



## WORKER HEALTH

### What to Do If an Employee Tests Positive for COVID-19

Currently, no federal or state agency is recommending employers send home all workers who have been exposed to a person who has tested positive for the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). Guidance from federal and state agencies for workers is summarized below:

#### FDA Guidance

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. While the primary responsibility in this instance is to take appropriate actions to protect other workers and people who might have come in contact with the ill employee, facilities should re-double their cleaning and sanitation efforts to control any risks that might be associated with workers who are ill regardless of the type of virus or bacteria. For example, facilities are required to maintain clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces.

#### CDC Guidance

##### **For employees who have been exposed to persons with COVID-19:**

Personnel in critical/essential infrastructure positions (Under the Dept of Homeland Security, food and ag are considered “critical infrastructure”): “Some personnel (e.g., emergency first responders) fill essential (critical) infrastructure roles within communities. Based on the needs of individual jurisdictions, and at the discretion of state or local health authorities, these personnel may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to SARS-CoV-2 (either travel-associated or close contact to a confirmed case), provided they remain asymptomatic.

*Personnel who are permitted to work following an exposure should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer’s occupational health program including taking their temperature before each work shift to ensure they remain afebrile. On days these individuals are scheduled to work, the employer’s occupational health program could consider measuring temperature and assessing symptoms prior to their starting work.”*

##### **For those who have contact with someone who has been exposed to others with COVID-19 —contact of contacts (e.g., your spouse is a caregiver of COVID-19 patients):**

Contacts of asymptomatic people exposed to COVID-19: “CDC does not recommend testing, symptom monitoring or special management for people exposed to asymptomatic people with potential exposures to SARS-CoV-2 (such as in a household), i.e., “contacts of contacts.” These people are **NOT** considered exposed to SARS-CoV-2.

#### CalOSHA

Recommends following CDC’s guidance.

#### **Employee Monitoring**

Monitoring your employees for illness is critical for maintaining a healthy workforce. Based on scientific studies published on the outbreak in China, the percentage of symptoms in COVID-19 patients is:

Fever: 87 – 94%

Cough: 55 – 79%

Fatigue: 23 – 42%

Muscle aches: 15 - 33%

#### **H-2A/Employee Housing**

In the event a worker living in employer-provided housing exhibits symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19, they should be self-isolated pursuant to the CDC or state health department guidance mentioned above. This may include placing the worker in an isolated dwelling unit to the extent feasible. Employers may also consider placing such workers in a hotel or motel. H-2A employers would simply notify the Office of Foreign Labor Certification that the worker was moved to alternative housing due to COVID-19 quarantine measures. The employer is still obligated to provide three meals a day or free and convenient kitchen facilities and a means for the employee to get food and necessary provisions. Employers should always treat such employees with compassion and respect and try to tend to their needs as they convalesce during these difficult circumstances.