

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY

Virginia Occupational Safety and Health (VOSH) Program



Coronavirus (COVID-19) VOSH Hazard Alert

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Coronaviruses are a group of viruses that can cause illness in people and animals. The common cold is an example of a coronavirus. SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19. “SARS” stands for severe acute respiratory syndrome.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is spread from person-to-person and can cause a variety of symptoms up to and including acute respiratory illness and death.

1. Workplace Safety

- a. Actively encourage sick employees to stay home, ensure appropriate personal hygiene practices with onsite employees/visitors, implement social distancing measures, and ensure work areas are cleaned and disinfected with EPA list of coronavirus disinfectants.
- b. <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

2. Prevention

- a. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person. Encourage employees to stay home if they or a family member is sick. Its spread:
 - i. Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
 - ii. Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- b. Hygiene:
 - i. Perform routine environmental cleaning.

- ii. Promote frequent and thorough hand washing (at least 20 seconds); provide alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol when soap and water are not accessible.
- iii. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze – the most effective way to cover is into your elbow joint instead of using your hand.
- iv. Avoid as much as possible touching your face with your hands, particularly the areas around your mouth, nose, and eyes, which can serve as an entry point for the virus into your body.

3. Screening

- a. Employers should be familiar with signs/symptoms of covid-19, and educate employees on signs and symptoms of covid-19 (utilize the CDC website as a guide). If an employer suspects that an employee may be sick, send the employee home and have them follow up with their healthcare provider, who will determine if they need to be tested for COVID-19. The following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure:
 - i. Fever
 - ii. Cough
 - iii. Shortness of breath

4. Guidance for an epidemic policy/ program

- a. The employer can implement an epidemic policy/program that would incorporate the basic elements such as:
 - i. Identification of Sources of Exposure to Workers.
 - 1. Who is at high risk.
 - 2. How it can be spread.
 - 3. Where are the areas of greatest exposure.
- b. Implement an infection preventative/control plan:
 - i. To include housekeeping procedures (cleaning).
 - ii. Utilizing appropriate EPA approved disinfectants.
 - iii. Hygiene (frequent 20 seconds hand washing/covering of mouth when sneezing, coughing).
- c. Develop Policies and Procedures for Prompt Identification and Isolation of Sick People:
 - i. Have protocol in place for those employees that respond to/treat potentially infected individuals.
 - ii. Provide isolation and protection of workers in close contact with the sick person.
- d. Develop, Implement and Communicate Workplace Flexibilities and Protections:
 - i. Encouraging sick employees to stay home.
 - ii. Social distancing.
 - iii. Ensuring sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance.

5. Implement Workplace Controls

- a. Engineering:
 - i. Change the working environment to reduce work related hazards.
 - ii. Install high-efficiency air filters, to increase ventilation rates in the workplace.
 - iii. Install a drive-through window for customer service.
- b. Administrative:
 - i. Teleworking, encouraging employees to stay home, flex schedules, minimize numbers of employees assigned to worksite.
 - ii. Post COVID-19 awareness signage regarding personal hygiene practices in strategic areas, such as restrooms, entrances and break room.
 - iii. Provide workers with up-to-date education and training on COVID-19 risk factors and protective behaviors (e.g., cough etiquette and care of PPE).
 - iv. Train workers who need to use protective clothing and equipment how to put it on, use/wear it, limitations, and take it off correctly, including in the context of their current and potential duties. Training material should be easy to understand and available in the appropriate language and literacy level for all workers.
 - v. Establish cleaning procedures that address routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs.
- c. Work practices:
 - i. Reduce the duration, frequency, and intensity of exposure to a workplace hazard by providing soap, hand sanitizers, tissue, no touch trash cans, disinfectants

6. PPE

- a. Provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when required, at no cost; and ensure that it is worn properly and is properly fitted

For additional information, see the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry webpage <https://www.doli.virginia.gov/vosh-programs/coronavirus-covid-19-resources/> or contact your local VOSH Consultant at <https://www.doli.virginia.gov/vosh-programs/consultation/>