

Guidelines for Safely Returning Kern County to Work

Every Department and employee have a role to play in reducing the spread of COVID-19. Following these guidelines while preparing for our workforce to return will ensure our ability to support our community with vital services and protect them from exposure to COVID-19 and other contagions.

These guidelines provide each County Department with necessary steps to follow when bringing staff back to the office and reopening to the public for services. The purpose is to ensure the continued safety of our staff and the customers they serve as a first priority. These guidelines incorporate the guidance issued by the [California Department of Public Health and Cal/OSHA on May 7, 2020](#).

Worksite Specific Plan

Each Department must establish a written worksite-specific COVID-19 prevention plan at every office location that is in conformance with these guidelines. The plan must be prepared in conjunction with a comprehensive risk assessment of all work areas. Each Department shall designate a person at each worksite to implement the plan. The plan must clearly identify the contact information for the Department of Public Health Services to ensure prompt communication of COVID-19 outbreaks among employees. Each Department is expected to train and communicate to all employees about its plan. The plan should be evaluated regularly to ensure compliance and correction of any deficiencies.

Temperature and Symptom Screening

Departments should provide temperature and/or symptom screenings for all workers at the beginning of their shift and for any personnel and customers entering the facility. Departments screening temperatures should:

1. Use contactless thermometers;
2. Designate staff members in protective gear, including a face mask, face shield or goggles, and disposable gloves, to check temperature;
3. Disallow entry to anyone registering a temperature of 100.4 °F
4. Utilize single points of ingress and egress for employees and customers;



5. Stagger employee start times to reduce delays;
6. Make information available on testing to those not permitted to enter.

Any documentation of temperature and/or symptom screening must be maintained as protected health information.

Face Coverings

Pursuant to the [State of California's order](#), face coverings are required at the worksite when:

1. Interacting in-person with any member of the public;
2. Working in any space visited by members of the public, regardless of whether anyone from the public is present at the time;
3. Working in any space where food is prepared or packaged for sale or distribution to others;
4. Working in or walking through common areas, such as hallways stairways, elevators, and parking facilities;
5. In any room or enclosed area where other people (except for members of the person's own household or residence) are present and unable to physically distance.

Departments must provide all workers and customers with access to face coverings for use. Employees must wear a face covering from the moment they depart their vehicle until they reach their assigned workstation. Employees must continue to wear their face covering when they are in the presence of other staff or customers.

Employees may use their own workplace appropriate face covering. Face coverings must cover the nose and mouth. They can be secured to the head with ties and straps or simply wrapped around the lower face. Cloth face coverings should be washed frequently, ideally after each use, or at least daily. All used disposable face coverings should be safely disposed.

Sick Employees

Employees who have COVID-19, or have symptoms related to COVID-19 (i.e., fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath, etc.), are required to stay home. Departments may permit these employees, if able, to work remotely.

Employees who have COVID-19, or have symptoms related to COVID-19 may not return to work until they have completed the following [CDC-recommended steps for self-isolation](#). Employees can find information about available testing sites for COVID-19 [here](#).

1. Employees who think or know they had COVID-19, and had symptoms, may return to work if:
 - a. At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared, **and**
 - b. At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication, **and**
 - c. Symptoms have improved.
2. Employees who tested positive for COVID-19, but had no symptoms, may return to work if:
 - a. They continue to have no symptoms, **and**
 - b. 10 days have passed since the test.

An employee may also return to work if they have had two negative test results in a row, at least 24 hours apart.

Exposed Employees

An exposed employee is anyone who has been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.

What counts as close contact?

1. You were within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period
2. You provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
3. You had direct physical contact with the person (touched, hugged, or kissed them)
4. You shared eating or drinking utensils
5. They sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on you

Exposed employees are required to stay home, monitor their health and follow the [CDC-recommended steps for self-quarantine](#). Departments should permit these employees, if able, to work remotely.

Exposed employees may not return to work until 14 days have passed since their last contact with a person with COVID-19, regardless of whether they have developed symptoms or tested negative for COVID-19.

Scenario 1: Close contact with someone who has COVID-19 and will not have further close contact. **Last day of quarantine is 14 days from the date you had close contact.**

Scenario 2: Close contact with someone who has COVID-19, live with the person, but can avoid further close contact. **Last day of quarantine is 14 days from when the person with COVID-19 began home isolation.**

Scenario 3: Under quarantine and had additional close contact with someone who has COVID-19 (i.e., additional household member). **Last day of quarantine is 14 days from the date of additional close contact with a person who has COVID-19.**

Scenario 4: Live with someone who has COVID-19 and cannot avoid continued close contact. **Last day of quarantine is 14 days after the person with COVID-19 has ended home isolation.**

Scenario 5: Critical infrastructure worker who has close contact with someone who has COVID-19, but has not developed symptoms. **Employee can continue to work while wearing a face covering and practicing physical distancing.**

An exposed employee who develops symptoms of COVID-19 and/or tests positive must follow the steps for self-isolation above before returning to work.

Leave for Sick and Exposed Employees

Sick and exposed employees are entitled to up to 80 hours of paid leave under either the Families First Coronavirus Response Act or the Emergency Responders Paid Sick Leave policy. If these paid leave entitlements are exhausted, employees must use their individual paid leave (sick, vacation, CTO, Paid Time Off Reward, etc.) balances, and

request to borrow paid sick leave under the paid sick leave borrowing program or apply for catastrophic leave pay. Catastrophic leave pay is subject to other qualifying criteria. Information about specific leave entitlements is [here](#).

Protecting High-Risk Employees

While many of the following measures will assist in protecting identified categories of high-risk employees, it is imperative that we take every possible precaution to ensure their continued safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. The identified categories are employees age 65 or older and those with chronic health conditions or compromised immune systems. Departments should prioritize these employees for the following temporary work accommodations:

1. Remote work;
2. Approve alternate work schedules;
3. Separated workstations or offices;
4. Non-community contact work assignments;
5. Personal protective equipment.

Departments should engage in the interactive process with these individuals to determine the most appropriate and available temporary work accommodations. If adequate accommodation cannot be provided to the employee, the employee shall be permitted to take a leave of absence (paid or unpaid) under the current policies of the County.

Worksite Exposures

The Department of Public Health Services will notify each Department head of positive COVID-19 results. Departments should immediately investigate exposure to their staff. The investigations will identify where and how other workers may have been exposed to COVID-19.

If an employee reports a COVID-19 infection, the Department must notify the Department of Public Health Services immediately. The Department shall identify and report close contacts (within six feet for 15 minutes or more) of an infected employee to the Department of Public Health Services.

Departments should work directly with the Department of Public Health to provide all information relevant to the exposure to assist with its investigation. If requested, Departments will inform close contacts of the exposure to COVID-19 and take steps to isolate COVID-19 positive employee(s) and close contacts. Departments shall take steps to maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Departments may offer exposed employees use of available paid leave upon request. Departments should also complete the appropriate workplace injury form and submit to Risk Management.

As the Department of Public Health Services conducts COVID-19 investigations, they will contact those employees identified as close contacts of the infected individual. Employees shall follow the directions of the local public health officials in responding to their own exposure. **Departments shall take immediate steps to disinfect all affected workspaces according to CDC guidelines.**

Physical Distancing

Federal, state, and local public health officials determined physical distancing to be a key factor in reducing the spread of COVID-19. Departments should continue with every possible effort to avoid unnecessary employee interactions for the near future. This means taking steps to provide alternative means of work assignments, communication, and work environments to observe physical distancing, including the following:

1. **Telework Options** – Departments should continue with current telework arrangements and expand these arrangements to include non-essential staff returning to work, where possible.
2. **Alternate/Staggered Shifts** – Departments should consider limiting the number of employees on-site at work locations in any given day by alternating on-site days with remote work days, or use alternate schedules with employees taking days off on different schedules (i.e. 9/80 schedule with different days off, not all employees off on Fridays).
3. **Rearrange Workstations** – Departments should ensure occupied workstations are at least six feet apart. If workstations are static and unmovable, Departments should limit the number of occupied workstations on a given day to allow greater physical distancing.
4. **Group-accessible Areas** – Departments should close or restrict access to

common areas such as lunchrooms and break rooms to provide the necessary physical distancing, and/or ensure that these areas are frequently cleaned and sanitized.

5. **Limit In-person Meetings** – Departments should not hold any in-person meeting without practicing six-foot physical distancing and are encouraged to hold all meetings virtually using Microsoft Teams. Meeting participants should be permitted to attend all meetings virtually.
6. **Non-essential Large Gatherings** – Departments should postpone all non-essential gatherings of 10 or more individuals that are not critical to their continued operations.
7. **Other Physical Distancing Strategies:**
 - a. Establish directional hallways and passageways for foot traffic;
 - b. Designate separate routes for entry and exit into office spaces;
 - c. Limit the number of individuals riding in an elevator;
 - d. Staggering employee breaks;
 - e. Discontinue non-essential travel;
 - f. Direct guests to meeting rooms to avoid congregation in lobbies;
 - g. Utilize virtual tools or bulletin boards to hand-off information between staff.

Additional Measures to Limit Exposure to the Public

Limiting interactions between employees is one factor in continuing physical distancing practices. Departments should continue to limit employee exposure with the public as well. Taking steps to create physical separation with members of the public and provide additional precautionary measures for employees include the following:

1. **Physical Distancing Marking of Publicly Accessed Space** – Departments should develop markings within their publicly accessed spaces to provide cues to the public about where to stand to be able to maintain a separation of 6 feet, to limit the number of individuals using elevators, and to limit touching public surfaces.
2. **Remote Access to Services** – Departments should attempt to create the opportunity for members of the public to access their services remotely to avoid the need to access them in-person.
3. **Develop Appointment-only Access** – Departments should seek to schedule known customer interactions by appointment to manage total customer access

to their facilities.

Ensuring a Clean and Hygienic Work Environment

Other key factors in limiting the spread of COVID-19 have been observance of individual hygiene practices and the sanitization of workspaces. In order to maintain a safe working environment for employees, Departments should develop consistent cleaning practices of workstations and other highly trafficked areas within their facilities (i.e., break rooms, lunchrooms, and bathrooms) at regular intervals throughout the day. Departments should also procure and distribute cleaning products and disinfecting agents to employees, so that they can ensure clean work areas. Departments should use products [approved for use against COVID-19](#). Appropriate cleaning and disinfecting protocols include:

1. Thorough cleaning on high traffic areas such as break rooms and lunch areas, and areas of ingress and egress including stairways, stairwells, handrails, and elevator controls.
2. Frequent disinfecting of commonly used surfaces including doorknobs, toilets, and handwashing areas.
3. Require employees to clean and disinfect personal work areas often and provide them with paid time to implement these cleaning practices before and after shifts.
4. Avoid sharing phones, other work supplies, or office equipment wherever possible. Never share PPE.
5. When items must be shared (i.e., copiers, fax machines, printers, telephones, etc.), disinfect between shifts or uses, whichever is more frequent.

Employee Health Practices

Employees are also encouraged to follow healthy practices at work to avoid the spread of COVID-19 and other contagions. These include:

1. **Self-screening at Home** – Screen yourself for temperature and/or symptoms using [CDC guidelines](#).
2. **Stay at Home** – Staying at home when you have symptoms or have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

3. **Washing Hands** – Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
4. **Avoid Touching Eyes, Nose and Mouth** – Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
5. **Covering Coughs and Sneezes** – Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Learn more about coughing and sneezing etiquette on the CDC website.
6. **Physical Distancing** – Practice physical distancing at work and off work time by avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible.
7. **Proper Use of Face Coverings** – Face coverings do not replace the need for physical distancing and frequent handwashing. Employees should wash or sanitize hands before and after using or adjusting face coverings. Face coverings should be washed after each shift.