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# SafetyVisions

## **Managing Covid-19**

*How OSHA and the BWC recommend employers manage Covid-19 and the need for personal protective equipment*

Per the U.S. Department of Labor, there is no specific Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) standard covering COVID-19 (coronavirus). So, how should employers prepare to protect their workforce against the spread of COVID-19?

Under OSHA, employers must furnish workers with “a place of employment, which is free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm.” They must provide gloves, eye and face protection, and respiratory protection if a hazard of exposure exists in the workplace. If respirators are necessary to protect workers, employers must implement a comprehensive respiratory protection program in accordance with the respiratory protection standard.

Recently, OSHA issued “Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19,” which classifies employees into very high, high, medium or low exposure risk and provides personal protective equipment (PPE”) recommendations specific to each class, based on their potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19.

Very high risk workers are those with high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19 (i.e., during medical, postmortem or laboratory procedures). This includes health care workers performing aerosol-generating procedures (i.e., intubation, cough induction procedures, bronchoscopies, dental procedures or invasive specimen collection) or who come into contact with known or suspected COVID-19 patients or specimens. Those workers categorized as high risk include health care delivery and support staff (e.g., doctors, nurses and other hospital staff who must enter patients’ rooms) exposed to known or suspected COVID-19 patients and medical transport workers (e.g., ambulance vehicle operators) moving known or suspected COVID-19 patients. OSHA advises that most workers at high or very high exposure risk likely need to wear gloves, a gown, a face shield or goggles, and either a face mask or a respirator.



Medium exposure risk jobs include those that require frequent and/or close contact (i.e., within six feet) with people who may be infected or ill but who are not known COVID-19 patients. Workers in this risk group may have frequent contact with travelers who may return from international locations with widespread COVID-19 transmission. OSHA advises that medium risk workers may need to wear some combination of gloves, a gown, a face mask and/or a face shield or goggles. If a medium risk worker requests PPE in excess of what he or she normally utilizes in their job, employers must determine the necessity of the PPE to the

specific work task, as well as the COVID-19 hazards and risk of exposure posed. If the job is not one that has a high or very high risk of exposure to COVID-19, OSHA does not require the worker be furnished with PPE. Furthermore, should the hazard assessment reveal few or no health hazards in the workplace, OSHA does not require an employee be furnished with PPE.

Lower exposure risk jobs are those that do not require contact or frequent close contact (i.e., within six feet) with people known to be, or suspected of being, infected. Importantly, OSHA does not recommend additional PPE for lower risk workers. Workers should continue to use the PPE, if any, that they would ordinarily use.

Compliance with OSHA alone, however, is not enough. Employers must also think about the specific safety requirements of the Bureau of Workers' Compensation. The specific safety requirements standard for PPE states that employers must

provide PPE in sanitary and proper working order, so it effectively protects against the hazard. If employees provide their own PPE, it must provide equal or greater protection than the employer's PPE. Importantly, the VSSR standard requires respiratory protection where there are air contaminants, such as dust, mist, fume, gas or vapor but makes no mention of illnesses or viruses like COVID-19. Therefore, the VSSR standard for PPE does not obligate employers to provide workers with PPE beyond that which their job normally requires.

**For more information**, please contact Sue Roudebush (sroudebush@bricker.com) at Bricker & Eckler LLP.

## How to safely use a ladder

*Each year, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), releases its Top 10 list of most workplace safety violations. Coming in seventh place each of the past two years, were violations relating to ladder safety. While ladders are an essential tool, they are only as safe as the workers utilizing them.*

Listed below are the five leading causes of ladder-related injuries according to the American Ladder Institute:

- 1. Three points of contact were not used while climbing the ladder.** Climbers on the ladder should always have two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand on the ladder while climbing up or down.
- 2. Overreaching while on a ladder contributes to a large number of injuries.** Ladder users stretch out over the side of a ladder, which throws the user and the ladder off balance which leads to falls. Always climb down and reposition the ladder to avoid overreaching.
- 3. Utilizing the wrong type of ladder.** Users try to make a step ladder work when a taller ladder is needed, often standing on the top of the ladder, which is unsafe. Always make sure to use the correct ladder for the job.
- 4. Using the wrong size ladder.** Many workers use a ladder that stop a foot or two short of a roofline, rather than one that stops three feet above the roof line. The transition from the top of a too-short ladder to the roof can be deadly. Choosing a ladder that is too short for the job often leads to standing on the top cap of the ladder, which also can result in a fatal injury.

