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Español

Safety and Health Topics / COVID-19

COVID-19

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Overview

This webpage provides information for workers and employers about the evolving coronavirus outbreak first identified in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. The information includes links to interim guidance and other resources for preventing exposures to, and infection with, the novel coronavirus—now officially named COVID-19.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Chinese authorities identified the new coronavirus, which has resulted in confirmed human infections in China and a growing number of other countries, including the United States. Infected patients have also spread the virus to healthcare workers. The latest situation summary updates are available on CDC's COVID-19 webpage.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 is now a pandemic, meaning a global outbreak of disease. On March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared the COVID-19 outbreak a national emergency. The virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be spreading in the community ("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. Different parts of the United States are seeing different levels of COVID-19 activity. U.S. COVID-19 cases include those among travelers, cases among close contacts of a known case, and community spread. Many types of workers may have similar exposure risks as other members of the general American public. Exposure risk may be elevated for workers who interact with potentially infected individuals, including those involved in:

- Healthcare
- Deathcare
- Laboratories
- Airline operations
- Border protection
- Solid waste and wastewater management
- Travel to areas where the virus is spreading

There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features associated with COVID-19 as the outbreak investigation continues. Infected people can spread COVID-19 through their respiratory secretions, especially when they cough or sneeze. According to the CDC, spread from person-to-person is most likely among close contacts (about 6 feet). Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. It's currently unknown if 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.

In addition to this OSHA guidance, employers and workers should consult interim CDC guidance specific to COVID-19. CDC also provides tips on what the general public should do during the ongoing outbreak.

Hazard Recognition

- Most U.S. workers remain at low risk of exposure
- How does COVID-19 spread?
- Workers who may have exposure risk
- Identifying potential sources of exposure

Standards

Understand how OSHA standards apply to protecting workers from COVID-19.

- Key OSHA standards for COVID-19
- Other relevant OSHA standards
- Temporary guidance on respirator annual fit-testing requirements in healthcare
- Enforcement directives
- Workers' rights and employers' responsibilities

Medical Information

Take steps to prevent worker exposure to COVID-19.

- What is a coronavirus?
- How is the COVID-19 different from other coronaviruses?
- What are the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 infection?
- What should I do if I think I have been exposed to or infected with COVID-19?
- How is COVID-19 diagnosed?
- How is COVID-19 treated?

Control and Prevention

Take steps to prevent worker exposure to COVID-19. OSHA provides general tips for all workers and employers, information for workers traveling to or from areas affected by COVID-19, and specific guidance for workers and employers involved in:

- Healthcare
- Deathcare
- Laboratories
- Airline operations
- Border protection
- Solid waste and wastewater management workers
- Business travel abroad

Background

Learn where COVID-19 came from and how the outbreak is thought to have started.

Additional Resources

Find additional resources and information for protecting workers from occupational exposure to COVID-19.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration
200 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20210
☎ 800-321-6742 (OSHA)
TTY
www.OSHA.gov

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OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

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