

COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR ESSENTIAL WORKPLACES AND BUSINESSES

Last Updated May 14, 2020



Whatcom County
HEALTH
Department



On May 1, 2020, [Governor Inslee introduced his Safe Start Washington Plan](#) which extended the Stay Home, Stay Healthy [executive order](#) requiring all non-essential workplaces in Washington State remain closed through May 31. [A list of all exempted business types is available here.](#)

Workplaces and businesses that meet the governor's criteria as "essential" and continue to operate have a responsibility to help stop and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Whatcom County. Follow these guidelines for maintaining a safe environment for workers and the public.

The Washington State Department of Health recommends all employers put COVID-19 screening protocols in place. Learn more about the [recommended guidance for daily screenings here.](#)

Sick Employee Guidance

- Encourage sick employees to stay home.
- Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance.
- Do 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. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
- Separate any employees who come in with a fever or respiratory illness symptoms and send them home immediately. Other COVID-19 symptoms include chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell.
- If an employee has tested positive for COVID-19, they should remain under home isolation precautions for 10 days since the start of symptoms and 72 hours (3 days) after fever is gone and symptoms get better, whichever is longer.
- If an employee has had a fever with cough but has not been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and has not tested positive for COVID-19, they should stay home away from others until 72 hours after the fever is gone and symptoms get better AND it has been ten days since the start of symptoms.

Keeping Employees Healthy

- Maximize telecommuting as much as possible.
- Provide sanitizer, soap, tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
- Instruct employees to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
- Stagger break times for employees to avoid congregating.
- Remove common areas that can contribute to spread of the virus such as water coolers and common coffee areas accessed by the public.
- Whatcom County Health Department [recommends wearing cloth face coverings](#) when in public places.
- Visit the Washington State Department of Health site for additional [recommendations and guidance to protect critical infrastructure workers.](#)

Environmental Cleaning

- Outside of healthcare facilities, there is typically no need to perform special cleaning or decontamination of work environments when a person suspected of having the virus has been present, unless those environments are visibly contaminated with blood or other body fluids.
- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label. No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.
- The EPA has a [list of registered sanitizers](#) labeled for use against the novel coronavirus. Note: There may be additional disinfectants that meet the criteria and EPA will update the list as needed.
- If possible, provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

Customer Care

- Use booking and scheduling to stagger customer flow to avoid crowding.
- Use online transactions where possible.
- Decrease social contacts in the workplace (limit in-person meetings).
- Use signs and floor markings to encourage people to stay six feet apart from one another.

Resources

- <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/CleaningforHealthBusiness.pdf>
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fspecific-groups%2Fguidance-business-response.html