MITIGATING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN THE WORKPLACE

Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19)

Introduction

Businesses and employers in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) play a key role in preventing and slowing the spread of COVID-19 within the community. COVID-19 is a disease that can spread from person to person, especially between people who are physically near each other (within about 6 feet).

People who are infected but do not show symptoms can also spread the virus to others. Most people with COVID-19 have mild symptoms, but some people become severely ill. Older adults and people who have certain underlying medical conditions are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

This document provides public health recommendations intended to help employers make workplaces safer; however, they will not eliminate the risk of COVID-19 completely. Make sure your policies follow CNMI and federal labor laws.

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) based the information in this document from U.S. Centers for Disease and Control's (CDC) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidance, and knowledge of what is currently known about the transmission of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus that causes COVID-19.

Workplaces cannot stop the spread of COVID-19 alone. Communities which have a lot of COVID-19 spread will also see outbreaks in workplaces. It is critical for our communities, families, and individuals to take necessary measures to lower the spread of COVID-19.

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and the CHCC continue to encourage all residents of the CNMI to live COVID-19 safe: follow the 3 W's (wear your mask, wash your hands, and watch your distance); avoid crowds and poorly ventilated spaces; cover coughs and sneezes; clean and disinfect high touch surfaces frequently; be alert for symptoms daily; and get tested for COVID-19. It will greatly reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading in our businesses.

Responding to COVID-19 in the workplace

The Occupational Safety and Health Act requires employers to provide a workplace free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to their employees (29 U.S.C. 654 (a)(1)). To meet the standard and keep the workplace as safe as possible from COVID-19, it is important to assess occupational hazards where employees may be exposed.

The CDC and the CHCC continue to emphasize that vaccination is the most effective way to protect against severe illness or death from COVID-19.

As an employer, if your business operations are interrupted, resuming normal or phased activities presents an opportunity to update and execute your COVID-19 preparedness, response, and control programs.

All employers should implement and update as necessary a COVID-19 prevention program that:

- Is specific to your industry
- Identifies all areas and job tasks with potential exposures to COVID-19
- Includes control measures to eliminate or reduce such exposures

Consider the following in your program to decrease the spread of COVID-19 and lower the impact in your workplace:

- Prevent and reduce transmission among employees
- Maintain healthy business operations
- Maintain a healthy work environment

Educate and train employees on your COVID-19 policies and procedures using accessible formats and in languages they understand. Train managers on how to implement COVID-19 policies. Communicate supportive workplace policies clearly, frequently, and via multiple methods to promote a safe and healthy workplace.

Communications should be in plain language that all workers understand (including non-English languages, and American Sign Language, or other accessible communication methods, if applicable) and in a manner accessible to individuals with disabilities. Training should be directed at employees, contractors, and any other individuals on site, as appropriate, and should include:

- Basic facts about COVID-19, including how it is spread and the importance of physical distancing (including remote work), ventilation, vaccination, use of face coverings, and hand hygiene
- Workplace policies and procedures implemented to protect workers from COVID-19 hazards

Reading and implementing policies in regards to health and safety in the workplace is paramount to keeping your teams safe. It is your responsibility as an employer to provide a safe and healthy workplace free of recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm.

Implementing a COVID-19 prevention program is the most effective way to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in your workplace.
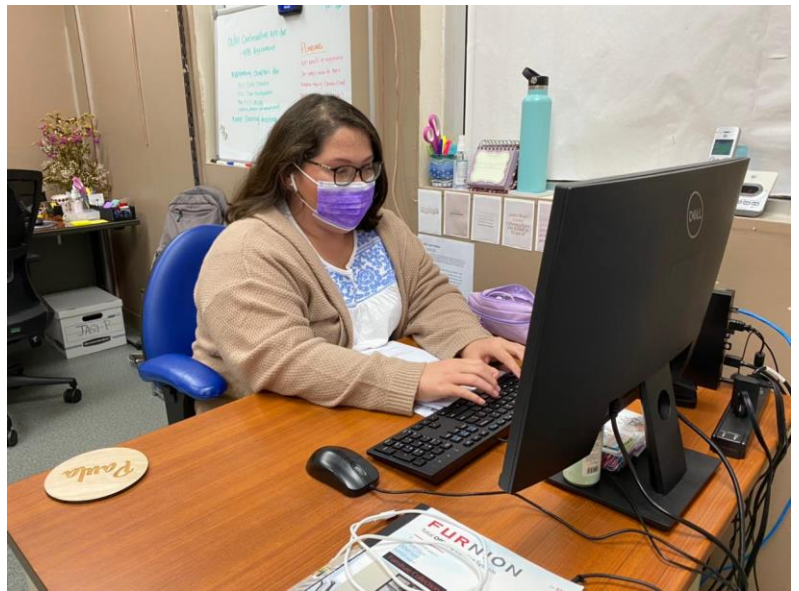
Suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the workplace

