

Managing Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in the Workplace



Washtenaw County businesses and entities remaining open must follow the guidelines set forth in the [Washtenaw County Health Officer's April 29, 2020 Order](#) and the Governor's Executive Orders [2020-59](#) and [2020-60](#) to ensure the safety of employees and customers.

Washtenaw County Health Department recommends:

- Screen everyone. Check employees for fever or other symptoms if they will enter facilities or buildings. Use a touchless thermometer, if available.
- Any employee with symptoms must stay home or work remotely.
- Maintain 6 feet of distance between people.
- Emphasize frequent and proper hand washing. Make sure sinks are well supplied.
- Supply masks to all employees. Encourage employees to wear masks, particularly if they will be in close contact with other employees or the public. Cloth masks are acceptable, as surgical masks should be reserved for those in health care.
- Do not share space or equipment. If this is not possible, have employees wash their hands before and after using shared equipment. Clean and sanitize equipment between uses.
- Work remotely whenever possible, particularly if individuals have underlying health conditions.

Do I have to take the temperature of all my employees?

No. We do recommend the use of a touchless thermometer, if available, to screen employees for fever. A fever is considered 100.4°F or above. The person taking the temperature should wear a mask, if the employee is not taking their own temperature.

However, if thermometers are not available, employees can take their own temperature at home or can report if they feel feverish ("subjective fever").

Do my employees have to wear masks at work?

Masks can help prevent asymptomatic people from infecting others. Employers **must** supply masks to all employees. Cloth masks are acceptable, as surgical masks should be reserved for those in health care. Based on current executive orders, there are some situations which require masks:

- Employees working in an enclosed public space **must** wear a mask.
- Employees providing a check out service in a food establishment or pharmacy **must** wear a mask.
- Employees who had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 **should** wear a mask at work for 14 days after last exposure to the person.

For everyone else, we **strongly recommend** that all employees wear masks while at work. Please encourage employees to wear masks, particularly if they will be in contact with other employees or the public, or if they work in areas where 6-foot social distancing is difficult to be maintained. Employers can establish guidelines that require their employees to wear masks.

What should I do if visitors or customers have symptoms of illness, such as coughing or sneezing?

Customers are required to wear a face covering, such as a homemade mask, scarf, bandana, or handkerchief, when in any enclosed public space, if they can medically tolerate one. Encourage employees to wear a cloth mask or face covering.

Employees should follow strict social distancing guidance and maintain at least a 6-foot distance from anyone, especially those who are having symptoms. If your employee must be closer to the customer, advise them to minimize time spent with symptomatic customers to less than 10 minutes, if possible. Be sure to provide the public with tissues and trash receptacles. Have a no-touch hand sanitizer dispenser near customer entrances.

What do I do when my employee shows up to work ill?

If an employee comes to work ill, or becomes ill while at work, they should be directed to go home immediately, even if their symptoms are mild. If they are having trouble breathing or cannot keep fluids down, have them contact their doctor right away.

One of our employees just tested positive for COVID-19. What should I do?

Instruct the employee to stay home and self-isolate. They should not return to work for at least 7 days after symptoms first started **and** 72 hours (3 full days) after fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medicines **and** symptoms have improved, whichever is longer. You could offer telework assignments if the employee is well enough to work.

IMPORTANT: You must protect the confidentiality of your employee. Legally, you cannot identify the employee by name. DO NOT disclose to other staff or third parties the name or other personal or health information of the employee who tested positive for COVID-19.

Thoroughly clean and disinfect equipment and other elements of the work environment of the employee, along with frequently touched surfaces and objects such as doorknobs/push bars, elevator buttons, restroom doors, etc. Use EPA-approved disinfectants and use according to label instructions.

If the employee had been working while ill, identify co-workers and individuals that the employee may have come into close contact with. A close contact is defined as a person who had been within 6 feet of the affected employee for greater than 10 minutes while the employee had symptoms. The exposed co-workers identified as close contacts may continue to work if they do not have symptoms. Instruct them to self-monitor for symptoms. They should wear masks while at work.

If an employee develops symptoms, they should follow the return to work guidelines (7 days after symptoms started and 3 days after fever has resolved and symptoms improved, whichever is longer).

One of our employees has a “suspected” (but unconfirmed) case of COVID-19. What should I do?

You would follow all the same steps outlined above for an employee who tested positive for COVID-19. Identify co-workers and individuals that the employee may have come into close contact with while ill. A close contact is defined as those individuals who had been within 6 feet of the affected employee for greater than 10 minutes while the employee had symptoms. The exposed co-workers identified as close contacts may continue to work if they do not have symptoms. Instruct them to self-monitor for symptoms. They should wear masks while at work.

Thoroughly clean and disinfect equipment and other elements of the work environment of the employee, along with frequently touched surfaces and objects such as doorknobs/push bars, elevator buttons, restroom doors, etc. Use EPA-approved disinfectants and use according to label instructions.

An employee’s family member has a suspected/confirmed case of COVID-19. What should I do?

The employee may continue to work if they do not have symptoms. Instruct the employee to self-monitor for symptoms. The employee should wear a mask while at work. If the employee develops symptoms, they should follow the return to work guidelines (7 days after symptoms started and 3 days after fever has resolved and symptoms improved, whichever is longer).

