



COUNTY OF IMPERIAL

PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

JANETTE ANGULO, M.P.A.
Director

STEPHEN MUNDAY, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.
Health Officer

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Guidance for Essential Businesses When an Employee is Ill or Tests Positive for COVID-19

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a novel coronavirus that causes respiratory illness. The virus is primarily spread through the air via respiratory droplets from an infected person or by touching contaminated surfaces. On April 1, 2020, the Imperial County Health Officer issued a legal order (“Order”), for all businesses located within the County of Imperial to close except for essential businesses, as outlined in both Executive Order N-33-20 and the list of essential critical infrastructures developed by the California Department of Public Health. The guidance below provides recommendations for essential business operators that may encounter an employee who developed symptoms including fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath or who have tested positive for COVID-19.

If Your Business Employee is Ill or Tests Positive for COVID-19, What to Do?

- If an employee is a confirmed positive for COVID-19 **and** the employee worked at the business facility at any time after their symptoms began, the business is to **cease operations and close the business to clean and disinfect the facility**. Once the business has been thoroughly sanitized it may reopen to the public. Please note: If the ill employee did not work while showing symptoms, ceasing of operations is not required.
- At all times, any employee that is ill or is experiencing any fever and/or respiratory symptoms shall be required by the employer to stay home and self-isolate until:
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **and**,
 - At least 14 days have passed since the symptoms first appeared.
- If an employee tested positive and worked after the symptoms began, it is recommended for the operator to inform other employees that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 and provide the day(s) on which the potential exposure occurred. Due to the exposure, employees are encouraged to closely monitor themselves for any symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, coughing, and/or shortness of breath) for 14 days.

During this period of the COVID-19 Pandemic, it is recommended for all employees to be screened for any sign of illness such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath prior to each work shift.

- Business operators may assign a person-in-charge to screen employees at the start of their shift and log employee temperatures as part of the employee screening process. Temperatures can be taken using a “no touch” type of temperature probe, such as an infrared temperature probe, at the beginning of their shift.

In the event an infrared temperature probe is not available, an ear or forehead temperature probe can be used, but **must** be sanitized before and after each use. **An oral temperature probe should not be used for screening employees.** It is suggested for the business operator to ask if the employee has taken any fever reducer medicine 2 hours prior to recording their temperature. If an employee shows any sign of illness at the time of screening, the employee shall be sent home **immediately.**

- Prior to coming to work, employees are to be encouraged to notify their supervisor if they are feeling ill and if they are ill, they shall stay home. It is recommended for employers to provide flexibility in sick leave and not require a doctor's note as healthcare offices may be very busy and unable to provide that documentation.
- Exposed co-workers of a positive COVID-19 employee may work as long as they do not show any symptoms or themselves have tested positive. Exposed employees should monitor themselves for 14 days and may continue to work during this 14-day period only if they do not have any symptoms.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Chlorine-based (bleach) sanitizer at 100 ppm or quaternary ammonium-based sanitizers at 200 ppm are effective sanitizers. Use test strips to ensure that the sanitizer is at these required concentrations.

- Clean and disinfect all contact surfaces using an appropriate sanitizer solution.
- Disinfect high use items and shared work areas such as phones, doorknobs, break rooms, touch screens, cash registers, faucet handles, and cabinet/drawer pulls, floors and walls.
- Clean and disinfect restroom floors, walls, doors, sinks and toilets.

As soon as the business has been cleaned and sanitized, the business may reopen. Prior to opening the operator is responsible to take the following steps:

- Obtain clearance: Contact Environmental Health at 442-265-1888 and obtain clearance to ensure that the COVID-19 positive employee can go back to work. Only Imperial County Public Health can allow an excluded employee to go back to work (a note from an employee's physician is not adequate to allow the excluded employee to return to work).
- Continue screening: Upon return to normal operations all employees are recommended to be screened for symptoms prior to the start of their shift.

Develop Policies and Procedures for Prompt Identification of Ill Employees

If one does not already exist, develop a plan for prompt identification of ill employees and actions to be taken. Operators are encouraged to plan as any employee may become infected with COVID-19 by touching a surface that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

- Backup plans: Create a plan for backups, temporary employees, or volunteers in the event staff cannot work.
- Reduce staffing: Maintain the lowest staffing level possible that is necessary to maintain business.
- Maintain social distancing: Continue to maintain a social separation of 6 feet from customers and employees.
- Face coverings: allow the use of face coverings, emphasizing that maintaining 6-foot social distancing and all other prevention measures remain important to stop the spread of the virus.
- Cleaning frequency: Increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing. Include workstations, counter tops, doorknobs, phones, drinking fountains, and restroom surfaces.
- Cross-train: Train employees in critical areas in the event that key employees are ill.
- Personal hygiene: Provide an employee refresher training on risk reduction measures, such as washing hands, covering your cough and sneeze with a tissue and staying home when feeling ill.

Additional Information

Please note that the information and requirements pertaining to COVID-19 may change as more is learned about this virus and its transmission. It is the responsibility of the business operator to make every effort to obtain the latest information as it relates to COVID-19. Stay informed and consider how to incorporate those recommendations and resources into workplace-specific plans. Up to date legal orders as well as additional information, status reports and website links can be accessed on the Imperial County Public Health website at: <http://icphd.org>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Lamoure", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeff Lamoure, Deputy Director