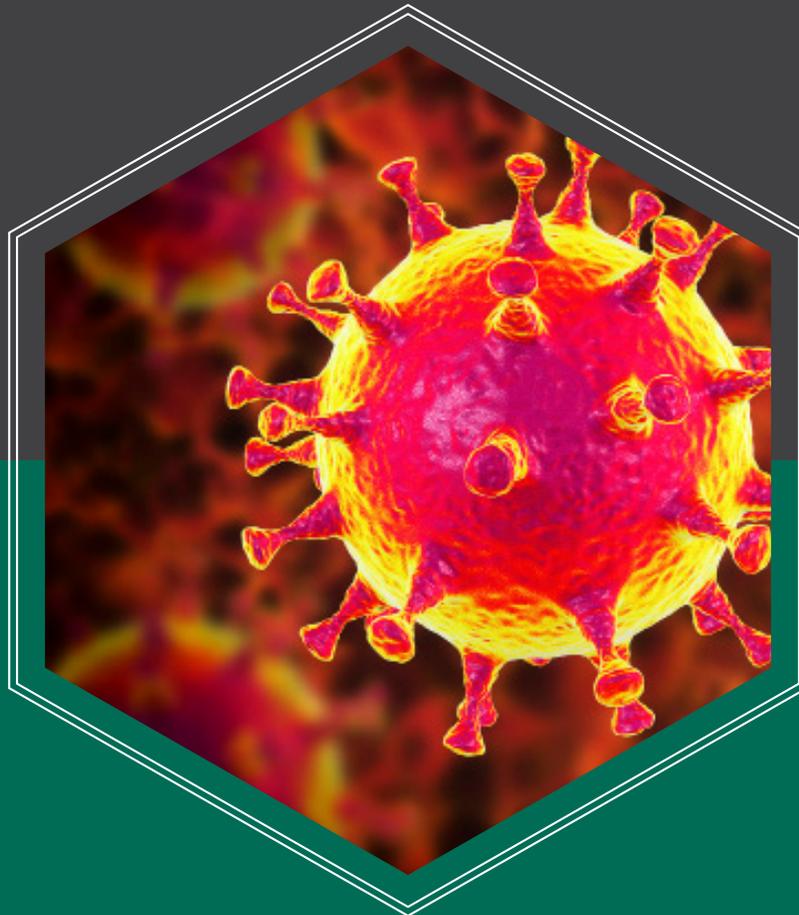




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Workplace Assessment for COVID-19



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The following is a workplace assessment guide that can be used to help non-healthcare sector employers / workplaces develop policies and procedures to prepare and respond to COVID-19. This guide is primarily based off guidelines published by the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC) and the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) (OSHA). The CDC has provided separate guidance for [healthcare settings](#).

This document is divided into the following sections:

- Establish a Pandemic Coordinator, assess exposure risks, monitor and address developments.
- Reduce transmission amongst employees.
- Maintain healthy Business Operations.
- Maintain a healthy work environment through Engineering or Administrative controls, and/or use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Users of this guide should factor in the realization that some elements of their business may encounter higher levels of risk than others. Therefore, resultant actions and policies should be crafted in response to any such variety. We would also encourage consideration of taking steps above and beyond what is recommended here for the identified risk categories – for instance the use of temperature screenings or wearing of face coverings for low risk workers.

1 Establish a Pandemic Coordinator, assess exposure risks, monitor and address developments.

Identify a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 issues and their impact at the workplace.

2 Identify where and how workers might be exposed to COVID-19 at work: Consider where employees and others may come into contact with the COVID-19 virus such as due to the difficulty of maintaining a 6' safe distance from each other and/or coming into contact with surfaces contaminated with the COVID-19 virus.

Examples include:

- Cash register lines
- Time clock areas
- Assembly lines
- Open cubical offices
- Shared rides in company vehicles
- Narrow hallways
- Items in the workplace commonly touched by multiple persons.

3 Reference the brief risk assessment found in this guide, more detailed help in [OSHA 3990 COVID-19 assessment publication](#), and industry specific guidance at the [OSHA COVID-19 website for employers](#).

Some employees may be at [higher risk for serious illness](#), such as [older adults](#) and those with chronic medical conditions. Consider minimizing face-to-face contact between these employees or assign work tasks that allow them to maintain a distance of 6' from other workers, customers and visitors, or to telework if possible.

