



## UWUA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance

*The Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA) issues these recommendations to employers with UWUA members to address Coronavirus (COVID-19) and to protect the safety of our members and the general public that we serve. UWUA members bring essential services to the communities where we work by providing the water, gas and electricity. Therefore, employers must be vigilant in safeguarding UWUA members during the COVID-19 outbreak.*

*These recommendations should be made part of company policies. Moreover, all company directives and policies on COVID-19 must be applicable to contractors and their employees as well. The UWUA requests that employers provide their COVID-19/Pandemic policies to UWUA National Health and Safety Director Scotty Macneill at [John.macneill@uwua.net](mailto:John.macneill@uwua.net). This request is made pursuant to the UWUA's right under the National Labor Relations Act to receive information related to the health and safety of its members.*

### **UWUA Recommendations:**

All UWUA members, non-union company employees and employees of contractors that come into contact with UWUA members should be given a questionnaire regarding coronavirus exposure. If any questions are answered “yes,” then general access should be denied and the employee should be assigned work to a safe and secure area or allowed to work from home.

If a contractor's employee should answer “yes” to any of the questions, he or she should be directed to reschedule work and leave the company premises immediately.

All questionnaires must be kept confidential.

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home. Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness should not report to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), and do not show signs of a fever or any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.

Employers should not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.

Employers should implement flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member.

### **Separate Sick Employees:**

- The CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) when they arrive at work or become sick during the work day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Sick employees should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available).

All UWUA members that are not allowed to work because of exposure to the virus that have COVID-19 symptoms or who need to be away from work to care for an immediate family member with COVID-19 symptoms should suffer no loss of compensation or sick time benefits.

All company employees and employees of contractors should receive information from the CDC and any and all CDC updates related to COVID-19. CDC information shall be posted on company bulletin boards and electronic notifications.

### ***Employers Must Follow OSHA Standards.***

#### **Recording workplace exposures to COVID-19**

OSHA recordkeeping requirements at [29 CFR Part 1904](#) mandate covered employers record certain work-related injuries and illnesses on their OSHA 300 log.

While [29 CFR 1904.5\(b\)\(2\)\(viii\)](#) exempts recording of the common cold and flu, COVID-19 is a recordable illness when a worker is infected on the job.

Visit OSHA's [Injury and Illness Recordkeeping and Reporting Requirements page](#) for more information.

This section highlights OSHA standards and directives (instructions for compliance officers) and other related information that may apply to worker exposure to novel coronavirus, COVID-19.

There is no specific OSHA standard covering COVID-19. However, some OSHA requirements may apply to preventing occupational exposure to COVID-19. Among the most relevant are:

- OSHA's Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) standards (in general industry, [29 CFR 1910 Subpart I](#)), which require using gloves, eye and face protection, and respiratory protection.
  - When respirators are necessary to protect workers, employers must implement a comprehensive respiratory protection program in accordance with the Respiratory Protection standard ([29 CFR 1910.134](#)).
- The General Duty Clause, [Section 5\(a\)\(1\)](#) of the [Occupational Safety and Health \(OSH\) Act of 1970](#), 29 USC 654(a)(1), which requires employers to furnish to each worker “employment and a place of employment, which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm.”

OSHA’s Bloodborne Pathogens standard ([29 CFR 1910.1030](#)) applies to occupational exposure to human blood and other potentially infectious materials that typically do not include respiratory secretions that may transmit COVID-19. However, the provisions of the standard offer a framework that may help control some sources of the virus, including exposures to [body fluids](#) (e.g., respiratory secretions) not covered by the standard.

**State Standards**

There are twenty-eight [OSHA-approved State Plans](#), operating state-wide occupational safety and health programs. State Plans are required to have standards and enforcement programs that are at least as effective as OSHA's and may have different or more stringent requirements.

The California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) [Aerosol Transmissible Diseases \(ATD\)](#) standard is aimed at preventing worker illness from infectious diseases that can be transmitted by inhaling air that contains viruses (including COVID-19), bacteria or other disease-causing organisms. While the Cal/OSHA ATD standard is only mandatory for certain healthcare employers in California, it may provide useful guidance for protecting other workers exposed to COVID-19.

Employers must also protect their workers from exposure to [hazardous chemicals used for cleaning and disinfection](#). Employers should be aware that common sanitizers and sterilizers could contain hazardous chemicals. Where workers are exposed to hazardous chemicals, employers must comply with OSHA's Hazard Communication standard (in general industry, [29 CFR 1910.1200](#)), Personal Protective Equipment standards (in general industry [29 CFR 1910 Subpart I](#)) and other applicable OSHA chemical standards. OSHA provides information about hazardous chemicals used in hospitals in the [Housekeeping section](#) of its [Hospital eTool](#).