What should I do if an employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19?

Instruct employees who are infected, or employees with COVID-19 symptoms who may be close contacts to a confirmed case, to stay home from work to prevent or reduce the risk of transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19.

Individuals positive with COVID-19 are required to quarantine in the designated government facility, or at home if they qualify to (which requires assessment by contact tracers).
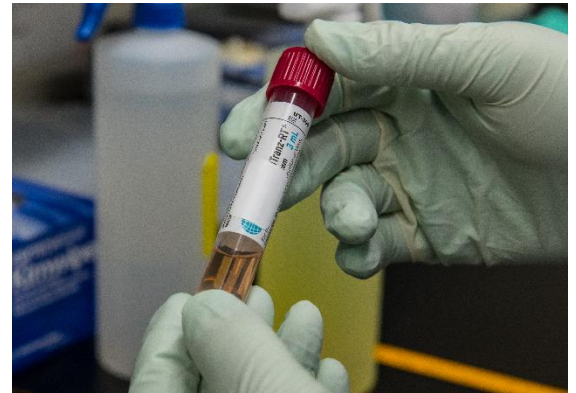
Employees who have symptoms when they arrive at work or become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home. Employees who develop symptoms outside of work should notify their supervisor and stay home.

Employees should not return to work until they have met the criteria to discontinue home isolation.

Employers should not require sick employees to provide a COVID-19 test result or healthcare provider's note to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or return to work.

Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.

As recommended by the CDC, fully vaccinated people who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should get tested 3-5 days after exposure and should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result. People who are not

fully vaccinated should be tested immediately after being identified, and, if negative, tested again five to seven days after last exposure or immediately if symptoms develop during quarantine.

If there has been a sick person or someone who has COVID-19 in your facility within the last 24 hours, you should clean and disinfect the spaces they occupied. Close off areas used by the person who is sick and do not use those areas until they have been cleaned and disinfected. Follow requirements in mandatory OSHA standards 29 CFR 1910.1200 and 1910.132, 133, and 138 for hazard communication and PPE appropriate for exposure to cleaning chemicals.

If it has been *less than 24 hours* since the person who was sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 was in the facility, clean and disinfect the space. If it has been *more than 24 hours* since the person who was sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 was in the facility, cleaning is enough. You may choose to also disinfect depending on certain conditions or everyday practices required by your facility. If it has been *more than three days* since the person who was sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 was in the facility, no additional cleaning (beyond regular cleaning practices) is necessary.

If employees have been exposed but are not showing symptoms, should I allow them to work?

As recommended by the CDC, employees may have been exposed if they are a "close contact" of someone who is infected, which is defined as being within about 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time:

- Potentially exposed employees who have symptoms of COVID-19 should isolate and [live COVID-19 safe](#).
- Potentially exposed employees who do not have symptoms should live COVID-19 safe and get tested when instructed to by CHCC contact tracers.
- Confirmed close contacts will be called by CHCC contact tracers for next steps.
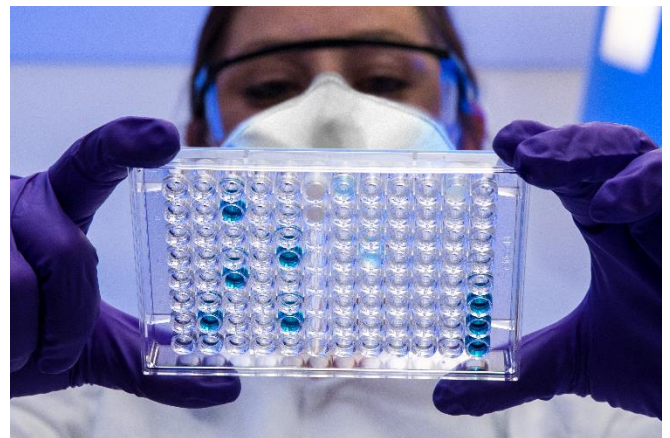
All other employees should self-monitor for symptoms and wear the best type of face covering they can find when in public. If they develop symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and stay home.

