This information is provided free of charge by the Department of Industrial Relations from its web site at www.dir.ca.gov. These regulations are for the convenience of the user and no representation or warranty is made that the information is current or accurate. See full disclaimer at https://www.dir.ca.gov/od_pub/disclaimer.html.

§3205. COVID-19 Prevention.

(a) Scope.

(1) This section shall apply until February 3, 2025, except for the recordkeeping subsection 3205(j), which shall apply until February 3, 2026.

(2) This section applies to all employees and places of employment, with the following exceptions:

(A) Work locations with one employee who does not have contact with other persons.

(B) Employees working from home.

(C) Employees with occupational exposure as defined by section 5199, when covered by that section.

(D) Employees teleworking from a location of the employee's choice, which is not under the control of the employer.

(3) Nothing in this section or sections 3205.1 through 3205.3 is intended to limit more protective or stringent state or local health department orders or guidance.

(b) Definitions. The following definitions apply to this section and to sections 3205.1 through 3205.3.

(1) “Close contact” means the following, unless otherwise defined by regulation or order of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), in which case the CDPH definition shall apply:

(A) In indoor spaces of 400,000 or fewer cubic feet per floor, a close contact is defined as sharing the same indoor airspace as a COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during the COVID-19 case's infectious period, as defined by this section, regardless of the use of face coverings.

(B) In indoor spaces of greater than 400,000 cubic feet per floor, a close contact is defined as being within six feet of the COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during the COVID-19 case's infectious period, as defined by this section, regardless of the use of face coverings.

(C) Offices, suites, rooms, waiting areas, break or eating areas, bathrooms, or other spaces that are separated by floor-to-ceiling walls shall be considered distinct indoor spaces.

Exception: Employees have not had a close contact if they wore a respirator required by the employer and used in compliance with section 5144 whenever they would otherwise have had a close contact under subsections 3205(b)(1)(A) or (b)(1)(B).

(2) “COVID-19” (Coronavirus Disease 2019) means the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2).

(3) “COVID-19 case” means a person who:

(A) Has a positive COVID-19 test; or

(B) Has a positive COVID-19 diagnosis from a licensed health care provider; or

(C) Is subject to a COVID-19-related order to isolate issued by a local or state health official; or

(D) Has died due to COVID-19, in the determination of a local health department or per inclusion in the COVID-19 statistics of a county.

(4) “COVID-19 hazard” means potentially infectious material that may contain SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Potentially infectious materials include airborne droplets, small particle aerosols, and airborne droplet nuclei, which most commonly result from a person or persons exhaling, talking or vocalizing, coughing, or sneezing, or from procedures performed on persons which may aerosolize saliva or respiratory tract fluids.

(5) “COVID-19 symptoms” means fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea, unless a licensed health care professional determines the person's symptoms were caused by a known condition other than COVID-19.

(6) “COVID-19 test” means a test for SARS-CoV-2 that is:

(A) Cleared, approved, or authorized, including in an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to detect current infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus (e.g., a viral test); and

(B) Administered in accordance with the authorized instructions.

(C) To meet the return to work criteria set forth in subsection 3205(c)(5), a COVID-19 test may be both self-administered and self-read only if another means of independent verification of the results can be provided (e.g., a time-stamped photograph of the results).

(7) “Exposed group” means all employees at a work location, working area, or a common area at work, within employer-provided transportation covered by section 3205.3, or residing within housing covered by section 3205.2, where an employee COVID-19 case was present at any time during the infectious period. A common area at work includes bathrooms, walkways, hallways, aisles, break or eating areas, and waiting areas. The following exceptions apply:

(A) For the purpose of determining the exposed group, a place where persons momentarily pass through, without congregating, is not a work location, working area, or a common area at work.

(B) If the COVID-19 case was part of a distinct group of employees who are not present at the workplace at the same time as other employees, for instance a work crew or shift that does not overlap with another work crew or shift, only employees within that distinct group are part of the exposed group.

(C) If the COVID-19 case visited a work location, working area, or a common area at work for less than 15 minutes during the infectious period, and the COVID-19 case was wearing a face covering during the entire visit, other people at the work location, working area, or common area are not part of the exposed group.

Note: An exposed group may include the employees of more than one employer. See Labor Code sections 6303 and 6304.1.

(8) “Face covering” means a surgical mask, a medical procedure mask, a respirator worn voluntarily, or a tightly woven fabric or non-woven material of at least two layers that completely covers the nose and mouth and is secured to the head with ties, ear loops, or elastic bands that go behind the head. If gaiters are worn, they shall have two layers of fabric or be folded to make two layers. A face covering is a solid piece of material without slits, visible holes, or punctures, and must fit snugly over the nose, mouth, and chin with no large gaps on the outside of the face. A face covering does not include a scarf, ski mask, balaclava, bandana, turtleneck, collar, or single layer of fabric.

