

Design and Construction Industry COVID-19 Safety Guidelines



During these unprecedented circumstances, the key to navigating a world affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is consistent adherence to guidelines provided by medical experts. Below is compiled recommended guidance for design and construction industry professionals on job sites/in the field, in the office and in other areas where work is performed. This guidance has been taken from a variety of sources, including expertise from member firms, federal guidelines (CDC, OSHA), state guidelines (Office of the Governor, Office of the Mayor), as well as from public agencies and key organizations essential to the built environment.

The goal of this document is to share best practices related to protecting the health and safety of our workers, our colleagues and the public we interact with in our professional capacities. This document will be updated as new information and guidelines are shared. **While this document provides suggested guidance for our member organizations, it does not take the place of medical advice or governmental directives and decrees.**

For additional documentation supporting the suggested guidance below, visit the ACEC New York Safety Resource website at acecnyc.org/covid-19-safety.

Ongoing Measures

In the field/On job sites

- **Information and education:**
 - Hold daily talks about COVID-19 safety measures with site workers before each shift.
 - Revise orientation and onboarding process to include site-specific COVID-19 measures and protocol.
 - Post COVID-19 exposure protocols where they are visible to all employees.
 - Ensure project safety plan accounts for COVID-19 issues.
 - Keep records of COVID-19 issues specific to the site (Have workers exhibited symptoms? Have issues been reported to Prime or Client where necessary?).

- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):**
 - Make appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies available for the project:
 - Gloves
 - Eye Protection
 - Masks
 - Face Shields
 - If a mask is not part of routine PPE used for a specific task, workers should use a face covering if they cannot maintain at least 6 feet of distance between themselves and others.

Below is detailed information regarding masks and respirators.

Surgical Mask – These are typically loose-fitting, disposable masks that, per the FDA (<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/personal-protective-equipment-infection-control/n95-respirators-and-surgical-masks-face-masks>) create a physical barrier between the mouth and nose of the wearer and potential contaminants in the immediate environment. These types of masks can help if you are going out in public by providing limited protection from droplets when people cough or sneeze. (Note: Physical Distancing of 6 feet will also protect you from droplets.) If you have staff going to worksites, and not in direct contact with COVID-19 patients, this is a type of mask they can need. There are no OSHA requirements for using this type of mask.

N-95/K-95/FFP3FFP2 masks or respirators – Masks or respirators with specific ratings such as N-95 or KN-95 are designed and constructed to provide a specific, tested level of particulate filtering when worn correctly. Masks meeting these ratings are currently used by medical personnel treating patients with COVID-19. If you have staff working with or near COVID-19 patients, this is the mask you will need. Member firms are likely to have work that requires the use of these respirators not related to COVID-19.

*Self-made masks: These face coverings, often made from fabric, protect **others** from the spread of particles and droplet transmission from the wearer’s exhalations, sneezes and coughs. Their primary role is to prevent the spread of virus **from** the wearer who may be unaware they are infected.*

You can use masks/respirators more than once: Masks and respirators can be used multiple times. They should be discarded if they become dirty, or you find it difficult to breathe when using them. Users should use caution to make sure you wash your hands before putting on a mask or taking a mask off. Then rewash your hands afterward to prevent cross-contamination. For more information, you can contact health and safety.

□ **Social distancing and physical measures:**

- Workers should comply with 6-foot social distancing.
- If social distancing is not possible, PPE measures should be adhered to (i.e. face shield/cloth face covers).
- Provide tools to help workers mark out physical distancing spacing when performing job tasks.
- Require workers maintain a distance of 6 feet when waiting to enter turnstiles, hoists/elevators, stairs, and other shared spaces.
- Advise workers to take stairs in lieu of hoists where possible.
- Limit crew sizes to the minimum required to accomplish task.
- Prevent workers from congregating during pre-shift meetings, toolbox talks and other similar gatherings.
- Stagger schedules for job functions that put workers close together. For example, workers that perform job functions that are in close proximity can work different shifts or days, or they can have different work start times and end times, including breakfasts and lunch breaks.
- Segregate crews from each other to reduce cross-exposure.
- Make special assessment of small workspaces and use judgement for feasibility to continue work.
- If tools must be shared, disinfect between uses.
- No visitors should be allowed in project offices.
- All progress meetings should be held via video conference.

- Paperwork from vendors or contractors should be handled with gloves at one desk in the office.
- Consider erecting temporary barriers to keep workers separate during the workday.
- Prohibit workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, work tools and equipment.

- **Sanitizing and disinfection:**
 - Ensure appropriate and sufficient sanitation and hygiene facilities and supplies are plentiful at all sites:
 - Adequate supplies of soap/hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes/spray should be maintained.
 - Provide correct guidance on effective handwashing procedures.
 - Require that all workers wash their hands thoroughly before and after an operation.
 - Regularly clean and disinfect shared tools and equipment.

- **Dealing with suspected infection:**
 - If anyone is symptomatic, send them home immediately and do not let them on the site.
 - Workers **must** stay home if sick. They should not return to work until all the following are true:
 - It has been at least seven days since symptoms started.
 - Worker never had fever or has not had a fever for the prior three days without use of fever-reducing drugs such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen.
 - Worker's overall illness has improved.