What should I do if I find out several days later, after an employee worked, that they were diagnosed with COVID-19?

According to the CDC, if it has been less than 7 days since the sick employee used the facility, clean and disinfect all areas used by the sick employee following the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations.

If it has been 7 days or more since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces in the facility.

Other employees may have been exposed to the virus if they were in "close contact" (within approximately 6 feet) of the sick employee for a prolonged period of time.

- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, 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).
- Those who have symptoms should isolate and follow CDC recommendations on how to live COVID-19 safe.
- In most workplaces, those potentially exposed but with no symptoms should remain at home or in a comparable setting and practice social distancing for 14 days.

Employees not considered exposed should self-monitor for symptoms. If they develop symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and stay home.
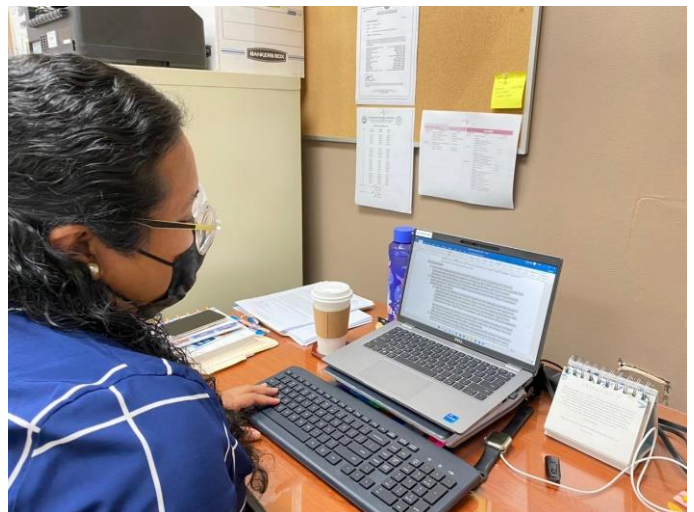
When should an employee suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 return to work?

The CHCC advises that sick employees live COVID-19 safe to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the CNMI. Employees should not return to work until they meet the criteria to discontinue home isolation or government quarantine.

Employers should not require a sick employee to provide a negative COVID-19 test result or health care provider's note to return to work.

For most people, testing is not recommended to determine when to end isolation after COVID-19, and testing without symptoms is not recommended within the first 90 days after a positive test result. In some people, a COVID-19 viral test is sensitive enough to detect leftover virus fragments and return a positive test result for up to 3 months after recovery from COVID-19, even though they are no longer contagious to others after they have exited isolation.

What testing does the CHCC recommend for employees in a workplace?

With guidance from the CDC, the CHCC does not recommend that employers use antibody tests to determine which employees can return to work. Antibody tests check a blood sample for past infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Viral tests check a respiratory sample (such as swabs of the inside of the nose) for current infection with SARS-CoV-2.

What should I do if an employee has a respiratory illness?

Employees who appear to have COVID-19 symptoms upon arrival to work or become sick during the day with COVID-19 symptoms should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home. Sick employees should live COVID-19 safe to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

What does "acute" respiratory illness mean?

"Acute" respiratory illness is an infection of the upper or lower respiratory tract that may interfere with normal breathing, such as COVID-19. "Acute" means of recent onset (for example, for a few days), and it is used to distinguish from chronic respiratory illnesses like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Are allergy symptoms considered an acute respiratory illness?

No. Allergy symptoms are not considered an acute respiratory illness. However, there is some overlap between common seasonal allergy symptoms and some of the symptoms that have been reported by people with COVID-19 (e.g., headache, sneezing, cough). It is important to take into account whether an individual's symptoms are compatible with the usual symptoms and timing for allergy in that person.

Prevent and reduce transmission

Please monitor all public health communications from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and the CHCC about COVID-19 regulations, guidance, and recommendations and ensure that workers have access to that information.

The U.S. Department of Labor and OSHA, as well as other federal agencies, are working diligently to ensure access to COVID-19 vaccinations. The CDC provides information on the benefits and safety of vaccinations.

Employers should also consider working with the CHCC to provide vaccinations in the workplace for unvaccinated workers. Finally, OSHA suggests that employers consider adopting policies that require workers to get vaccinated or to undergo regular COVID-19 testing – in addition to mask-wearing and physical distancing – if they remain unvaccinated.

Unvaccinated individuals are at risk of serious illness from COVID-19. Vaccines are the best protection against the highly transmissible virus, and are readily available at the Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe, Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.; and Saturday, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. For latest updates and to register for COVID-19 vaccines or booster shots, please visit www.vaccinatecnmi.com.

If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms like coughing, fever, shortness of breath, or new loss of taste or smell, get checked by a health care provider right away, or call the CHCC Tele-Triage line (670) 233-2067 if you do not have a provider.

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home

Employees who have symptoms should notify their immediate supervisor, stay home if possible, and get tested for COVID-19, to include their close contacts.

If an employee is not experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and it has been five to seven days since their exposure to a person who may have COVID-19, they can access free CNMI Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services (DFEMS) antigen testing (Mondays and Saturdays, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., at Kagman or Susupe fire stations) or the free community-based testing (Register at https://covidtesting.chcc.health; more dates will be announced).

While you wait to get tested or get your test results, follow the 3 W's (wear a mask, wash your hands, and watch your distance), stay at home as much as possible, and limit your contact with others. More tips on how to live COVID-19 safe are available at www.staysafecnmi.com/livecovidsafe.

Employees who are sick with COVID-19 should self-isolate and live COVID-19 safe. Employees who are asymptomatic (have no symptoms) but have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 infection should self-quarantine and live COVID-19 safe. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met.

Employers are encouraged to implement flexible, non-punitive paid sick leave and supportive policies and practices as part of a comprehensive approach to prevent and reduce transmission among employees. Some employees may be eligible to take leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

Consider conducting daily in-person or virtual health checks

Screen employees for their temperature or for symptoms before they enter the facility, in accordance with the Commonwealth and CHCC public health officials and, if available, your respective occupational health services plans or policies.

Screening and health checks are not a replacement for other protective measures such as social distancing, mask wearing, and engineering controls. Symptom and temperature screening cannot identify people with COVID-19 infection who do not have symptoms or who have not developed signs or symptoms yet.

For virtual health checks, encourage individuals to self-screen prior to coming to the workplace or a respective jobsite.

For in-person health checks, you are encouraged to conduct them safely, respectfully, and in a way that maintains social distancing of workers in and around a designated screening area. Workers should not enter the worksite past designated screening areas if any of the following are present:

- Symptoms of COVID-19
- Fever of 100.4 F or higher, or report of feeling feverish
- Diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior five days

Some examples that can be incorporated into your respective in-person screening process include:

- Social distancing: Ask employees to take their own temperature either before coming to the workplace or upon arrival at the workplace. Upon their arrival, stand at least 6 feet away from the employee.
- Barrier/Partitional controls: If possible, during screening, a designated screener should stand behind a physical barrier, such as a glass or plastic window or partition, that can protect the screener's face and mucous membranes from respiratory droplets that may be produced when the employee sneezes, coughs, talks, or breathes. Upon arrival, the designated

screener(s) should wear a mask and wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or, if soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Designated screeners need to be trained on how to properly put on, take off, and dispose of all PPE. Upon arrival, the screener should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol and put on a facemask or properly-fitted respirator, eye protection (goggles or disposable face shield that fully covers the front and sides of the face), and a single pair of disposable gloves.

Extended use of a facemask or respirator and eye protection may be implemented. Use of an isolation gown could be considered if extensive contact with an employee is anticipated.