This definition includes clear face coverings or cloth face coverings with a clear plastic panel that otherwise meet this definition and which may be used to facilitate communication with people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing or others who need to see a speaker's mouth or facial expressions to understand speech or sign language respectively.

(9) “Infectious period” means the following time period, unless otherwise defined by CDPH regulation or order, in which case the CDPH definition shall apply:

(A) For COVID-19 cases who develop COVID-19 symptoms, from two days before the date of symptom onset until :

(1) Ten days have passed after symptoms first appeared, or through day five if testing negative on day five or later; and

(2) Twenty-four hours have passed with no fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications, and symptoms have improved.

(B) For COVID-19 cases who never develop COVID-19 symptoms, from two days before the positive specimen collection date through 10 days (or through day five if testing negative on day five or later) after the date on which the specimen for their first positive test for COVID-19 was collected.

(10) “Respirator” means a respiratory protection device approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to protect the wearer from particulate matter, such as an N95 filtering facepiece respirator.

(11) “Returned case” means a COVID-19 case who was excluded from work but returned pursuant to subsection 3205(c)(5)(A) and did not develop any COVID-19 symptoms after returning. A person shall only be considered a returned case for 30 days after the initial onset of COVID-19 symptoms or, if the person never developed COVID-19 symptoms, for 30 days after the first positive test. If a period of other than 30 days is required by a CDPH regulation or order, that period shall apply.

(12) “Worksite,” for the limited purposes of this section and section 3205.1, means the building, store, facility, agricultural field, or other location where a COVID-19 case was present during the infectious period. It does not apply to buildings, floors, or other locations of the employer that a COVID-19 case did not enter.

(c) Application of section 3203. COVID-19 is a workplace hazard and shall be addressed under section 3203, which requires employers to establish, implement, and maintain an effective Injury and Illness Prevention Program. The employer's COVID-19 procedures shall either be addressed in the written Injury and Illness Prevention Program or maintained in a separate document.

(1) When determining measures to prevent COVID-19 transmission and to identify and correct COVID-19 hazards, employers shall consider all persons to be potentially infectious, regardless of symptoms, vaccination status, or negative COVID-19 test results.

(2) When determining measures to prevent COVID-19 transmission and to identify and correct COVID-19 hazards, employers shall review applicable orders and guidance related to COVID-19 from the State of California and the local health department with jurisdiction over the workplace and shall treat COVID-19 as an airborne infectious disease. COVID-19 prevention controls include remote work, physical distancing, reducing the density of people indoors, moving indoor tasks outdoors, implementing separate shifts and/or break times, restricting access to the work area, and other prevention measures, in addition to the requirements of this section.

(3) Employees shall receive training regarding COVID-19 in accordance with subsection 3203(a)(7).

(4) The employer's procedure to investigate COVID-19 illness at the workplace, as required by subsection 3203(a)(5), shall include the following:

(A) The employer shall determine the day and time a COVID-19 case was last present and, to the extent possible, the date of the positive COVID-19 test(s) and/or diagnosis, and the date the COVID-19 case first had one or more COVID-19 symptoms, if any were experienced.

(B) The employer shall effectively identify and respond to persons with COVID-19 symptoms at the workplace. Employees shall be encouraged to report COVID-19 symptoms and to stay home when ill.

(5) Employers shall have effective methods and/or procedures for responding to a COVID-19 case at the workplace, including the following:

(A) Employers shall immediately exclude from the workplace all COVID-19 cases and employees excluded under section 3205.1. The employer shall demonstrate it has met the applicable requirements below:

1. COVID-19 cases who do not develop COVID-19 symptoms shall not return to work during the infectious period;

2. COVID-19 cases who develop COVID-19 symptoms shall not return to work during the shorter of the following: the infectious period; or through 10 days after the onset of symptoms and at least 24 hours have passed since a fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medication.

3. Regardless of vaccination status, previous infection, or lack of COVID-19 symptoms, a COVID-19 case shall wear a face covering in the workplace until 10 days have passed since the date that COVID-19 symptoms began or, if the person did not have COVID-19 symptoms, from the date of their first positive COVID-19 test.

4. The requirements in subsections 3205(c)(5)(A)1. and (c)(5)(A)2. apply regardless of whether an employee has previously been excluded or other precautions were taken in response to an employee's close contact or membership in an exposed group.

(B) Employers shall review current CDPH guidance for persons who had close contacts, including any guidance regarding quarantine or other measures to reduce transmission. Employers shall develop, implement, and maintain effective policies to prevent transmission of COVID-19 by persons who had close contacts.

