

## **Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Workers in the Construction Industry**

August 19, 2020

Given the community spread of COVID-19 throughout Georgia, construction industry employers should have a comprehensive COVID-19 exposure control plan, which includes symptom checking, social distancing, hygiene and decontamination procedures, and training. Training should cover COVID-19 hazards and control measures, including social distancing, on-site handwashing facilities, disinfecting high-touch surfaces, extended use and reuse of PPE, and mental health services available. This document summarizes the minimum standards construction employers should implement as part of their COVID-19 exposure control plan on all jobsites.

### **Symptom Checking**

- Ask workers to monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms (fever or 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, diarrhea) each day. If thermometers are used on the job, they should be ‘no touch’ or ‘no contact.’
- Create policies which encourage workers to stay at home or leave the worksite when feeling sick or when they have been in close contact with a confirmed positive case. If someone goes home from the site because they are not well, the area where that person worked should be immediately disinfected.

### **Social Distancing**

- If possible, workers should drive to worksites or parking areas alone—no passengers or carpooling. All passengers should wear a face mask or covering if driving alone is not an option.
- Create at least 6 feet of space between workers by staging/staggering crews when possible. Modify work schedules to stagger work, provide alternating workdays or extra shifts to reduce the total number of employees on a jobsite at any given time.
- Workers working near or with others in close quarters, such as confined space work, should wear a facemask or covering, or, as needed, a NIOSH-approved respirator certified as N95 or higher implemented under a full respiratory protection program. At sites or in situations where a respirator is not typically required, we strongly encourage the use of face coverings <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>.

- Identify choke points where workers are forced to stand together, such as hallways, hoists and elevators, break areas, and buses, and put policies in place to maintain social distancing.
- Minimize interactions when picking up or delivering equipment or materials.
- Organize the placement of materials to minimize movement on the work site.
- Office staff should practice social distancing and be encouraged to telework when possible.

### **Hygiene and Decontamination**

- Provide soap and running water whenever possible on all jobsites for frequent handwashing. Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers with greater than 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol as a backup only if providing running water is impossible.
- Workers should be encouraged to wash their hands before and after going to the bathroom, and to leave their workstations to wash their hands before eating, and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing their nose.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces on jobsites and in offices frequently—such as shared tools, machines, vehicles and other equipment, handrails, doorknobs, and portable toilets
- Make disinfectants available to workers throughout the worksite and ensure supplies are frequently replenished.

### **Training**

- Conduct a Safety Stand-Down/toolbox talk/tailgate training on all job sites to explain the protective measures in place for all workers. Keep social distancing at all gatherings.
  - COVID-19 training resources are available at:  
<http://covid.elcosh.org/search/category-4/Training+Resources>
- Designate a person at every job site to be responsible for ensuring employees adhere to the exposure control plan

## Respiratory Protection and the N95 Shortage

- Cloth face coverings are NOT surgical masks or respirators and are not appropriate substitutes for them when masks or respirators are recommended or required.
- All employers should reassess their engineering controls, work practices, and administrative controls to identify any changes they can make to decrease the need for N95 respirators. For example, consider whether it is possible to increase the use of wet methods or portable local exhaust systems or to move operations outdoors.
- If respiratory protection must be used, employers may consider use of alternative classes of respirators that provide equal or greater protection compared to an N95 filtering facepiece respirator (FFR), such as NIOSH-approved, non-disposable, elastomeric respirators or powered, air-purifying respirators (PAPRs). Other FFRs, such as N99, N100, R95, R99, R100, P95, P99, and P100, are also permissible alternatives
- Reusable PPE must be properly cleaned, decontaminated, and maintained after and between uses.
- In the event extended use or reuse of N95 FFRs becomes necessary, the same worker should extend use of or reuse the respirator, as long as the respirator maintains its structural and functional integrity and the filter material is not physically damaged, soiled, or contaminated.

## Mental Health

- Please be aware that people are vulnerable in these uncertain times. If a colleague or coworker needs mental health or substance use care, they should contact their member assistance program or employee assistance program.
- For access to services and immediate crisis help, call the Georgia Crisis & Access Line (GCAL) at **1-800-715-4225**, available 24/7.

## Workers who test positive or who are close contacts of persons who has tested positive for COVID-19

- Workers with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 should follow DPH guidance for isolation (<https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact>) and can return to work once they have completed the requirements in the DPH return to work guidance: <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/dph-covid-19-return-work-guidance-after-covid-19-illness-or-exposure-persons-not/download>

- Workers with exposure to a confirmed positive COVID-19 case should refer to guidance from DPH on persons who have been exposed to COVID-19:  
<https://dph.georgia.gov/contact>

**COVID-19 Information and Resources for Construction Workers:**

<https://www.cpwr.com/covid-19>

**Enforcement Guidance for Respiratory Protection during the COVID-19 Pandemic:**

<https://www.osha.gov/memos/2020-04-03/enforcement-guidance-respiratory-protection-and-n95-shortage-due-coronavirus>

**COVID-19 Information for Georgia Businesses and Employers:**

<https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-19-businesses-and-employers> or call 1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584)