threatening illness.
- Cal/OSHA requires training on COVID-19 related benefit information. See Department of Industrial Relations COVID-19 Resources page for benefits that may be available to employees impacted by COVID-19 including paid sick leave and workers' compensation. It is extremely important that workers are aware of such benefits so that they are more likely to stay home when sick and keep COVID-19 out of the workplace.
- Share information on relevant laws and protections by referring to the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission’s (EEOC) [What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws](#).
**WORKPLACE STEPS TO CONTROLLING OB**

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See [CalOSHA training requirements](#) for further details.

**FOOD FACILITIES**

- Read and follow Alameda County Department of Environmental Health’s [Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) New Guidance for Food Facilities](#).
  - This document provides additional instructions for food facilities to ensure compliance with Alameda County Health Officer Orders.

- Food services facilities may contact Alameda County Department of Environmental Health for additional guidance related to food service by visiting [www.deh.acgov.org](http://www.deh.acgov.org) or call (510) 567-6700.

**TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF OPERATIONS**

- Consider voluntarily suspending all or part of operations when an exposure or outbreak has occurred in the workplace. Temporarily closure can be an invaluable tool that allows:
  - Investigation of the exposure
  - Deep cleaning and disinfection
  - Reviewing, revising, and reinforcing prevention measures

- In order to control an outbreak as soon and effectively as possible, it is critical that management work closely with ACPHD investigators and strictly follow all recommendations.

Keep in mind that under AB 685, Cal/OSHA may:
- Issue an “Order Prohibiting Use” to shut down an entire worksite or a specific worksite area that exposes employees to an imminent hazard related to COVID-19.
- Cite or fine employers for serious violations related to COVID-19 without having to provide 15-days' notice.
- Cite or fine employers for violations of AB 685 worker notification provisions.

**WORKING WITH AN ACPHD OUTBREAK INVESTIGATOR**

If you have an outbreak, you may be eligible for additional support from an ACPHD Outbreak Investigator (OI) who can advise you of requirements and share best practices for containing the outbreak and for preventing recurrence.

For best communication with an OI:

- **Point-of-Contact**
  - Designate a workplace infection prevention coordinator to communicate with the ACPHD OI; implement COVID-19 infection prevention and outbreak control measures; and manage COVID-related issues among workers.

- **Frequency**
  - At least weekly while the outbreak is active

- **Content**
  - You should promptly communicate:
RESOURCES and LINKS

Please review and bookmark these important links. They include national, state, and local guidance and requirements for reopening and management of COVID-19 outbreaks.

Alameda County

COVID-19 Workplace Guidance

- Alameda County COVID-19 Recovery Resources for the Workplace

Isolation & Quarantine

- Health Officer Orders for Isolation and Quarantine
- When Can I Leave Isolation infographic
- How Long Should I Stay in Quarantine FAQ

Available in multiple languages

Food facilities:
Department of Environmental Health COVID-19 New Guidance for Food Facilities

California

California Department of Public Health Safely Reopening California

Cal/OSHA COVID-19 ETS Guidance and Resources
Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Cal/OSHA Sample Model Program](#) – links to fillable document

[AB 685](#) Full Text of Assembly Bill

[SB 95](#) adds additional COVID-19-related benefits and protections including new Supplemental Paid Sick Leave retroactive to January 1, 2021. Information can be found on the [SPSL FAQ](#) and Dept of Industrial Relation’s [information sheet](#).

[California Coronavirus Testing Task Force Home Page](#) – resources for setting up a testing plan in your facility

**United States**

**CDC**

[Workplaces and Businesses, Plan, Prepare, and Respond](#)

[Guidance for Wearing Masks](#)

[Interim Guidance for SARS-CoV-2 Testing in Non-Healthcare Workplaces](#)

[Ventilation in Buildings](#)

**CDC Vaccination**

- Workplace Vaccination Program

- Workplace COVID-19 Vaccination Toolkit

- [Post-vaccination Considerations for Workplaces](#)

**NIOSH**

Hierarchy of Controls can be viewed [here](#).

[Environmental Protection Agency List N: Disinfectants for Coronavirus (COVID-19)](#)

**Department of Labor**
The American Rescue Plan of 2020-21

EEOC

What you Should Know about COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws