



## What To Do If a Restaurant Employee Gets COVID-19

*Last Updated: 6/29/20*

### **Background**

Even when a business follows all of the state and federal COVID-19 protocols, it is very likely that someone who comes into that business will later be diagnosed with COVID-19. Restaurants are no exception, which is why restaurants continue to follow strict sanitation, social distancing, and health screening protocols.

Texas has not issued requirements or recommendations to businesses who learn that an employee came into the business before being diagnosed with COVID-19, except to say that an employee with signs or symptoms of COVID-19 cannot work until the applicable quarantine period has passed. However, the CDC has issued guidance on this question, and so the Texas Restaurant Association (TRA) recommends that all restaurants follow these CDC guidelines at least until the State issues additional guidance.

### **CDC and State of Texas Guidelines**

1. Ensure any employee with signs or symptoms of COVID-19 does not return to work until the State's quarantine protocols have been met:
  - a. In the case of an employee or contractor who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to work when all three of the following criteria are met: at least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications); and the individual has improvement in symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
  - b. In the case of an employee or contractor who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to work until the individual has completed the same three-step criteria listed above.
  - c. Alternatively, if the employee or contractor has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis.
2. If the COVID-19 case has not already been reported by the sick employee or the medical facility that ran the test, then report it to the local public health department.
3. Identify anyone who had close contact with the sick employee at the restaurant (i.e., within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes), and notify them that they may have been exposed without revealing the name and identifying information of the sick employee. Keep the identifying information confidential per ADA and EEOC guidance. Any employees with signs or symptoms must quarantine as provided above. Employees who may have been exposed but are showing no signs or symptoms may continue working if the restaurant follows the enclosed CDC guidance.



4. Thoroughly clean and disinfect the facility. The CDC specifically says that, in most cases, businesses do not need to shut down because an employee contracts COVID-19. Instead, the CDC directs businesses to close off areas used by the sick employee and increase air circulation to those areas (for example by opening outside doors and windows and bringing in fans). The CDC further recommends that a business wait 24 hours, or as long as practical, and then clean and disinfect the sick employee's work area and all frequently touched surfaces. If possible, TRA recommends completing this step while the restaurant is closed at night to ensure a thorough cleaning and disinfecting. See the enclosed cleaning and disinfecting guidance from the CDC and EPA.

# Interim Guidance for Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19

Accessible version: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html>

To ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, CDC advises that critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community.

A potential exposure means being a household contact or having close contact within 6 feet of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. The timeframe for having contact with an individual includes the period of time of 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic.

Critical Infrastructure workers who have had an exposure but remain asymptomatic should adhere to the following practices prior to and during their work shift:

- ▶ **Pre-Screen:** Employers should measure the employee's temperature and assess symptoms prior to them starting work. Ideally, temperature checks should happen before the individual enters the facility.
- ▶ **Regular Monitoring:** As long as the employee doesn't have a temperature or symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program.
- ▶ **Wear a Mask:** The employee should wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure. Employers can issue facemasks or can approve employees' supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.
- ▶ **Social Distance:** The employee should maintain 6 feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit in the workplace.
- ▶ **Disinfect and Clean work spaces:** Clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment routinely.

If the employee becomes sick during the day, they should be sent home immediately. Surfaces in their workspace should be cleaned and disinfected. Information on persons who had contact with the ill employee during the time the employee had symptoms and 2 days prior to symptoms should be compiled. Others at the facility with close contact within 6 feet of the employee during this time would be considered exposed.

Employers should implement the recommendations in the Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 to help prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. Additional information about identifying critical infrastructure during COVID-19 can be found on the DHS CISA website or the CDC's specific First Responder Guidance page.

## INTERIM GUIDANCE

This interim guidance pertains to critical infrastructure workers, including personnel in 16 different sectors of work including:

- ▶ Federal, state, & local law enforcement
- ▶ 911 call center employees
- ▶ Fusion Center employees
- ▶ Hazardous material responders from government and the private sector
- ▶ Janitorial staff and other custodial staff
- ▶ Workers – including contracted vendors – in food and agriculture, critical manufacturing, informational technology, transportation, energy and government facilities

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ▶ Employees should not share headsets or other objects that are near mouth or nose.
- ▶ Employers should increase the frequency of cleaning commonly touched surfaces.
- ▶ Employees and employers should consider pilot testing the use of face masks to ensure they do not interfere with work assignments.
- ▶ Employers should work with facility maintenance staff to increase air exchanges in room.
- ▶ Employees should physically distance when they take breaks together. Stagger breaks and don't congregate in the break room, and don't share food or utensils.





## CDC & EPA Recommendations – Cleaning and Disinfecting to Address COVID-19

### General Guidance

- Ensure cleaning and disinfecting products are not past their expiration date.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for application, proper ventilation, and safety measures. Many products require keeping the surface wet for several minutes to ensure germs are killed.
- Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.
- Wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash. Remove gloves and gowns carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area.
- Always wash your hands immediately after removing gloves. Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds.

### Hard (Non-porous) Surfaces

- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- To disinfect, use an EPA-approved product for use against COVID-19<sup>1</sup> or a diluted household bleach solution if appropriate for the surface (5 tablespoons of bleach per gallon of room temperature water OR 4 teaspoons of bleach per quart of room temperature water).

### Soft (Porous) Surfaces

- Remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces.
- After cleaning:
  - If the items can be laundered, launder items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and then dry items completely.
  - Otherwise, use an EPA-approved product for use against COVID-19 that is suitable for porous surfaces.

### Electronics

- Remove visible contamination if present. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfecting products.
- Consider use of wipeable covers for electronics.
- If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol to disinfect touch screens. Dry surfaces thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids.

### Linens, Clothing, and Other Items That Go in the Laundry

- To minimize the possibility of dispersing the virus through the air, do not shake dirty laundry.
- Wash items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an ill person can be washed with other people's items.
- Clean and disinfect hampers or other carts for transporting laundry according to guidance above for hard or soft surfaces.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>