

COVID-19 / Frequently Asked Questions

# 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 These materials may no longer represent current OSHA recommendations and guidance.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**.

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
- Healthcare
- Liability Waivers
- Personal Protective Equipment
- 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?

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?

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?

## 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?

## Healthcare

What should healthcare employers do to protect healthcare workers from exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19?

I am a healthcare worker who previously provided direct patient care without a mask. Why do I need one now?

What can I do if I am a healthcare worker whose employer is not adhering to the relevant Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations or OSHA guidelines and requirements to protect workers from exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19?

I am a lab technician, and I work with samples that contain (or may contain) SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. What level of biosafety precautions should I follow?

Does OSHA's guidance for healthcare apply to healthcare provided outside of hospitals?

## 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?

## Personal Protective Equipment

My organization is experiencing a supply shortage of N95 filtering facepiece respirators. What alternatives are available if N95s are required to protect my employees?

## Posting the OSHA 300A or Equivalent Form

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

Must I post the *OSHA 300-A Summary of Work-related Injuries and Illnesses* in my workplace if there are no workers at the site due to COVID-19?

## 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?

If I require my employees to take the COVID-19 vaccine as a condition of their employment, are adverse reactions to the vaccine recordable?

I do not require my employees to get the COVID-19 vaccine. However, I do recommend that they receive the vaccine and may provide it to them or make arrangements for them to receive it offsite. If an employee has an adverse reaction to the vaccine, am I required to record it?

No. Although adverse reactions to *recommended* COVID-19 vaccines may be *recordable* under 29 CFR 1904.4(a) if the reaction is: (1) work-related, (2) a new case, and (3) meets one or more of the general recording criteria in 29 CFR 1904.7, OSHA is exercising its enforcement discretion to only require the recording of adverse effects to *required* vaccines at this time. Therefore, you do not need to record adverse effects from COVID-19 vaccines that you *recommend*, but do not require.

Note that for this discretion to apply, the vaccine must be truly voluntary. For example, an employee's choice to accept or reject the vaccine cannot affect their performance rating or professional advancement. An employee who chooses not to receive the vaccine cannot suffer any repercussions from this choice. If employees are not free to choose whether or not to receive the vaccine without fearing adverse action, then the vaccine is not merely "recommended" and employers should consult the above FAQ regarding COVID-19 vaccines that are a condition of employment.

Note also that the exercise of this discretion is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding OSHA's expectations as to the recording of adverse effects during the health emergency; it does not change any of employers' other responsibilities under OSHA's recordkeeping regulations or any of OSHA's interpretations of those regulations.

Finally, note that this answer applies to a variety of scenarios where employers recommend, but do not require vaccines, including where the employer makes the COVID-19 vaccine available to employees at work, where the employer makes arrangements for employees to receive the vaccine at an offsite location (e.g., pharmacy, hospital, local health department, etc.), and where the employer offer the vaccine as part of a voluntary health and wellness program at my workplace. In other words, the method by which employees might receive a recommended vaccine does not matter for the sake of this question.

## 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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## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Occupational Safety & Health Administration  
200 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20210  
☎ 800-321-6742 (OSHA)  
TTY  
[www.OSHA.gov](http://www.OSHA.gov)

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