



COVID-19 INDUSTRY GUIDANCE: Ports

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covid19.ca.gov



OVERVIEW

On March 19, 2020, the State Public Health Officer and Director of the California Department of Public Health issued an order requiring most Californians to stay at home to disrupt the spread of COVID-19 among the population.

The impact of COVID-19 on the health of Californians is not yet fully known. Reported illness ranges from very mild (some people have no symptoms) to severe illness that may result in death. Certain groups, including people aged 65 or older and those with serious underlying medical conditions, such as heart or lung disease or diabetes, are at higher risk of hospitalization and serious complications. Transmission is most likely when people are in close contact with an infected person, even if that person does not have any symptoms or has not yet developed symptoms.

Precise information about the number and rates of COVID-19 by industry or occupational groups, including among critical infrastructure workers, is not available at this time. There have been multiple outbreaks in a range of workplaces, indicating that workers are at risk of acquiring or transmitting COVID-19 infection. Examples of these workplaces include long-term care facilities, prisons, food production, warehouses, meat processing plants, and grocery stores.

As stay-at-home orders are modified, it is essential that all possible steps be taken to ensure the safety of workers and the public.

Key prevention practices include:

- ✓ physical distancing to the maximum extent possible,
- ✓ use of face coverings by employees (where respiratory protection is not required) and customers/clients,
- ✓ frequent handwashing and regular cleaning and disinfection,
- ✓ training employees on these and other elements of the COVID-19 prevention plan.

In addition, it will be critical to have in place appropriate processes to identify new cases of illness in workplaces and, when they are identified, to intervene quickly and work with public health authorities to halt the spread of the virus.

Purpose

This document provides guidance for ports to support a safe, clean environment for employees. The guidance is not intended to revoke or repeal any employee rights, either statutory, regulatory or collectively bargained, and is not exhaustive, as it does not include county health orders, nor is it a substitute for any existing safety and health-related regulatory requirements such as those of Cal/OSHA.¹ Stay current on changes to public health guidance and state/local orders, as the COVID-19 situation continues. Cal/OSHA has additional safety and health guidance on their Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Infection Prevention for Logistics Employers and Employees [webpage](#). CDC has more requirements in their guidance for [businesses and employers](#) and specific guidance for [mail and parcel delivery](#).



Worksite Specific Plan

- Establish a written, worksite-specific COVID-19 prevention plan at every port facility in consultation with terminal operators, perform a comprehensive risk assessment of all work areas, and designate a person at each port facility and terminal operator to implement the plan.
- Review contractors' job site safety plans and actions to ensure they are updated to protect workers from COVID-19.
- Identify contact information for the local health department where the facility is located for communicating information about COVID-19 outbreaks among employees.
- Train and communicate with employees and employee representatives on the plan.
- Regularly evaluate the workplace for compliance with the plan and document and correct deficiencies identified.
- Investigate any COVID-19 illness and determine if any work-related factors could have contributed to risk of infection. Update the plan as needed to prevent further cases.
- Identify close contacts (within six feet for 15 minutes or more) of an infected employee and take steps to isolate COVID-19 positive employee(s) and close contacts.
- Adhere to the guidelines below. Failure to do so could result in workplace illnesses that may cause operations to be temporarily closed or limited.



Topics for Employee Training

- Information on [COVID-19](#), how to prevent it from spreading, and which underlying health conditions may make individuals more susceptible to contracting the virus.
- Self-screening at home, including temperature and/or symptom checks using [CDC guidelines](#).
- The importance of not coming to work if employees have a frequent cough, fever, difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, recent loss of taste or smell, or if they or someone they live with have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

- To seek medical attention if their symptoms become severe, including persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, or bluish lips or face. Updates and further details are available on [CDC's webpage](#).
- The importance of frequent handwashing with soap and water, including scrubbing with soap for 20 seconds (or using hand sanitizer with at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol when employees cannot get to a sink or handwashing station, per [CDC guidelines](#)).
- The importance of physical distancing, both at work and off work time (see Physical Distancing section below).
- Proper use of face coverings, including:
 - Face coverings do not protect the wearer and are not personal protective equipment (PPE).
 - Face coverings can help protect people near the wearer, but 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.
 - Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - Face coverings should be washed after each shift.
- Ensure temporary or contract workers at the facility are also properly trained in COVID-19 prevention policies and have necessary PPE. Discuss these responsibilities ahead of time with organizations supplying temporary and/or contract workers.
- Information on employer or government-sponsored leave benefits the employee may be entitled to receive that would make it financially easier to stay at home. See additional information on [government programs supporting sick leave and worker's compensation for COVID-19](#), including employee's sick leave rights under the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) and employee's rights to workers' compensation benefits and presumption of the work-relatedness of COVID-19 pursuant to the Governor's [Executive Order N-62-20](#).



Individual Control Measures and Screening

- Provide temperature and/or symptom screenings for all workers at the beginning of their shift and any vendors, contractors, or other workers entering the establishment. Make sure the temperature/symptom

screeener avoids close contact with workers to the extent possible. Both screeners and employees should wear face coverings for the screening.