4 Stay abreast of local, state, and national developments

- Monitor reliable news outlets
- Review resources by organizations such as the [CDC](#), [OSHA](#), [State Health Department](#), local health department, and the [Nebraska Dept. of Labor](#).

5 Notify the local health department about confirmed/suspected COVID-19 cases.

Reduce Transmission Potential Among Employees

6 Educate employees about how they can reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Employees can [take steps to protect themselves](#) at work and at home. Older people and people with serious chronic medical conditions are at [higher risk for complications](#).
- Follow the policies and procedures of your employer related to illness, cleaning and disinfecting, and work meetings and travel.
- Stay home if you are sick, except to get medical care. Learn [what to do if you are sick](#).
- Inform your supervisor if you have a sick family member at home with COVID-19. Learn [what to do if someone in your house is sick](#).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Learn about [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#).
- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs. Dirty surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, use [products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2](#), and are appropriate for the surface.
- Avoid using other employees' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Practice social distancing by avoiding [large gatherings](#) and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet) from others when possible.

7 Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:

- Employees who have [symptoms](#) (i.e., fever, cough, shortness of breath, reduced sense of smell or taste, body aches, chills, etc.) should notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Sick employees should follow [CDC-recommended steps](#). Employees should not return to work until the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#) are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow [CDC recommended precautions](#).

8 Monitor for sick employees/vendors:

- Consider screening employees (and vendors) upon arrival at the facility for fever (>100.4°F) and other [symptoms of COVID-19](#).
- Consider logging only essential screening results (e.g. >100.4°F temperature) otherwise all results tied to a name could be considered confidential medical records.
- Employees who appear to have [symptoms](#) upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home.
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, 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). The employer should instruct fellow employees about how to proceed based on the CDC [Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](#).

9 Maintain Healthy Business Operations

Implement and communicate flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices.

- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees may want to draft non-punitive “emergency sick leave” policies.
- Employers should not require a positive COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider’s note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the [Department of Labor](#) and the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)).
- Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources (if available) and community resources as needed. Employees may need additional social, behavioral, and other services, for example, to cope with the death of a loved one.

Assess for critical infrastructure and company specific essential functions, services, or products.

- Review and follow National Risk Management guidance for [critical infrastructure](#) operations and personnel.
- Identify company specific essential functions, services, or products.
- Consider changing your business practices to maintain critical operations.
- Identify alternate supply chain for critical goods and services.
- Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home.

Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from [childcare programs and K-12 schools](#).

- Plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace.
- Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher than usual absenteeism.
- Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies.
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.

Employers with more than one business location are encouraged to provide local managers with the authority to take appropriate actions outlined in their COVID-19 response plan based on local conditions.

10 **Maintain a Healthy Work Environment**

Establish and reinforce policies and practices for social distancing. Social distancing should be implemented if recommended by state and local health authorities. Social distancing means avoiding [large gatherings](#) and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible (e.g., breakrooms and cafeterias).

Strategies that business could use include:

- Downsizing operations.
- Increasing physical space between employees and customers (e.g., drive through, partitions).
- Limiting number of persons in company vehicles and/or use of face coverings.
- Implementing flexible meeting and travel options (e.g., postpone non-essential meetings or events).
- Delivering services remotely (e.g. phone, video, or web).
- Minimizing close contact with delivery personnel.

Support respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene for employees, customers, and worksite visitors:

- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
- Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. If hands are visibly dirty, soap and water should be chosen over hand sanitizer.
- Place hand sanitizers in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.
- Place posters that encourage [hand hygiene](#) to [help stop the spread](#) at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
- Discourage handshaking – encourage the use of other noncontact greetings.
- Direct employees to visit the [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) and [clean hands webpage](#) for more information.

Perform routine environmental cleaning and disinfection:

- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.
 - Dirty surfaces should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
 - For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available [here](#). Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.
- Ensure workers performing cleaning are trained on the facility's standard operating procedures and on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals used in the workplace in accordance with [OSHA's Hazard Communication standard](#)
- Pool vehicles, tools and equipment disinfected between uses by different individuals.
- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them between uses.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) can be wiped down by employees before each use. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2, the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.

Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility:

- If a sick employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, follow the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#).