(C) If an order to isolate, quarantine, or exclude an employee is issued by a local or state health official, the employee shall not return to work until the period of isolation or quarantine is completed or the order is

lifted.

(D) If no violations of local or state health official orders for isolation, quarantine, or exclusion would result, the Division may, upon request, allow employees to return to work on the basis that the removal of an employee would create undue risk to a community's health and safety. In such cases, the employer shall develop, implement, and maintain effective control measures to prevent transmission in the workplace including providing isolation for the employee at the workplace and, if isolation is not feasible, the use of respirators in the workplace.

(E) Upon excluding an employee from the workplace based on COVID-19 or a close contact, the employer shall give the employee information regarding COVID-19-related benefits to which the employee may be entitled under applicable federal, state, or local laws. This includes any benefits available under legally mandated sick leave, if applicable, workers' compensation law, local governmental requirements, the employer's own leave policies, and leave guaranteed by contract.

(d) Testing of close contacts. Employers shall make COVID-19 tests available at no cost, during paid time, to all employees of the employer who had a close contact in the workplace, with the exception of returned cases as defined in subsection 3205(b)(11), and provide them with the information on benefits described in subsection 3205(c)(5)(E).

(e) Notice of COVID-19 cases.

(1) The employer shall notify employees and independent contractors who had a close contact, as well as any employer with an employee who had a close contact. Notice shall be provided as soon as possible, and in no case longer than the time required to ensure that the exclusion requirements of subsection 3205(c)(5)(A) are met.

(2) When Labor Code section 6409.6 or any successor law is in effect, the employer shall provide notice of a COVID-19 case, in a form readily understandable to employees. Notice shall be given to all employees, employers, and independent contractors at the worksite in accordance with the applicable law.

(3) When Labor Code section 6409.6 or any successor law is in effect, the employer shall provide notice in accordance with the applicable law to the authorized representative, if any, of the COVID-19 case and of any employee who had a close contact. The employer shall also provide notice in accordance with the applicable law to the authorized representative, if any, of all employees on the premises at the same worksite as the COVID-19 case within the infectious period.

(f) Face coverings.

(1) Employers shall provide face coverings and ensure they are worn by employees when required by a CDPH regulation or order. When a CDPH regulation or order requires face coverings indoors, that includes spaces within vehicles. Face coverings shall be clean, undamaged, and worn over the nose and mouth.

(2) When employees are required to wear face coverings under this section or sections 3205.1 through 3205.3, the following exceptions apply:

(A) When an employee is alone in a room or vehicle.

(B) While eating or drinking at the workplace, provided employees are at least six feet apart and, if indoors, the supply of outside or filtered air has been maximized to the extent feasible.

(C) While employees are wearing respirators required by the employer and used in compliance with section 5144.

(D) Employees who cannot wear face coverings due to a medical or mental health condition or disability, or who are hearing-impaired or communicating with a hearing-impaired person. Such employees shall wear an effective non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom, if the condition or disability permits it.

(E) During specific tasks which cannot feasibly be performed with a face covering. This exception is limited to the time period in which such tasks are actually being performed.

(3) If an employee is not wearing a face covering pursuant to the exceptions in subsections 3205(f)(2)(D) and (f)(2)(E) the employer shall assess COVID-19 hazards and take action as necessary based on subsection 3205(c) and on section 3203.

(4) No employer shall prevent any employee from wearing a face covering, including a respirator, when not required by this section, unless it would create a safety hazard.

(g) Respirators. Upon request, employers shall provide respirators for voluntary use in compliance with subsection 5144(c)(2) to all employees who are working indoors or in vehicles with more than one person. Whenever an employer makes respirators for voluntary use available, the employer shall encourage their use and shall ensure that employees are provided with a respirator of the correct size and that employees are trained how to properly wear the respirator provided; how to perform a user seal check according to the manufacturer's instructions each time a respirator is worn; and the fact that facial hair interferes with a seal.

(h) Ventilation.

(1) For indoor workplaces, employers shall review CDPH and the Division guidance regarding ventilation, including “Interim Guidance for Ventilation, Filtration, and Air Quality in Indoor Environments.” Employers shall develop, implement, and maintain effective methods to prevent transmission of COVID-19 including one or more of the following actions to improve ventilation:

(A) Maximize the supply of outside air to the extent feasible, except when the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Air Quality Index is greater than 100 for any pollutant or if opening windows or maximizing outdoor air by other means would cause a hazard to employees, for instance from excessive heat or cold.

(B) In buildings and structures with mechanical ventilation, filter circulated air through filters at least as protective as Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV)-13, or the highest level of filtration efficiency compatible with the existing mechanical ventilation system.

(C) Use High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filtration units in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations in indoor areas occupied by employees for extended periods, where ventilation is inadequate to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

(2) Employers subject to section 5142 or 5143 shall review and comply with those sections, as applicable.