Consider adding testing for COVID-19 into workplace preparedness, response, and control programs

Consider implementing periodic COVID-19 testing of workers at regular intervals, targeted testing of new workers or those returning from a prolonged absence such as medical leave or furlough and or some combination of health testing approaches. Several factors may be helpful in determining the interval for periodic testing, including availability of testing, results of previous testing, and level of community transmission of COVID-19.

The CHCC provides free community-based testing, and individuals must register at https://covidtesting.chcc.health/. If no dates are showing, it means all slots have been filled for that day. More dates will be announced as soon as they are available.

OSHA suggests that employers consider adopting policies that require workers to get vaccinated or to undergo regular COVID-19 testing – in addition to mask wearing and physical distancing – if they remain unvaccinated.

The CDC recommends that to reduce their risk of becoming infected with the Delta variant and potentially spreading it to others, fully vaccinated individuals should get tested three to five days following a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed with COVID-19 and wearing a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days after exposure or until a negative test result.

Identify where and how workers might be exposed to individuals with COVID-19 at work

Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace. Conduct a thorough hazard assessment of the workplace to identify potential workplace hazards related to COVID-19.

Keeping a safe work environment means looking for potential hazards and developing a method to prevent the hazards from causing an unwanted exposure.

Use appropriate combinations of control measures to limit the spread of COVID-19, including engineering controls, workplace administrative policies, and PPE to protect workers from the identified hazards.

Conduct a thorough hazard assessment to determine if workplace hazards are present, or are likely to be present, and determine what type of controls or PPE are needed for specific job duties. When engineering and administrative controls cannot be implemented or are not fully protective, employers are required by OSHA standards to:

- Determine what PPE is needed for their workers' specific job duties.
- Select and provide appropriate PPE to the workers at no cost.
- Train their workers on its correct use.

Ensure all employees wear masks in accordance with CDC and OSHA guidance as well as any local requirements. This applies if the hazard assessment has determined that they do not require PPE, such as a respirator or surgical mask for protection.
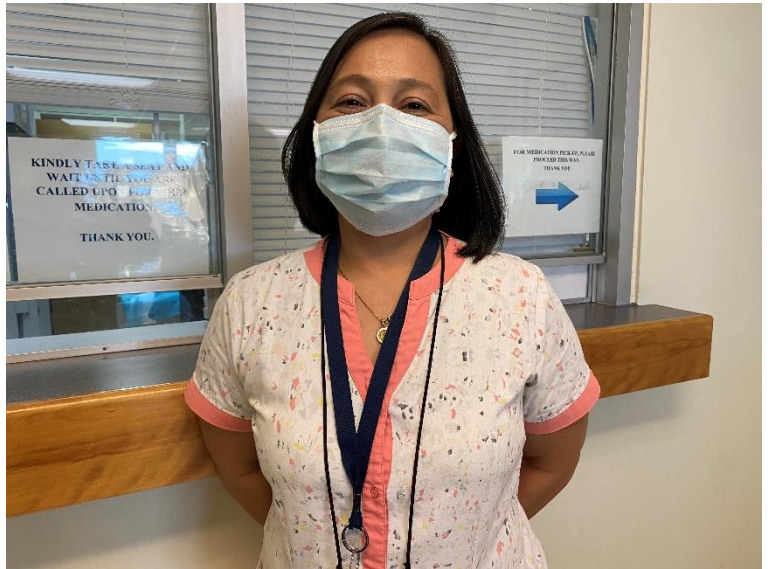
Remind employees and customers that the CDC recommends wearing masks in public settings and when around people who do not live in their household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Wearing a mask, however, is not a substitute for social distancing. Masks should still be worn in addition to staying at least six feet apart.

Take appropriate action if an employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19

Under mandatory OSHA rules in 29 CFR part 1904, employers are required to record work-related cases of COVID-19 illness on OSHA's Form 300 logs if the following requirements are met: (1) the case is a confirmed case of COVID-19; (2) the case is work-related (as defined by 29 CFR 1904.5); and (3) the case involves one or more relevant recording criteria (set forth in 29 CFR 1904.7) (e.g., medical treatment, days away from work).

Employers must follow the requirements in 29 CFR part 1904 when reporting COVID-19 fatalities and hospitalizations to OSHA. More information is available on OSHA's website at www.osha.gov.

Employers should also report outbreaks to the CHCC as required and support the Commonwealth's contact tracing efforts.

Implementation of testing strategies can supplement measures to reduce transmission in the workplace. Repeated testing over time may be more likely to detect infection among workers with exposures than testing done at a single point in time.

Follow the CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfection your facility (This guidance is indicated for buildings in community settings and is not intended for healthcare settings or for other facilities where specific regulations or practices for cleaning and disinfection may apply):

- Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water before disinfecting them. To disinfect surfaces, use products that meet EPA criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- Always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used when you are cleaning and disinfecting.
- Ensure there is adequate ventilation when using cleaning and disinfection products to prevent from inhaling toxic vapors.
- You may need to wear additional PPE depending on the setting and disinfectant product you are using. For each product you use, consult and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.

Determine which employees may have been exposed to the virus and may need to take additional precautions. Employers have an obligation to manage the potentially exposed workers' return to work in ways that best protect the health of those workers, their co-workers, and the general public.

Inform employees of their possible close contact (within six feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with someone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 in the workplace, but maintain confidentiality as required by federal law.

Exposed employees (close contacts) after being identified by contact tracers should get tested as soon as contact tracers notify them and monitor for symptoms, especially if they have not been fully vaccinated. This approach maximally reduces post-quarantine transmission risk.

Maintain a healthy work environment

Since COVID-19 may be spread by those with no symptoms, businesses and employers should evaluate and institute controls to protect their employees and members of the general public who may engage in their respective business establishment.

Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system

Increase outdoor air ventilation, using caution in highly polluted areas. Use fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows. To safely achieve this, fan placement is important and will vary based on room configuration. Avoid placing fans in a way that could potentially cause contaminated air to flow directly from one person over another. One helpful strategy is to use a window fan, placed safely and securely in a window, to exhaust room air to the outdoors. This will help draw fresh air into room via other open windows and doors without generating strong room air currents.

Decrease occupancy in areas where outdoor ventilation cannot be increased. Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.

Ensure restroom exhaust fans are functional and operating at full capacity when the building is occupied.

Inspect and maintain local exhaust ventilation in areas such as kitchens, cooking areas, etc. Operate these systems any time these spaces are occupied. Consider operating these systems, even when the specific space is not occupied, to increase overall ventilation within the occupied building.

Consider portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to help enhance air cleaning (especially in higher risk areas such as a nurse's office or areas frequently used by persons with increased risk of getting COVID-19).

Provide employees, customers, and visitors items needed to clean their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes

Provide tissues, no-touch trash cans, and soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, provide access to alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Ideally, place touchless hand sanitizer stations in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.

Place posters that encourage proper hand hygiene to help stop the spread at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen. This should include signs for non-English speakers, as needed.

Discourage handshaking. Encourage employees to use other noncontact methods of greeting.

Perform routine cleaning and disinfection

Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs. If surfaces are dirty, clean them using a detergent or soap and water before you disinfect them.

Provide disposable disinfecting wipes so that employees can wipe down commonly used surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) before each use. Discourage workers from using each other's phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible.

Store and use disinfectants in a responsible and appropriate manner according to the label. Do not mix bleach or other cleaning and disinfection products together. This can cause fumes that may be very dangerous to breathe in.

Ensure there is adequate ventilation when using cleaning and disinfection products. Advise employees to always wear gloves appropriate for the chemicals being used when they are cleaning and disinfecting and that they may need additional PPE based on the setting and product.

Perform cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility.

Delay travel

Advise employees, if they must travel, to follow CDC's latest recommendations for travel during COVID-19. 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.

If they are outside the U.S., sick employees should follow company policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to help them find an appropriate health care provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, or resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

Minimize risk to employees when planning meetings and gatherings

Use videoconferencing or teleconferencing, when possible, for work-related meetings and gatherings. When videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces continuing to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet apart and wear masks.

Cancel, adjust, or postpone large work-related meetings or gatherings that can only occur in-person in accordance with state and local regulations and guidance.

Remind employees of the Smoke-Free Air Act

The purpose of the Smoke-Free Air Act of 2008 is to protect the public health and welfare by prohibiting smoking in public places and places of employment; and to guarantee the right of nonsmokers to breathe smoke-free air; and to recognize that the need to breathe smoke-free air shall have priority over the desire to smoke.

Smoking is prohibited in all enclosed facilities within places of employment, or within 25 feet of any person who is not smoking if the place or site of work is an outdoor area or area other than an enclosed area, without exception. For the purposes of determining compliance within these regulations, employers must adhere to the following:

(1) Inform employees, agents, subagents, contractors, customers, and all other persons who are physically present on the premises of the prohibition against smoking.
(2) Prominently posting "Smoking" or "No Smoking" signs, or the international "No Smoking" symbol,
(3) Removing all ashtrays,
(4) Asking any person who smokes in an area where smoking is prohibited to refrain from smoking,
(5) If the person does not refrain from smoking, asking the person to leave,
(6) Refusing service to a person who is smoking.

If the person refuses to leave, the proprietor or other person in charge shall handle the situation in the same manner as for violations of other laws, employee policies, or house rules.

Nothing in this section prohibits the owner, manager, or other person in charge from taking more stringent measures to protect individuals from secondhand smoke.

Maintain healthy business operations

COVID-19 is front of mind of all businesses from Saipan to Tinian to Rota. Given the enormous amount of information on the coronavirus and varying protocols, it can be difficult to ascertain what is right or wrong when it comes to keeping your team healthy. In a situation like this, in the heart of a public health emergency, too much may be better than too little.

Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices

Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible, non-punitive, and consistent with federal and Commonwealth public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.

Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.

Some workers may be eligible to take leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees should consider drafting non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies.

Employers should consider not to require a COVID-19 test result or a health care provider's note for employees who are sick to qualify for sick leave or to return to work. Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care and can follow CDC recommendations on when to discontinue self-isolation and return to work. However, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, employers are permitted to require a doctor's note from their employees to verify that they are healthy and able to return to work. However, be aware that health care provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and may not be able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.

Review your respective human resources policies to make sure that your policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and with existing Commonwealth and federal workplace laws.

Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources, if available, and community resources as needed. Employees may need additional social, behavioral, and other services, for example, to help them manage stress and cope.

Protect employees at higher risk for severe illness through supportive policies and practices

Educate employees about steps they can take to protect themselves at work and at home. More information on how to live COVID-19 safe is available at www.staysafecnmi.com/livecovidsafe. Encourage employees to follow any new policies or procedures related to illness, cleaning and disinfecting, and work meetings and travel:

- Stay home if they are sick, except to get medical care, and to learn what to do if they are sick.

- Inform their supervisor if they have a sick household member at home with COVID-19 and to learn what to do if someone in their home is sick.
- Wear a mask when out in public and when around people who do not live in their household, especially when social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
- Wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or to use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. Inform employees that if their hands are visibly dirty, they should use soap and water instead of hand sanitizer.
- Practice social distancing by avoiding large gatherings (e.g., stagger lunches) and maintaining distance (at least six feet) from others when possible.
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when they cough or sneeze or use the inside of their elbow. Throw used tissues into no-touch trash cans 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.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.
- Avoid using other employees' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. Clean and disinfect them before and after use.

Older adults, such as our *manåmko'*, and people of any age who have certain underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Support and encourage options to telework, if available. This will eliminate the need for employees living in higher transmission areas to travel to workplaces in lower transmission areas and vice versa.

Consider offering employees at higher risk for severe illness duties that minimize their contact with customers and other employees (e.g., restocking shelves rather than working as a cashier), if the worker agrees to this.

Communicate supportive workplace polices clearly, frequently, and via multiple methods

Employers may need to communicate with non-English speakers in their preferred languages.

Train workers on how implementing any new policies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 may affect existing health and safety practices. Communicate to any contractors or on-site visitors about changes that have been made to help control the spread of SARS-CoV-2. Ensure that they have the information and capability to comply with those policies.

