



Construction Risk Advisor

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OSHA's Latest COVID-19 Guidance for the Construction Sector

The COVID-19 vaccine rollout offers significant promise in the ongoing effort to curb the pandemic. However, even in the midst of this rollout, it's vital for employers to promote workplace health and safety measures to protect their staff from COVID-19 exposures. The construction industry is no exception to these protective measures, especially considering that most construction employees don't have the option to work remotely during this time.

Recommended protocols include having staff wear face coverings, promoting frequent hand-washing, regularly disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and items with [trusted cleaning products](#), encouraging employees to follow respiratory etiquette standards and enforcing physical distancing at the job site. In addition to these measures, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently released the following updated COVID-19 [prevention guidelines](#) for the construction sector:

- **Select a coordinator**—OSHA now recommends that employers like you designate a coordinator to be in charge of handling all COVID-19 concerns at the job site. This coordinator should be a trusted, qualified and competent individual who is capable of managing any workplace issues related to COVID-19 on your behalf.
- **Conduct a hazard assessment**—It's also important to perform a hazard assessment that identifies how and where employees might be exposed to COVID-19 at the job site. This assessment should list common workplace tasks, as well as their associated exposure levels. In the scope of construction work, COVID-19 exposure levels for various tasks are as follows:
 - Low-exposure tasks are those that allow staff to remain at least 6 feet apart and require minimal contact with others.
 - Medium-exposure tasks are those that require staff to be in close contact with each other, customers, visitors or the public.
 - High-exposure tasks are those that require staff to enter an indoor area occupied by other employees, customers or residents who are suspected of having or known to have COVID-19. If possible, high-exposure tasks should be avoided until they can be performed safely—such as when community transmission declines.
- **Develop a program**—Once you have selected a coordinator and conducted a hazard assessment, utilize the information from the assessment to establish a COVID-19 prevention program. This program should include measures for limiting the spread of COVID-19 at the job site, staff training on prevention procedures, isolation and quarantine protocols for exposed employees, extra protections for vulnerable staff, testing and screening arrangements, reporting requirements for COVID-19 cases and deaths, a process for employees to anonymously report occupational COVID-19 hazards and a COVID-19 vaccination plan. According to OSHA, the most effective programs engage staff and their union or representatives in the program's development.

For more industry-specific guidance and OSHA updates, contact us today.