



COVID-19 INDUSTRY GUIDANCE: Public Transit and Intercity Passenger Rail

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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 public transit agencies and California state-supported intercity passenger rail operators (Capitol Corridor, San Joaquins, and Pacific Surfliner) to support a safe, clean environment for workers and customers. 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 Additionally, it is not intended to conflict with federal or state requirements for rail or transit vehicles or facilities. Stay current on

changes to public health guidance and state/local orders, as the COVID-19 situation continues. Cal/OSHA has more comprehensive guidance on their Cal/OSHA Interim General Guidelines on Protecting Workers from COVID-19 [webpage](#). CDC has specific guidelines for the transit industry:

- [Bus Transit Operators](#)
- [Rail Transit Operators](#)
- [Transit Maintenance Workers](#)
- [Transit Station Workers](#)



Worksite Specific Plan

- Establish a written, worksite-specific COVID-19 prevention plan at every facility, perform a comprehensive risk assessment of all work areas, and designate a person at each facility to implement the plan.
- 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 10 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.



Individual Control Measures and Screening

- Provide temperature and/or symptom screenings for all workers at the beginning of their shift and any personnel entering the facility. Make sure the temperature/symptom screener avoids close contact with workers to the extent possible. Both screeners and employees should wear face coverings for the screening.
- 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. 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 in a public transit or rail facility, breakrooms and offices, parking lots or garages, or a transit or rail vehicle. Face coverings must not be shared.
- Non-employees entering the 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, vendors, and all others entering the transit facility are required to wear face coverings.

- Public transit or rail agencies must take reasonable measures to remind the public that they need to use face coverings and avoid directly facing other passengers when physical distancing is difficult.



Cleaning and Disinfecting Protocols

- Perform thorough cleaning on high traffic areas within transit and rail stations and in transit and rail vehicles on a regular basis, such as break rooms, restroom surfaces, lunch areas, changing areas and areas of ingress and egress, including stairways, handrails, and elevator controls, etc. Frequently disinfect commonly used surfaces, including kiosks, ticket machines, turnstiles, benches, elevator buttons, system maps, doorknobs, toilets, handwashing facilities, equipment handles, maintenance equipment, and tools.
- Perform routine cleaning and disinfection of all frequently touched surfaces within transit and rail vehicles, including but not limited to, seats, arm rests, door handles, seat belt buckles, light and air controls, walls and windows, grab handles, pull-cords and buttons used by riders to request a stop.
- Clean all areas of drivers' cabs between shifts or users, whichever is more frequent. Provide time for workers to implement cleaning practices before and after shifts. If cleaning is assigned to the worker, they must be compensated for that time.
- Avoid sharing phones, other work tools, or equipment wherever possible. Never share PPE.
- When choosing cleaning chemicals, employers should use product approved for use against COVID-19 listed on the [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-approved](#) list and follow product instructions. Use disinfectants 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.

- Equip stations, transit and rail offices, and transit and rail vehicles with proper sanitation products, including hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes, and provide personal hand sanitizers to all frontline staff (e.g., operators).
- Ensure that sanitary facilities stay operational and stocked at all times and provide additional soap, paper towels, and hand sanitizer when needed.
- Consider installing portable high-efficiency air cleaners, upgrading vehicle and building air filters to the highest efficiency possible, and making other modifications to increase the quantity of outside air and ventilation in vehicles, offices, break areas, and other spaces.



Physical Distancing Guidelines

- Implement measures to ensure physical distancing of at least six feet between transit and rail operators and passengers. This can include use of physical partitions or visual cues (e.g., floor markings, colored tape, or signs to indicate to passengers where they should not sit or stand near the bus operator).
- Especially in circumstances (routes and times) where physical distancing is difficult to maintain, require passengers to wear face coverings to enter a public transit or rail vehicle or station. Some jurisdictions already require face coverings on public transit and rail.
- Operators will have the option to request passengers avoid standing or sitting within six feet of them. Where possible, install Plexiglas or other appropriate barriers in transit and rail vehicles to minimize exposure between operators and passengers.
- Reduce maximum occupancy onboard transit and rail vehicles to support physical distancing. Remove or space seats to support physical distancing or use colored tape to mark the seats that riders are allowed to use or block off seats that are not to be used. Where possible, use additional buses or transit vehicles to support excess capacity on busy lines and ensure physical distancing of passengers.
- 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.

- Place additional limitations on the number of workers in enclosed areas to ensure at least six feet of separation to limit transmission of the virus.
- Require passengers to purchase tickets and add value to transit and rail cards online to minimize the need for use of machines at the station.
- Allow/encourage passengers to verbally request a stop to avoid having to activate the stop request signal.
- Develop a passenger entry and exit plan to minimize physical contact and crowding with other passengers during entry and exit of the transit vehicle.
- Passengers using a wheelchair or other mobility device, or who require operator assistance. When assisting such passengers, operators must sanitize their hands before and after the interaction.
- Public transit agencies and intercity rail operators must take reasonable measures to communicate the updated ridership practices and any changes to the frequency of service timetables to the public. Public communication could include those listed (above) and may also include updates to text messaging or transit apps.

¹Additional requirements must be considered for vulnerable populations. Public transit operators 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.