**Other Relevant OSHA Standards**

Depending on the specific work task, setting, and exposure to other biological or chemical agents, additional OSHA requirements that may apply include:

<b>Recordkeeping and Reporting Occupational Injuries and Illness (29 CFR 1904)</b>		<b>Related Information</b>
<a href="#">29 CFR 1904</a> – Recording and Reporting Occupational Injuries and Illness		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">Topic Page</a></li> </ul>
<b>General Industry (29 CFR 1910)</b>		<b>Related Information</b>
<a href="#">1910 Subpart I</a> – Personal Protective Equipment	<a href="#">1910.132</a> , General requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">Directives</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Federal Register notices</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Letters of interpretation</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Settlement agreements</a></li> </ul>

<b>General Industry (29 CFR 1910)</b>	<b>Related Information</b>
	<p data-bbox="526 302 967 338">1910.133, Eye and face protection</p> <ul data-bbox="1029 302 1390 457" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1029 302 1227 338">▪ Topic Page</li> <li data-bbox="1029 344 1211 380">▪ Directives</li> <li data-bbox="1029 386 1390 422">▪ Federal Register notices</li> <li data-bbox="1029 428 1390 457">▪ Letters of interpretation</li> </ul>
	<p data-bbox="526 518 951 554">1910.134, Respiratory protection</p> <ul data-bbox="1029 518 1390 716" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1029 518 1227 554">▪ Topic Page</li> <li data-bbox="1029 560 1211 596">▪ Directives</li> <li data-bbox="1029 602 1390 638">▪ Federal Register notices</li> <li data-bbox="1029 644 1390 680">▪ Letters of interpretation</li> <li data-bbox="1029 686 1373 716">▪ Settlement agreements</li> </ul>
	<p data-bbox="526 777 870 812">1910.138, Hand protection</p> <ul data-bbox="1029 777 1390 890" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1029 777 1211 812">▪ Directives</li> <li data-bbox="1029 819 1390 854">▪ Federal Register notices</li> <li data-bbox="1029 861 1390 890">▪ Letters of interpretation</li> </ul>
<p data-bbox="206 953 461 1066">Subpart J – General Environmental Controls</p>	<p data-bbox="526 953 792 989">1910.141, Sanitation</p> <ul data-bbox="1029 953 1390 1024" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1029 953 1390 989">▪ Federal Register notices</li> <li data-bbox="1029 995 1390 1024">▪ Letters of interpretation</li> </ul>
<p data-bbox="206 1096 496 1167">Subpart Z – Toxic and Hazardous Substances</p>	<ul data-bbox="1029 1096 1227 1131" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1029 1096 1227 1131">▪ Topic page</li> </ul>
	<p data-bbox="526 1197 1008 1268">1910.1020, Access to employee exposure and medical records</p> <ul data-bbox="1029 1197 1390 1310" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1029 1197 1211 1232">▪ Directives</li> <li data-bbox="1029 1239 1390 1274">▪ Federal Register notices</li> <li data-bbox="1029 1281 1390 1310">▪ Letters of interpretation</li> </ul>
	<p data-bbox="526 1373 967 1409">1910.1030, Bloodborne pathogens</p> <ul data-bbox="1029 1373 1390 1528" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1029 1373 1227 1409">▪ Topic Page</li> <li data-bbox="1029 1415 1211 1451">▪ Directives</li> <li data-bbox="1029 1457 1390 1493">▪ Federal Register notices</li> <li data-bbox="1029 1499 1390 1528">▪ Letters of interpretation</li> </ul>
	<p data-bbox="526 1589 979 1625">1910.1200, Hazard communication</p> <ul data-bbox="1029 1589 1419 1862" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1029 1589 1227 1625">▪ Topic Page</li> <li data-bbox="1029 1631 1419 1667">▪ Congressional testimonies</li> <li data-bbox="1029 1673 1211 1709">▪ Directives</li> <li data-bbox="1029 1715 1390 1751">▪ Federal Register notices</li> <li data-bbox="1029 1757 1390 1793">▪ Letters of interpretation</li> <li data-bbox="1029 1799 1419 1862">▪ Memorandums of understanding</li> </ul>

General Industry (29 CFR 1910)	Related Information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">Settlement agreements</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">1910.1450, Occupational exposure to hazardous chemicals in laboratories</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Directives</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Federal Register notices</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Letters of interpretation</a></li> </ul>

### **How COVID-19 Spreads**

COVID-19 is a new disease and we are still learning how it spreads, the severity of illness it causes, and to what extent it may spread in the United States.

The following is what we know now:

- The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- It also spreads through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
- It may also may be possible to spread the virus before people show symptoms. There have been reports of this occurring with the COVID-19, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.
- It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.
- How easily a virus spreads from person-to-person can vary. Some viruses are highly contagious, like measles, while other viruses do not spread as easily. Another factor is whether the spread is sustained, spreading continually without stopping.
- The virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be spreading easily and sustainably in the community<sup>10</sup> (“community spread”) in some affected [geographic areas](#).
- Community spread means people have been infected with the virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected.