

FAQ

COVID-19 Guidelines for Employers

Quick overview of processes related to employees with COVID-19 exposures and illnesses

Note: Please refer to the definitions section of the Cal/OSHA CCR Title 8 3205- COVID Prevention Program (CPP). This document is based on information considered reliable from Cal/OSHA, CDPH, and CDC, but we cannot assure its effectiveness or that all potential exposures are addressed. As directives are updated regularly, this information does not ensure compliance with federal, state, county, or local regulations. Regularly check with these agencies for the latest information. Also, review the Sedgwick COVID-19 Resource page <https://pooling.sedgwick.com/covid-19-resources-page/>.

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FAQs

What if an employee reports COVID-19 symptoms to the employer?

- Send the employee home immediately.
- Ask the employee when the symptoms started.
- Determine the high-risk exposure period (two days before first symptoms until 10 days after symptoms or 24 hours passed with no fever).
- Offer the affected employee a COVID-19 test at no cost to the employee and during working hours.
- Conduct a documented COVID-19 case investigation as directed in your CPP. (See Model COVID-19 Prevention Program – Appendix C)
- During the investigation, determine the workplace conditions that could have contributed to the risk of COVID-19 exposure. Implement corrective actions as needed.

- If an employee requests to file a workers' compensation claim, follow the normal process for filing a claim.

What if an employee reports a positive COVID-19 test to the employer?

- Send the employee home immediately.
- Ask the employee when the symptoms started.
- Determine the high-risk exposure period (two days before first symptoms until 10 days after symptoms or 24 hours passed with no fever) (If the affected employee is asymptomatic, the period would be two days before the positive test and 10 days after).
- Conduct a documented COVID-19 case investigation as directed in your CPP. (See Model COVID-19 Prevention Program – Appendix C)
- Within one business day, notify all employees, and their authorized representative, who were within six-feet of a COVID case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes within any 24-hour period during the high-risk exposure period without revealing the affected employee's name.
- Within one business day, notify any independent contractors or vendors who were within six-feet of a COVID case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes within any 24-hour period during the high-risk exposure period without revealing the affected employee's name.
- During the investigation, determine what workplace conditions could have contributed to the risk of COVID-19 exposure. Implement corrective actions as needed.
- Within three business days of the employer's notice of an employee's positive COVID-19 test, follow the instructions for reporting the positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test to the TPA/Claims Administrator. If an employee requests to file a workers' compensation claim, follow the normal process for filing a claim within five calendar days of the employer's knowledge they are seeking benefits.

When does the employer need to report to the County Health Department?

- Within 48-hours, the County Health Department must be notified when there are three or more positive COVID-19 cases at the same worksite over a 14-day period, unless otherwise directed by the County Health Department.
- Follow the procedures listed in your CPP for multiple COVID-19 infections and outbreaks.

When does the employer contact the third-party claims administrator (TPA)?

- As required by SB 1159, the employer will notify the TPA/Claims Administrator within 3 business days of knowledge an employee has tested positive for COVID-19 with the results of a PCR test.
- Any request for workers' compensation benefits requires the employer to file a claim (utilizing normal reporting processes) within five calendar days of your knowledge they are seeking benefits.

When does the employer contact Cal/OSHA?

- The employer must contact Cal/OSHA within 8 hours' notice of an employee's serious injury or illness in the workplace. This is defined as:
 - Any hospitalization, regardless of length of time, for other than medical observation or diagnostic testing (e.g., admission to a hospital for COVID-19).

- Cal/OSHA does not require notification for any COVID-19 case unless it meets the serious illness standard above.
- For reporting purposes, if the employee became sick at work, it does not matter if the illness is work-related. Employers must report all serious injuries, illnesses, or deaths occurring at work without making a determination about work-relatedness. If a suspected COVID-19 case has not been diagnosed by a licensed health care professional, an employer should still report it to Cal/OSHA if the illness occurred in connection to any employment if it resulted in death or in-patient hospitalization.

Reporting a serious illness is not an admission that the illness is work-related, nor is it an admission of responsibility.

When do we employ contact tracing?

- As a part of the COVID-19 case investigation, use the contact tracing procedures in the CPP to assist with determining who could have had a workplace exposure to the affected employee.

When can an affected employee return to the workplace?

- COVID-19 cases with COVID-19 symptoms will not return to an agency worksite until **all of the following** have occurred:
 - At least 24 hours have passed since a fever of 100.4 or higher has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medications; **and**
 - COVID-19 symptoms have improved; **and**
 - At least 10 days have passed since COVID-19 symptoms first appeared.
- COVID-19 cases who tested positive but never developed COVID-19 symptoms will not return to an agency worksite until a minimum of 10 days have passed since the date of specimen collection for their first positive COVID-19 test.
- A negative COVID-19 test is not required for an employee to return to a worksite.
- If an order to isolate or quarantine an employee is issued by a local or state health official, the employee will not return to work until the period of isolation or quarantine is completed or the order is lifted. If no period was specified, then the period will be 10 days from the time the order to isolate was effective or 14 days from the time the order to quarantine was effective.

How do we handle employees with direct confirmed COVID-19 exposures (in the workplace or not)?

- The agency will exclude employees with COVID-19 exposure from a worksite for 10 days after the last known close contact COVID-19 exposure.
- The agency will allow employees who are able to telework, and are able and available to work, to telework during the isolation or quarantine period. The agency will provide these employees their normal compensation for the work they perform during the isolation or quarantine period.
- If employees are unable to telework during the period of isolation or quarantine, follow the procedures outlined in your CPP.