Create and test communication systems that employees can use to self-report if they are sick and that you can use to notify employees of exposures and closures.
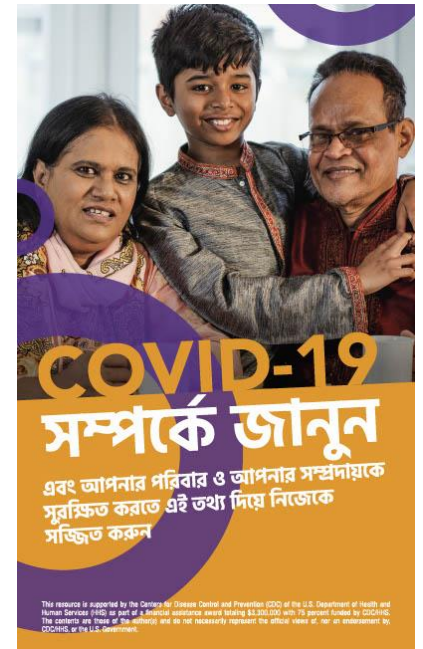
Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products

Be prepared to change your business practices, if needed, to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize existing customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations). Identify alternate supply chains for critical goods and services. Some goods and services may be in higher demand or unavailable.

If other companies provide your business with contract or temporary employees, talk with them about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.

Talk with business partners about your response efforts. Share best practices with other businesses in your communities (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.

Minimize the number of workers present at worksites by balancing the need to protect workers with support for continuing operations.

Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes

Plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace. Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher-than-usual absenteeism.

Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies. Cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.

Establish policies and practices for social distancing

Consider altering your workspace to help workers and customers maintain social distancing and physically separate employees from each other and from customers, when possible.

- Implement flexible worksites (e.g., telework).
- Implement flexible work hours (e.g., rotate or stagger shifts to limit the number of employees in the workplace at the same time).
- Increase physical space between employees at the worksite by modifying the workspace.
- Increase physical space between employees and customers (e.g., drive-through service, physical barriers such as partitions).
- Use signs, tape marks, or other visual cues such as decals or colored tape on the floor, placed at least six feet apart, to indicate where to stand when physical barriers are not possible.
- Implement flexible meeting and travel options (e.g., postpone in-person non-essential meetings or events in accordance with state and local regulations and guidance).
- Close or limit access to common areas where employees are likely to congregate and interact.
- Utilize alternatives to handshaking.
- Deliver services remotely (e.g., phone, video, or web).

- Adjust your business practices to reduce close contact with customers by providing drive-through services, click-and-collect online shopping, shop by phone, curbside pickup, and delivery options, wherever feasible.
- Move the electronic payment terminal/credit card reader farther away from the cashier, if possible, to increase the distance between the customer and the cashier.
- Shift primary stocking activities to off-peak or after hours, when possible, to reduce contact with customers.

Resources

CDC Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
The CDC has industry-specific guidance as well as guidance on:

- Cleaning and disinfecting workplaces
- Decision making tools to reopen your business
- Critical infrastructure response planning
- Employee fatigue and stress

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html

CDC COVID-19 Employer Information for Office Buildings
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/office-buildings.html

CDC General Business Frequently Asked Questions
The FAQs are based on what is currently known about the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), in the workplace.
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace
The U.S. Department of Labor website updates guidance over time to reflect developments in science, best practices and standards related to COVID-19
https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/safework

Contact information

Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Infoline

General information and non-medical inquiries about the CNMI's COVID-19 response

(670) 488-0211, available every day, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

info@staysafecnmi.com

Mental Health Support Line

Mental health support and coping skills

(670) 284-0844/0845 or (670) 284-0847, available every day, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Disaster Distress Helpline (SAMSHA)

1-800-985-5990, available 24/7

Vaccinate CNMI

Inquiries regarding COVID-19 vaccines: registration, rescheduling, etc.

(670) 682-7468 (SHOT)

info@vaccinatcnmi.com

www.vaccinatecnmi.com

CHCC Contact Tracing

(670) 287-1652, (670) 287-1683, (670) 286-1710, (670) 286-1711, (670) 285-1942

CHCC Test Team

Inquiries regarding test results from community-based testing (PIC, Marianas Resort, Kanoa Resort), or testing account information

(670) 785-9966, (670) 785-9968, (670) 785-9970, (670) 785-9972, (670) 785-9973

www.staysafecnmi.com/livecovidsafe

www.governor.gov.mp

www.chcc.gov.mp