COVID-19: Guidance for Critical Infrastructure Workers

This guidance aims to help the most critical workers serving on the front lines to continue working after potential exposure to someone with COVID-19, provided those workers are symptom-free.

Who is a critical infrastructure worker?
Critical infrastructure workers are people working in 16 different sectors including:

- Federal, state, & local law enforcement
- 911 call center employees
- Fusion Center employees
- Hazardous material responders from government and the private sector
- Janitorial staff and other custodial staff
- Workers – including contracted vendors – in food and agriculture, critical manufacturing, informational technology, transportation, energy and government facilities

If You Are an Employer of Critical Infrastructure Workers Exposed to COVID-19

To ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) advises that critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, as long as they don't develop any COVID-19 symptoms and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community.

A potential exposure means being a household contact or having close contact for more than 10 minutes within 6 feet of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. The timeframe for having contact with an individual with COVID-19 includes the period of time of 48 hours before the individual develops symptoms.

Critical infrastructure workers who have had an exposure but don't show symptoms should take the following actions prior to and during their work shift:

- **Pre-Screen:** Employers should measure the employee's temperature and assess symptoms prior to them starting work. Ideally, temperature checks should happen before the individual enters the facility.
- **Regular Monitoring:** As long as the employee doesn't have a temperature or symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program.
- **Wear a Mask:** The employee should wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure. Employers can issue face masks or can approve employees' supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.
- **Social Distance:** The employee should maintain 6 feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit in the workplace.
- **Disinfect and Clean work spaces:** Clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment routinely.

If the employee becomes sick during the day, they should be sent home immediately. Surfaces in their workspace should be cleaned and disinfected. Persons who had contact with the ill employee during the time the employee had symptoms and 2 days prior to symptoms should be notified. Others at the facility with close contact within 6 feet of the employee during this time would be considered exposed.

CDPH
Chicago Department
of Public Health

Employers should implement the recommendations in the [CDPH COVID-19 Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#) to help prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. Additional information about identifying critical infrastructure during COVID-19 can be found on the [DHS CISA website](#) or the CDC's specific [First Responder Guidance page](#).

If You Are a Critical Infrastructure Worker Who Has Been Exposed to COVID-19

How do I know if I was exposed?
You generally need to be in close contact with a sick person to get infected. Close contact includes:
- Living in the same household as a sick person with COVID-19,
- Caring for a sick person with COVID-19,
- Being within 6 feet of a sick person with COVID-19 for about 10 minutes.

What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19 but am not sick?
You should monitor your health for fever, cough, and difficulty breathing during the 14 days after you were last in close contact with a person sick with COVID-19. You can continue to go to work as long as you have no COVID-19 symptoms and only after approval from and under the direction of your employer. If you have any conditions that may increase your risk for a serious illness (age 60 years or over or have underlying medical conditions), contact your health care provider and tell them you were exposed to someone with COVID-19. Apart from providing essential services, you should avoid public places for 14 days. In addition you should take these everyday preventative actions:
- Monitor your symptoms and take your temperature before work.
- Practice enhanced hand hygiene and social distancing as work duties permit. Don't congregate in the break room or other crowded places.
- Wear a face mask or a face covering at all times.
- Minimize close contact to other household members as best you can. Stay in another room, use a separate bathroom, avoid sharing dishes, glasses, towels, or other household items, and clean high touch surfaces and shared spaces every day.
- Stay home if you become sick.

What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19 and get sick?
If you get sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing (even if your symptoms are very mild), you should stay at home and away from other people. If you are at higher risk for a serious illness (age 60 years or over or have underlying medical conditions), call your health care provider. They may decide to evaluate you in person or test you for COVID-19. People who are pregnant should also contact their physician. While the data to-date has not shown that pregnant people are at increased risk of serious illness from COVID-19, they should be monitored since they are known to be at risk with severe viral illness.

If you do not have a high-risk condition and you are mildly ill, you do not need to be evaluated in person and do not need to be tested for COVID-19. Keep in mind that there are currently no medications to treat COVID-19 and you will receive the same advice whether or not you have a test. Most importantly, stay home away from others and do not return to work until:
- at least 7 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared; and,
- at least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since your fever has resolved (i.e., no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications) and your other symptoms have improved.

For example, if you have a fever and coughing for 4 days, you need to stay home 3 more days with no fever for a total of 7 days. Or, if you have a fever and coughing for 5 days, you need to stay home 3 more days with no fever for a total of 8 days. For more information, see [What to do you if you're sick](#).

CDPH
Chicago Department
of Public Health

How can I protect myself from exposure?

- Stay home as much as possible. Practice social distancing in the workplace, at least 6 feet if possible.
- Practice proper hand hygiene. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in public place. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Do not touch your face with unwashed hands. Do not shake hands.
- Wear a cloth face covering in public settings where it's difficult to maintain social distancing.
- If you are sick, stay home except to get medical care. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. If surfaces are dirty, clean them using detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants will work. See CDC's recommendations for household cleaning and disinfection.
- Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of fluids, eat healthy foods, and manage your stress to keep your immunity strong.

How can I reduce stress reactions?

Responding to COVID-19 can take an emotional toll on you. There are things you can do to reduce stress reactions:

- Acknowledge that stress can impact anyone during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Learn the symptoms including physical (fatigue, illness) and mental (fear, withdrawal, guilt).
- Allow time for you and your family to recover from responding to the pandemic.
- Create a menu of personal self-care activities that you enjoy, such as spending time with friends and family, exercising, or reading a book.
- Take a break from media coverage of COVID-19.
- Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed or concerned that COVID-19 is affecting your ability to care for yourself and your family as you did before the outbreak. Call NAMI Chicago Helpline (833-626-4244) or our CDPH MH Centers (312-747-1020) for free telephonic services from a mental health counselor.

CDPH
Chicago Department
of Public Health