Advise employees before traveling to take additional preparations:

- Check the [CDC's Traveler's Health Notices](#) for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from countries with travel advisories, and information for aircrew, can be found on the [CDC website](#).
- Advise employees to [check themselves for symptoms](#) of COVID-19 (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) before starting travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
- If outside the United States, sick employees should follow company policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to assist them with finding an appropriate healthcare provider in that country.

Take care when organizing or attending [meetings and gatherings](#):

- Carefully consider whether travel is necessary.
- Consider using videoconferencing or teleconferencing when possible for work-related meetings and gatherings.
- Consider canceling, adjusting, or postponing large work-related meetings or gatherings that can only occur in-person.
- When videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces.
- In-person meetings that must take place done so with a recorded log of attendees in case contact tracing is needed at a later date.

12 Maintain a healthy work environment through Engineering or Administrative controls, and/or use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

In determining proper precautions and responses, OSHA provides guidance on determining worker and business risk levels. There may be different risk levels for different business operations or worker tasks, and employers should assess accordingly. The levels are as follows:

Risk:	Exposure Level:	Definition and Examples:
Very High	High probability, High Concentration	Jobs or tasks with exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19. Examples include healthcare workers and facilities, laboratory personnel, and morgue workers.
High	High potential probability, any concentration	Jobs or tasks slightly lesser exposure than very high. Examples include healthcare delivery and support staff, medical transport workers, and mortuary workers.
Medium	Moderate probability, any quantity	Frequent and/or close contact with the general public, who may be carriers but are not known positives. Examples include retail sales, schools/teachers, childcare facilities, delivery services, & utility workers.
Low	Low probability, any quantity	Jobs and tasks that do not require contact with known or suspected COVID-19 cases, and jobs with no interaction with the general public. Examples include office workers, manufacturing, warehousing & distribution centers, etc.

Following the preferred hierarchy of controls, here are some recommendations for businesses to follow according to risk levels. NSCN advises employers in the High and Very High risk categories to seek detailed guidance available from the Centers for Disease Control and OSHA.

Engineering Controls:

- **Medium** exposures: employers should consider increasing air changes and ventilation rates in their facilities, if feasible through control of their HVAC systems.
- **Medium** exposures: in addition to the recommendation for low exposures, employers should erect physical barriers, such as plexiglass sneeze guards/personnel barriers placed between employees, between employees and others, to prevent transmission of airborne germs.

Administrative controls:

- **Low** exposure workplaces should still direct their employees to physically distance themselves, following the guidance on page 6 of this document.
- **Low** exposure workplaces should still disinfect and sanitize frequently touched surfaces and items, following the guidance on page 7 of this document.
- **Low** exposure workplaces may still restrict access to break and lunch areas, vending machines, refrigerators, and other “community” areas and items.
- **Medium** exposure workplaces should follow all the above recommendations, and additionally, may consider screening employees, visitors, and vendors prior to entry to the facility (by no-contact temperature screening devices, asking them if they feel well or have any COVID-19 telltale symptoms, etc), as well as establishing single-points of entry and exit.
- **Medium** exposure employers should, where appropriate, limit visitor and customer access to only business-essential personnel.
- **Medium** exposure workplaces should limit face-to-face contact as much as possible, by drive-through operations, text and phone communications, etc.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): All employers, per OSHA requirements, need to conduct a PPE hazard analysis based upon workplace hazards, provide employees with PPE, and train them on required use and protocols. With respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, here are additional recommendations:

- **Low** exposure workplaces do not necessarily need any additional PPE for COVID-19 protection. Employers should allow employees who wish to voluntarily wear masks or gloves to do so.
- **Low** exposure workplaces may choose to require the use of cloth or surgical style masks, although OSHA and the CDC do not make this a requirement. The use of N95 filtering face-piece respirators (or other, higher levels of respiratory protection) is not necessary. Any and all use of respiratory protection should follow the requirements of OSHA 1910.134.
- **Medium** exposure employers should make a determination, by job tasks and exposures, of appropriate PPE. Those employees and tasks which have high interaction with the general public and/or known or suspected COVID-19 cases should require the use of a mask of some sort (cloth, surgical style, or potentially N95 or above respirators), gloves, safety eyewear and/or face shields, and potentially even gowns, dependent upon task exposure.



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www.SafeNebraska.org
402.898.7364
safety@safenebraska.org