- **Consider closing the site if physical distancing or alternative measures cannot be maintained.**

In Office

Access:

- The office is off limits to all employees unless there is written permission from management.
- Employees who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home.
 - Sick employees should follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.
 - Employees who are well but who have a family member at home that is sick with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow CDC-recommended precautions.
- Establish process for screening temperature of all staff and guests upon entry to office
 - Use infrared fever scan system to measure temperature in seconds at office entry.
 - Establish daily screening protocol distributed to all employees to complete daily.
 - Establish plan for screening visitors.

Exposure control:

- Identify a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 issues and their impact at the workplace.
- Identify where and how workers might be exposed to COVID-19 at work:
 - See [OSHA COVID-19 webpage](https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19) (osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19) for information on how to protect workers from potential exposures and guidance for employer, including steps to take for jobs according to exposure risk.
 - Be aware some employees may be at higher risk for serious illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions. Consider minimizing face-to-face contact between these employees or assign work tasks that allow them to maintain a distance of six feet from other workers, customers and visitors, or to telework if possible.
 - Implement centralized tracking of possible exposures (e.g. corporate nurse service). The professional responsible for centralized tracking should determine if office is closed.
- Separate sick employees:
 - Employees who appear to have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough or shortness of breath) upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home.
 - If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The employer should instruct fellow employees about how to proceed based on the [CDC Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-community-related-exposure) (cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-community-related-exposure.html).

- **Administrative measures:**
 - Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices.
 - Consider policies and practices for social distancing (avoiding large gatherings and maintaining 6-foot distance from others when possible). Strategies that businesses could use include:
 - Implement flexible worksites (e.g., telework).
 - Implement flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts).
 - Increase physical space between employees at the worksite.
 - Increase physical space between employees and customers (e.g., drive through, partitions).
 - Establish one-directional walking pathways where practical.
 - Implement flexible meeting and travel options (e.g., postpone non-essential meetings or events).
 - Consider downsizing operations.
 - Consider delivering services remotely (e.g. phone, video, or web).
 - Consider delivering products through curbside pick-up or delivery.

- **Perform routine environmental cleaning and disinfection:**
 - Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.
 - If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
 - For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).
 - Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) can be wiped down by employees before each use. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA’s criteria for use against COVID-19.
 - Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility. If a sick employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations.

Transportation

- Consider restricting mass transit use to the site or office.
- If mass transit use cannot be restricted, require use of appropriate PPE on mass transit.
- Consider giving employees without cars alternative transportation options, such as rental cars.
- Restrict ride sharing when possible.
- Advise employees before traveling to take additional preparations:
 - Check the [CDC’s Traveler’s Health Notices](https://www.cdc.gov/travel/notices) (cdc.gov/travel/notices) for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from countries with travel advisories, and information for aircrew, can be found on the CDC website.
 - Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.

Building Operations

General Procedures

- Make cleaning supplies readily available in common areas.
- Establish and follow deep cleaning and disinfection protocol.
- Add touchless water faucets set for 20 seconds in bathrooms, if possible.
- Add touchless soap dispensers in toilet areas, if possible.
- Place walk-off mats soaked with surface protector at main entrance to capture particulates from shoes.

Air Conditioning and HVAC Measures

- Place Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation and Photo Catalytic Oxidation at the air conditioning unit to kill bacteria, viruses, fungi, volatile organic compounds, and other organics.
- Purify air in multiple spaces (open office space/conference rooms/cafeteria).
- Increase exhaust ventilation in washrooms to reduce accumulation of airborne virus.
- Install UV lamp in washroom to be switched on at night.
- Install UV lamp on toilet lids and waste bins for continuous sanitization when not in use.
- Increase fresh air supply based on demand by using carbon dioxide sensor, particularly in meeting rooms/phone booths/enclosed offices.
- Add standalone air purifiers (equipped with High efficiency particulate air [HEPA] filter and UV germination technology) in enclosed spaces.
- Increase relative humidity at night to minimize airborne transmission.

ACEC New York Site Safety Guidance Checklist

- Guidance and education:**
 - Does site or office have written COVID 19 guidance and protocols? Y___ N___
 - Are daily talks/meetings held to address safety measures? Y___ N___
 - Is guidance posted for review by workers and visitors? Y___ N___
 - Are workers and visitors required to acknowledge guidance? Y___ N___
 - Are there record-keeping measures in place for COVID-19-related activity? Y___ N___

- Social distancing:**
 - Does site or office have space for correct levels of distancing with given staff level? Y___ N___
 - Is social distancing tracked and enforced? Y___ N___
 - Are there office or jobsite conditions that prevent social distancing or otherwise increase transmission risks, such as confined spaces, use of shared tools or machinery? Y___ N___
 - If Yes, please describe conditions: _____
 - If Yes, are there special measures being taken to protect workers? Y___ N___

- Personal hygiene:**
 - Does site or office have ready access to properly-equipped handwashing or sanitizing facilities? Y___ N___

- Cleaning and disinfecting measures:**
 - Does site or office have written cleaning and disinfecting protocol? Y___ N___
 - Does site have sanitizing products (sprays, wipes) available for use by workers and visitors? Y___ N___
 - What building, site or tool sanitizing measures are being taken? (Please attach information.)

- PPE requirements:**
 - Does site or office have written PPE requirements? Y___ N___
 - Does site offer PPE or require workers or visitors to provide their own? Provide PPE: Y/N_____
 - If Yes, please describe available PPE: _____

- Transportation:**
 - Are safe travel accommodations available for workers to practice social distancing? Y___ N___
 - If Yes, please describe: _____

- On-site screening for staff and visitors (screening checklist/questionnaire):**
 - Is there on-site screening for staff and visitors? Y___ N___