Note: Section 5142 requires heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems to be operated continuously during working hours, with limited exceptions.

(3) In vehicles, employers shall maximize the supply of outside air to the extent feasible, except when doing so would cause a hazard to employees or expose them to inclement weather.

(4) A place of employment subject to section 3205.1 after February 3, 2023 shall continue to comply with the ventilation requirements of subsection 3205.1(f) even after the outbreak has passed and section 3205.1 is no longer applicable.

(i) Aerosolizing procedures. For employees in work settings that are exempt from section 5199 in accordance with the conditions in subsection 5199(a)(2)(A) or (a)(2)(B), who are exposed to procedures that may aerosolize potentially infectious material such as saliva or respiratory tract fluids, employers shall evaluate the need for respiratory protection to prevent COVID-19 transmission under section 5144 and shall comply with that section.

Note: Examples of work covered by subsection 3205(i) include, but are not limited to, certain dental procedures and outpatient medical specialties not covered by section 5199.

(j) Reporting and recordkeeping.

(1) The employer shall keep a record of and track all COVID-19 cases with the employee's name, contact information, occupation, location where the employee worked, the date of the last day at the workplace, and the date of the positive COVID-19 test and/or COVID-19 diagnosis. These records shall be retained for two years beyond the period in which the record is necessary to meet the requirements of this section or sections 3205.1 through 3205.3.

(2) Employers shall retain the notices required by subsection 3205(e) in accordance with Labor Code section 6409.6 or any successor law.

(3) Personal identifying information of COVID-19 cases or persons with COVID-19 symptoms, and any employee medical records required by this section or by sections 3205.1 through 3205.3, shall be kept confidential unless disclosure is required or permitted by law. Unredacted information on COVID-19 cases shall be provided to the local health department with jurisdiction over the workplace, CDPH, the Division, and NIOSH immediately upon request, and when required by law.

(k) Orders. Pursuant to title 8, section 332.3, the Division may require an employer to take additional actions to protect employees against COVID-19 hazards through the issuance of an Order to Take Special Action.

Credits

Note: Authority cited: Section 142.3, Labor Code. Reference: Sections 142.3, 144.6 and 6409.6, Labor Code.

History

1. New section filed 11-30-2020 as an emergency; operative 11-30-2020. Emergency expiration extended 60 days (Executive Order N-40-20) plus an additional 60 days (Executive Order N-71-20) (Register 2020, No. 49). A Certificate of Compliance must be transmitted to OAL by 10-1-2021 or emergency language will be repealed by operation of law on the following day. For prior history, see Register 74, No. 43.

2. Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-84-20 (2019 CA EO 84-20), dated December 14, 2020, which suspended certain provisions relating to the exclusion of COVID-19 cases from the workplace.

3. Editorial correction of punctuation errors in subsections (b)(1), (c)(3) (D), (c)(10)(C) and (c)(10)(E) (Register 2021, No. 24).

4. New section refiled with amendments 6-17-2021 as an emergency; operative 6-17-2021 pursuant to Executive Order N-09-21 (Register 2021, No. 25). Exempt from the APA pursuant to Government Code sections 8567, 8571 and 8627 (Executive Order N-09-21). Emergency expiration extended 60 days (Executive Order N-40-20) plus an additional 60 days (Executive Order N-71-20). A Certificate of Compliance must be transmitted to OAL by 1-13-2022 or emergency language will be repealed by operation of law on the following day.

5. New section, including amendments, refiled 1-5-2022 as an emergency; operative 1-14-2022 (Register 2022, No. 1). A Certificate of Compliance must be transmitted to OAL by 4-14-2022 or emergency language will be repealed by operation of law on the following day.

6. Editorial correction of History 5 (Register 2022, No. 9).

7. Emergency filed 1-5-2022 extended an additional 21 calendar days pursuant to Executive Order N-5-22. A Certificate of Compliance must be transmitted to OAL by 5-5-2022 or emergency language will be repealed by operation of law on the following day.

8. New section, including amendments, refiled 5-5-2022 as an emergency pursuant to EO N-23-21; operative 5-5-2022 pursuant to EO N-23-21 (Register 2022, No. 18). Pursuant to EO N-23-21, a Certificate of Compliance must be transmitted to OAL by 12-31-2022 or emergency language will be repealed by operation of law on the following day.

9. Certificate of Compliance as to 5-5-2022 order, including amendment of section, transmitted to OAL 12-20-2022 and filed 2-3-2023; amendments effective 2-3-2023 pursuant to Government Code section 11343.4(b)(3) (Register 2023, No. 5).

10. Editorial correction of History 9 (Register 2023, No. 29).

Go Back to General Industry Safety Orders, Introduction