OSHA’s Updated Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace

Lee Anne Jillings
Director, Directorate of Technical Support and Emergency Management, OSHA
For employers and workers not covered by the OSHA’s COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) to identify COVID-19 exposure risks to workers who are unvaccinated or otherwise at-risk, and to help them take appropriate steps.

The recommendations are advisory in nature and informational in content, and are intended to assist employers in providing a safe and healthful workplace.

OSHA will work with CDC and other federal partners to monitor the need for additional guidance going forward.
Higher Risk Workers and Workplaces

- At-Risk Workers: Some conditions, such as a prior transplant, as well as prolonged use of corticosteroids or other immune-weakening medications, may affect workers’ ability to have a full immune response to vaccination.

- Additional recommendations for workers in high-risk workplaces that create greater risks for unvaccinated or otherwise at-risk workers – because they involve close contact for extended periods of time, or frequent contact with unvaccinated people or people whose vaccination status is not known.
Updated Protecting Workers Guidance - What Workers Need to Know

- Follow recommended precautions and policies at workplace
- Vaccination is the key to multi-layered approach to protection
- Properly wear face covering
- Stay far enough away from other people, ask about possible telework and flexible schedule options
- Participate in training
- Practice good personal hygiene
Employers should engage with workers and their representatives to determine how to implement multi-layered interventions (11 points, highlighted below)

- Grant paid time off for employees to get vaccinated
- Provide unvaccinated and otherwise at-risk workers with face coverings or surgical masks, unless their work task requires a respirator or other PPE.
- Educate and train workers on your COVID-19 policies and procedures using accessible formats and in language they understand.
- Maintain Ventilation Systems.
- Implement protections from retaliation
Appendix: Measures Appropriate for Higher-Risk Workplaces with Mixed-Vaccination Status Workers

- Provide best practices to protect unvaccinated or otherwise at-risk workers at higher-risk workplaces including:
  - Manufacturing
  - Meat and poultry processing
  - High-volume retail and grocery
  - Seafood processing
Heightened risk due to the following types of factors:

- Close contact, Duration of contact, Type of contact

Other distinctive factors including:

- Sharing employer-provided transportation
- Frequent contact with other unvaccinated or otherwise at-risk individuals in community settings in areas with elevated community transmission;
- Communal housing or living quarters onboard vessels with other unvaccinated or otherwise at-risk individuals.
In all higher-risk workplaces where there are unvaccinated or otherwise at-risk workers:

- Stagger break times
- Stagger workers’ arrival and departure times
- Provide visual cues
- Implement strategies (tailored to your workplace) to improve ventilation

In workplaces (or well-defined work areas) with processing or assembly lines:

- Proper spacing of workers
In retail workplaces (or well-defined work areas within retail):

- Suggest masks for unvaccinated (or unknown status) customers and other visitors.
- Consider means of physical distancing from others who are not known to be fully vaccinated.
- Move electronic payment terminal/credit card reader to increase distance between customers and unvaccinated or otherwise at-risk workers.
- Shift primary stocking activities of unvaccinated or otherwise at-risk workers to off-peak or after hours when possible.

Traveling to and from work in employer-provided buses and vans:

- Notify unvaccinated or otherwise at-risk workers of risk and help limit number of workers in on vehicle.
- Make sure all unvaccinated or otherwise at-risk workers sharing a vehicle are wearing appropriate face coverings possible.
OSHA COVID-19 Resources

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

OSHA.gov/coronavirus includes latest information and resources on protecting workers from exposure to COVID-19.

OSHA Requirements

- Regulations
  - NEW Emergency Temporary Standard for Healthcare
  - National Emphasis Program
  - Enforcement
  - Recording and Reporting
    - Reporting and Recording FAQ
    - Workers’ Rights

Guidance

- For Everyone
  - UPDATED Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace
    - Summary
    - Hazard Recognition
    - Control and Prevention
    - By Industry
    - By Topic
    - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Highlights and Tools

- Vaccines.gov
- CDC Coronavirus (COVID-19) Page
- CDC Workplaces and Businesses Page
- Job Accommodation Network (COVID-19)
- OSHA Newsroom
- Archived OSHA Resources

OSHAgov/coronavirus includes latest information and resources on protecting workers from exposure to COVID-19.