- If requiring self-screening at home, which is an appropriate alternative to providing it at the establishment, ensure that screening was performed prior to the worker leaving the home for their shift and follows [CDC guidelines](#), as described in the Topics for Employee Training section above.
- Encourage workers who are sick or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 to stay home.
- Employers should provide and ensure workers use all required protective equipment, including face coverings and gloves where necessary. Employers should consider where disposable glove use may be helpful to supplement frequent handwashing or use of hand sanitizer; examples are for workers who are screening others for symptoms or handling commonly touched items.
- Face coverings are strongly recommended when employees are in the vicinity of others. Workers should have face coverings available and wear them when on-site, in offices, or in a vehicle for work-related travel with others. Face coverings must not be shared.
- Non-employees entering the port facility should be restricted to only those classified as essential by management and they must complete a temperature and/or symptom screening before entering. Contractors, drivers, and all others entering the plant should wear face coverings.
- Employers should take steps to inform employees about policies related to the use of proper protective equipment, including face coverings and the importance of maintaining physical distancing.



Cleaning and Disinfecting Protocols

- Perform thorough cleaning on high traffic areas such as break rooms, lunch areas, and changing areas, and areas of ingress and egress including stairways and stairwells, handrails, and elevator controls. Frequently disinfect commonly used surfaces, including tables, amenities, doorknobs, toilets, and handwashing facilities, etc.
- Clean touchable surfaces between users or shifts, whichever is more frequent, including but not limited to working surfaces, radios, machinery, tools, equipment, shelves, storage rooms, handles, latches and locks, and controls on stationary and mobile equipment.

- Require employees to wash hands or use sanitizer between use of shared equipment, such as time clocks and forklifts, and allow time to do so. Provide time for workers to implement cleaning practices during their shift. Cleaning assignments should be assigned during working hours as part of the employee's job duties.
- Avoid sharing phones, office supplies, other work tools, or equipment wherever possible. Never share PPE.
- Ensure that sanitary facilities stay operational and stocked at all times and provide additional soap, paper towels, and hand sanitizer when needed. Provide additional sanitary facilities (portable toilets and handwashing stations) if necessary.
- Provide resources to promote employees' personal hygiene. This will include tissues, no-touch trash cans, hand soap, adequate time for handwashing, alcohol-based hand sanitizers, disinfectants, and disposable towels.
- When choosing cleaning chemicals, employers should use products approved for use against COVID-19 on the [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-approved](#) list and follow product instructions. Use disinfectants that are labeled to be effective against emerging viral pathogens, diluted household bleach solutions (5 tablespoons per gallon of water), or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, that are appropriate for the surface. Provide employees training on manufacturer's directions and Cal/OSHA requirements for safe use. Workers using cleaners or disinfectants should wear gloves as required by the product instructions.
- Consider installing portable high-efficiency air cleaners, upgrading the facility's air filters to the highest efficiency possible, and making other modifications to increase the quantity of outside air and ventilation in work and break areas.



Physical Distancing Guidelines

- Implement measures to ensure physical distancing of at least six feet between employees, including transportation personnel. This can include the use of physical partitions or visual cues such as floor markings, colored tape, or signs to indicate to where workers should stand.
- Minimize transaction time between port workers, warehouse employees, and transportation personnel. Perform gate check-ins and paperwork digitally if feasible. Employee are strongly recommended to put on face

coverings prior to interfacing with transportation personnel and other people entering and exiting the facility.

- Require truck drivers and other non-employees at terminals to follow all COVID-19 related precautions. They should wear face coverings and maintain physical distancing outside of their cabs. Provide visual cues in waiting and service areas. Provide signage outlining requirements in areas where employees or non-employees may be, which include pictographs or are in a language and language style they will understand.
- Redesign workspaces and shared outdoor spaces to allow for at least six feet between employees.
- Consider offering workers who request modified duties options that minimize their contact with other employees (e.g., managing administrative needs through telework).
- Use the following hierarchy to prevent transmission of COVID-19 in work areas especially where physical distancing is difficult to maintain: engineering controls, administrative controls, and PPE.
 - Engineering controls include creating physical or spatial barriers between employees such as Plexiglas or other sturdy and impermeable partitions.
 - Administrative controls include increasing the number of shifts to reduce the number of personnel present at one time and ensure adequate physical distancing.
 - PPE includes face shields, some masks, and impermeable gloves. Note that some disposable equipment such as some face shields and respirators are prioritized for health care workers and workers that handle pathogens and should not otherwise be used.
- Adjust safety and other meetings to ensure physical distance and conduct smaller individual meetings at facilities to maintain physical distancing guidelines. Wherever possible, transition all meetings and interviews to phone or digital platforms or hold outside.
- Utilize work practices, when feasible, to limit the number of workers on-site at one time. This may include scheduling (e.g., staggering shift start/end times) or rotating crew access to a designated area during a shift. Stage the jobsite to stagger work and limit overlap of work crews. Discourage employees from congregating in high traffic areas.
- Place additional limitations on the number of workers in enclosed areas, where six feet of separation may not be sufficient to limit transmission of the virus.

- Stagger employee breaks, in compliance with wage and hour regulations, to maintain physical distancing protocols.
- Close breakrooms, use barriers, or increase distance between tables/chairs to separate workers and discourage congregating during breaks. Where possible, create outdoor break areas with shade covers and seating that ensures physical distancing.
- Hold port commission meetings virtually.
- Suspend school and business boat tours and close other public access to the docks. Control pedestrian access at port facilities and promenades, and limit access to picnic tables, benches, and other amenities that may be placed on publicly-accessible port property.

¹Additional requirements must be considered for vulnerable populations. Ports must comply with all [Cal/OSHA](#) standards and be prepared to adhere to its guidance as well as guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#). Additionally, employers must be prepared to alter their operations as those guidelines change.