An employee has reported that they came into contact with someone believed to be positive for COVID-19. What should I do?

Review the nature of the exposure. If the contact occurred within 6 feet of the ill individual for more than 10 minutes, the employee is considered a close contact. The employee may continue to work if they do not have symptoms. Instruct the employee to self-monitor for symptoms. The employee should wear a mask while at work.

If an employee develops symptoms, they should follow the return to work guidelines (7 days after symptoms started and 3 days after fever has resolved and symptoms improved, whichever is longer).

When can my employee come back to work if they had symptoms of illness?

Employees who have been ill with symptoms of an upper respiratory illness [new onset of fever (subjective or temperature of $\geq 100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$ or 37.8°C) OR symptoms of possible COVID-19 (cough OR shortness of breath OR sore throat OR diarrhea)] can return to work 7 days after symptoms started and 72 hours after fever has resolved without the use of fever reducing medications and symptoms improved, whichever is longer.

How do I count the 7 days of isolation or 14 days of quarantine?

For **isolation (sick individual)**, the day the individual first showed symptoms of illness is “Day 0.” Count 7 days past that date for the return-to-work date. Be sure that the employee also has 72 hours (3 full days) of no fever and improved symptoms.

- **Example:** Employee developed fever 4/14/20 (Day 0). Fever went away on its own 4/16/20. Employee has no other symptoms. Employee can return to work 4/22/20 (Day 8, which is 7 full days after illness began and at least 3 days after fever stopped/symptoms improved).

For **quarantine (travel)**, the day the individual returned from travel is “Day 0.” Count 14 days past that date for the return-to-work-date.

- **Example:** Employee returned from Florida on 4/14/20 (Day 0). Employee can return to work 4/29/20 (Day 15, which is 14 full days after exposure).
- **Note:** If the employee develops symptoms while in quarantine, they must then revert to the 7 days past symptoms and 3 days without symptoms to return to work. See isolation example.

Are all employees required to be tested for COVID-19?

No. Essential workers are now part of a prioritization group for testing, but there is no requirement for testing these employees. This prioritization allows essential workers to be tested if supplies and testing capacity are available. Testing availability is still somewhat limited. If workers would like to be tested, they should call testing locations first to see if people without symptoms will be tested.

If an employee doesn't have symptoms but is tested for COVID-19, what do the test results mean?

- **Positive test:** The individual should self-isolate for 10 days from date of test. If no symptoms develop, they can return to work after 10 days. If an employee develops symptoms, they should follow the return to work guidelines (7 days after symptoms started and 3 days after fever has resolved and symptoms improved, whichever is longer).
- **Negative test:** No action is needed. Just remember this is a point in time for the test. The individual could have been recently exposed and tested negative or could become exposed after testing.

What about antibody testing for my employees?

From what we understand at this point, antibody testing is not widely available, and is not recommended to make health-based decisions on an individual basis. Additional studies are needed to understand what antibody level, if any, would mean an individual is “immune” to COVID-19 disease - and for how long that immunity may last. If someone has antibodies, we don't know if that means the person won't get sick if exposed to someone infected with COVID-19. We also don't know if it means they will - or won't - be able to transmit the virus to someone else. Until we better understand the virus, we can't rely on antibody testing to make individual return-to-work decisions.

Why is the quarantine time period different for critical infrastructure workers vs. other workers?

Critical infrastructure workers, due to the nature of their work, are needed to ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, like health care and our food supply. We all depend on these workers. Because of this, critical infrastructure workers may continue to work following travel. However, businesses do not have to adopt the updated quarantine guidance and can continue to practice the 14-day quarantine period.

What is the difference between a “critical infrastructure worker” and one who is not?

Critical infrastructure workers are those where in-person presence is necessary to sustain or protect life. They fall into categories described in the following guidance:

- U.S. Department of Homeland Security [designation of critical infrastructure work](#)
- State of Michigan guidance on the [categories of employees defined as critical infrastructure workers](#)
- The Governor’s [Executive Order 2020-59](#) includes descriptions of critical infrastructure job categories

Examples of critical infrastructure workers include health care workers, food service workers, grocery store workers, and manufacturing workers in a facility that is making critical equipment, to name a few.

Workers who are **not** critical infrastructure workers are those who are necessary to conduct minimum basic operations. The in-person presence of the worker is strictly necessary to allow the business or operation to maintain the value of inventory and equipment, care for animals, ensure security, process transactions (including payroll and employee benefits), or facilitate the ability of other workers to work remotely.

Examples of workers who are not critical infrastructure workers include a security guard at a facility that is closed, or a bookkeeper who needs to be in the office to complete payroll. Also, workers who are allowed to resume operations like landscapers and workers at golf courses are not critical infrastructure workers.

For the most up-to-date guidance for COVID-19, including [detailed instructions on self-isolation and self-quarantine](#), visit the following sources of official information:

- Washtenaw County: [washtenaw.org/COVID19](https://www.washtenaw.org/COVID19)
- Michigan: [michigan.gov/coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus)
- National: [cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)

For questions, contact the Washtenaw County Health Department at L-wchdcontact@washtenaw.org or 734-544-6700.