- 5. Missing the bottom rung when descending a ladder.** A surprising number of injuries – ranging from twisted, sprained and broken ankles and knees to head injuries and fatalities – have resulted from a worker missing a rung on a ladder. Make sure to climb with care and to make sure no rungs are skipped.

**For more information, please contact CareWorks Comp's Safety Consultant, Jim Saulters**, at (866) 780-NFIB (6342) option 6, or by email at [Jim.Saulters@careworkscorp.com](mailto:Jim.Saulters@careworkscorp.com).



## Medical Services and First Aid – OSHA Requirements

*The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) states employers are to ensure the ready availability of medical personnel for advice and consultation on matters of occupational health.*

OSHA further states in the absence of an infirmary, clinic, or hospital in near proximity to the workplace which is used for the treatment of all injured employees, a person or persons shall be adequately trained to render first aid. Adequate first aid supplies need also be readily available.

Since most small businesses do not have medical facilities on-site at their place of business, they rely on emergency medical services from their local fire department, their local hospital or medical facility in near proximity to their workplace. OSHA states medical assistance should have a response time of 3 to 5 minutes.

In reality though, even if your local Emergency Medical Services is just down the street it may not be able to respond within this 3 to 5 minute window. This is one of the reasons why all employers

should have at least 1 person trained in basic first aid and CPR per shift. It is recommended that at least 2 or more people be trained to allow for coverage in case one is out sick or on vacation.

CareWorks Comp's Safety Consultant, Jim Saulters, conducts a first aid/CPR training each quarter at our Dublin office, and can conduct the same training on-site if an appropriate area is available and four employees are able to attend.

**For more information, or to set up a training,** please contact Jim Saulters, at (866) 780-NFIB (6342), option 6, then option 2 or email him at [Jim.Saulters@careworkscorp.com](mailto:Jim.Saulters@careworkscorp.com).

## Power Tool Safety

*Power tools are formidable tools that allow workers, when properly used, to work more efficiently. Unfortunately, with power tools, come safety risks.*

To help reduce these risks, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), states appropriate Personal Protective Equipment, such as safety goggles, gloves and ear protection, be worn to protect against hazards associated with power tools. OSHA recommends that workers observe the general precautions, including the following:

- » **Never carry a tool by the cord or hose;**
- » **Never yank the cord or the hose to disconnect it from the receptacle;**
- » **Keep cords and hoses away from heat, oil, and sharp edges;**
- » **Disconnect tools when not using them, before servicing and cleaning them, and when changing accessories such as blades, bits, and cutters;**
- » **Keep all people not involved with the work at a safe distance from the work area;**
- » **Secure work with clamps or a vise, freeing both hands to operate the tool;**

- » **Avoid accidental starting. Do not hold fingers on the switch button while carrying a plugged-in tool;**
- » **Maintain tools with proper care; keep them sharp and clean for best performance;**
- » **Follow instructions in the user's manual for lubricating and changing accessories, etc;**
- » **Be sure to keep good footing and maintain good balance when operating power tools;**
- » **Wear proper apparel for the task. Loose clothing, ties, or jewelry can become caught in moving parts; and,**
- » **Remove all damaged portable power tools from use and tag them: "Do Not Use."**

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## Solvents Safety

*Solvents are used in nearly every industry. From healthcare, automotive, construction, electrical, and metal finishing to furniture/wood manufacturing, and oil and gas, solvents are everywhere!*

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), a solvent is a liquid capable of dissolving into another substance, and while commonly used, can be hazardous in the workplace. OSHA states 10 million workers are exposed to solvent hazards in the workplace. Some of the hazards noticed by OSHA include liver and kidney damage, respiratory impairment, and even cancer.

Listed below are some tips from OSHA to help decrease solvent hazards:



- » Dispense solvents carefully. Bond and ground containers to prevent buildup of static electricity, which could start a fire.
- » Take only the minimum amount of solvent needed for the job and put it in an approved safety container. Never use more than you need.
- » Keep the container closed except when adding or removing solvents.
- » Wear required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as eye protection and gloves. Ask your supervisor and check the Safety Data Sheet (SDS formally MSDS) for the required PPE.
- » Dispose of solvent-soaked rags in designated closed containers.
- » Do not eat, drink, or smoke in any area that contains solvents. Also, do not keep food, beverages, eating utensils, etc., in areas where solvents are contained.
- » Do not wash your hands with solvents. Always use soap and water instead.
- » After working with solvents, remove contaminated PPE and work clothes as soon as possible, to avoid getting solvents on your skin.
- » Store solvents safely in designated areas.
- » Inspect stored containers regularly for leaks, corrosion, dents, and other damage. Report problems immediately.

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