

## MODEL WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH DEMANDS FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS

The COVID-19 crisis has caused an unprecedented hazard for all workers and the public. While many workers have been sidelined during the crisis by layoffs and job losses, many others are deemed essential and are providing needed services to the community. These workers are facing serious and life-threatening dangers that require an urgent response by employers.

Essential jobs should be reviewed to determine if they are truly crucial for food, shelter, sanitation, medical care and other vital needs. The spread of the virus can be reduced by closing all nonessential workplaces and focusing resources on those that must remain open.

Employers need workers to maintain essential operations during this unprecedented public health crisis. Recognizing their power, union and non-union workers across a range of industries have taken action in recent weeks to demand and win safe working conditions to protect themselves, their families and the public. Below are best practices, drawn from experience during this and other infectious disease outbreaks, that can enhance workplace safety.



NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR  
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH  
WWW.NATIONALCOSH.ORG  
INFO@NATIONALCOSH.ORG  
@NATIONALCOSH



1. EVERY WORKPLACE NEEDS A WRITTEN PROGRAM TO PROTECT WORKERS FROM THE HAZARDS OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES. EMPLOYERS MUST DEVELOP THE PLAN IN COOPERATION WITH THEIR WORKERS. THIS PLAN MUST INCLUDE:

- Determination of points of potential exposure: Locate the areas and tasks where workers might be exposed to viruses, including worst case scenarios.
- Exposure control plan: Design controls based on the hierarchy of controls and controls based on specific situations.
- Comprehensive worker training, including information about the virus and disease, points of exposure and exposure control plan.
- Continue to meet with worker representatives while implementing the program and revise it as needed.

2. HAZARD CONTROL MEASURES:

- Use physical barriers to separate people by at least six feet at all times.
- Schedule the public and workers, including breaks and work shifts, to reduce person-to-person contact.
- Consider new or modified procedures and equipment.
- Reduce use of shared tools and schedule regular decontamination when sharing does occur.
- Provide washing stations with water, soap, and clean, drying towels and hand sanitizer stations.
- Provide all necessary personal protective equipment (PPE), training and fit testing at no cost to workers.



### 3. PROVIDE TRAINING TO ALL WORKERS ON THE HAZARD CONTROL PLAN AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION:

- Demonstrate and practice putting on and taking off PPE.
- Provide the training in language workers understand.
- Make sure the training is effective in practice. The workers must understand the training, be able to follow it and actually do so.
- Involve worker representatives and peer trainers in the training.

### 4. MONITOR USE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ALL HAZARD CONTROL MEASURES

### 5. ESTABLISH A WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE TO MONITOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORK TEAMS.

The committee must have worker representatives, chosen by their union if there is one, or directly by workers. The committee must have no more management representatives than worker representatives. Worker and management representatives will co-chair the committee.

### 6. MAKE SURE WORKERS CAN REPORT HAZARDS AND ILLNESSES AND TAKE TIME OFF WITHOUT PENALTY. PROVIDE ACCESS TO TESTING AND SUPPORT FOR WORKERS IMPACTED BY COVID-19

- All workers with symptoms or unprotected exposure to infected people should stay home without loss of pay or benefits.
- Encourage workers to report hazards/concerns without fear of retaliation.
- Eliminate any program that penalizes absenteeism.
- Provide Employee Assistance Program [EAP] to help with family hardships.
- Make COVID-19 testing available for any worker at no cost.





- Ensure prompt notification of any case to those in the immediate work area and promptly decontaminate all areas that were accessed by those infected.

#### 7. PROVIDE SUPPLEMENTAL PAY TO ALL ESSENTIAL WORKERS.

This should be determined between the employer and the worker organization to compensate all employees for their sacrifices made to keep the community safe and healthy during the COVID-19 crisis.

*Supplemental pay is often referred to as “hazard” pay. We don’t use that term because it has often been used to justify dangerous work conditions. All workers are entitled to a safe and healthy workplace and supplemental pay should be used to compensate workers for their essential service in this time of need related to the crisis*

#### 8. POST REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION AND PROGRESS OF HAZARD CONTROL TO ALL WORKERS IN A TIMELY, ACCESSIBLE MANNER.

LINKS TO INDUSTRY SPECIFIC MODELS OF DEMANDS BY OUR PARTNERS:

- [Grocery and other retail workers](#)
- [Warehouse Workers](#)
- [Poultry processing workers](#)
- [Seafood Processing workers](#)



**NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR  
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**  
WWW.NATIONALCOSH.ORG  
INFO@NATIONALCOSH.ORG  
@NATIONALCOSH