

# Guidance on Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Many workplaces and communities are preparing for potential impacts related to the coronavirus (COVID-19). Though information about the virus is still evolving, recommendations for preventing its spread remain similar to what is already prescribed for influenza.

## Control and Prevention for Solid Waste Management Workers and Employers

At this time, no special precautions to protect waste workers from COVID-19 are recommended when handling municipal solid waste. Continue to use those precautions already in place to protect workers from the hazards they encounter during their routine job tasks.

Medical waste suspected or known to be contaminated with COVID-19 should be handled like other regulated medical waste. (COVID-19 is not a [Category A](#) infectious substance.) Use approved engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and PPE to prevent worker exposure to medical waste, including sharps and other items that can cause injuries or exposures to infectious materials.

For additional information, consult the [regulated medical waste information](#) in CDC's [guidelines for environmental infection control in healthcare facilities](#).

Source: US OSHA, [osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html#solidwaste](https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html#solidwaste)

COVID-19 is a recordable illness, per OSHA. And it is being called a recognized workplace hazard, which is important to know for your employee communications.

## Recommended Strategies for Employers

Employers and managers are urged to review the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\), February 2020](#). The following strategies are further explained in that guidance document:

- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home
- Separate sick employees
- Emphasize staying home when sick, using proper cough and sneeze etiquette, and proper hand hygiene (Refer to preventative guidance in this flyer)
- Perform routine environmental cleaning in your workplace. Wipe commonly used surfaces like telephones and handles with disinfectants.
- Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps
  - Check the CDC's Traveler's Health Notices for the latest guidance and recommendations.
  - Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of acute respiratory illness before traveling.
  - Ensure employees who become sick while traveling notify their supervisor and promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
  - If outside the US, sick employees should follow company policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider.
- Additional measures in response to currently occurring sporadic importations of the COVID-19
  - Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](#) of their potential exposure.
  - If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](#) of their potential exposure.

# Basic COVID-19 Information

## *How COVID-19 Spreads*

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Source, U.S. CDC, [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html)

## *Symptoms*

Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death for confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Source, U.S. CDC, [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html)

## *Prevention*

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask
  - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
  - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
  - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Source: U.S. CDC, [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html)

Coordination with [state](#), [provincial/territorial](#), and [local](#) health officials is strongly encouraged for all businesses so that timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses in each location where their operations reside. Since the intensity of an outbreak may differ according to geographic location, local health officials will be issuing guidance specific to their communities. For more information about the virus, please visit the [CDC](#), [OSHA](#), [CPHA](#), or [WHO](#).

**KEEPING HANDS CLEAN  
THROUGH IMPROVED HAND  
HYGIENE IS ONE OF THE MOST  
IMPORTANT STEPS WE CAN TAKE  
TO AVOID GETTING SICK AND  
SPREADING GERMS TO OTHERS.**

