COVID-19 Instructions for Supervisors

Environmental Health & Safety
Directory of Services
Assistant Vice President for Environmental Health and Safety  1-540-231-9044
Hazardous Materials Management  1-540-231-2982
Laboratory Safety  1-540-231-8758
Occupational Safety and Health  1-540-231-5985
Radiation Safety  1-540-231-5364
Biological Safety  1-540-231-5864
Main Office Number  1-540-231-3600

The following are instructions for responding to reported cases (suspected or confirmed) of COVID-19 in your work unit. Supervisors will likely be contacted directly by their employees to report COVID-19 cases. For information regarding masks, gloves and prevention tips please see Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance. If you need more information related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) that is not covered in this document, please contact EHS at 1-3600 or VT-EHS@vt.edu.

The guidance provided in this document covers the following issues:

- Individuals experiencing flu-like symptoms (suspected “COVID-19 Case”)
- COVID-19 Case Assessment for Impact on University Operations
- Identifying and Restricting Access to Work Areas and Equipment in Close Contact with a COVID-19 Case
- Individuals in Close Contact with a COVID-19 Case (“Close Contacts”)
- Individuals in Shared Work Area/Equipment but not deemed a close contact (“Shared Contacts”)
- Individuals and vendors in a Building with a COVID-19 Case
- Guidelines for Potential Work Place Exposure to COVID-19 Related to Workers’ Compensation
1. General Guidance

Based on CDC’s recommendations, EHS recommends that cloth face coverings/masks be worn in work areas while maintaining social distances of at least six (6) feet. This is especially important because individuals might be infected but have no visible symptoms.

If your department has a policy in place about mandatory safety procedures (including social distancing, masks, gloves, etc.) during this time, supervisors should address non-compliance by partnering with your department’s Human Resources team.

2. Guidance to Individuals Experiencing Flu-like Symptoms (Suspected “COVID-19 Case”)

COVID-19 Symptoms: These symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure
- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Provide the following guidance to employees if they experience flu-like systems that could be due to COVID-19:

a. **Self-Isolate:** Individuals who develop these symptoms at work should leave immediately after notifying their supervisor. Individuals who develop these symptoms while away from work should stay home.

b. **COVID Phone Screen:** Individuals should be instructed to either:
   i. Contact their personal healthcare provider for a phone screen assessment for COVID-19, or

c. **Contact Supervisor/Manager:** Instruct the individual to contact their Supervisor/Manager and provide the following information. Supervisors should be familiar with this information as well:
   i. Record that “Suspected COVID-19” is the reason for the individual’s absence.
   ii. Confirm and record the individual’s work location and supervisor information.
   iii. Record the date that the individual last worked onsite.
   iv. Record the names of other people with whom the ill individual came into close contact (within 6 feet) over the course of their last few working days.
   v. Notify your department Human Resources team immediately.

d. **Future Test Results:** Instruct the individual to report results of COVID-19 test to your department’s Human Resources team. This will help clarify if self-quarantine for individuals and work area closures are required to remain in effect or can be suspended. This also determines whether an accident report should be filed.
e. **Guidance:** Helpful instruction sheets which may be sent to ill staff or students.
   i. *One Sheet Instructions: Steps to Help Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 if You Are Sick*
   ii. *One Sheet Instructions: 10 Ways to Manage Respiratory Symptoms at Home*

3. **COVID-19 Case Assessment for Impact on University Operations**

As a general reference to Supervisors:
- The incubation period for COVID-19 is believed to be 2-14 days.
- According to the CDC, COVID-19 virus will die naturally within 72 hours on most surfaces.\(^1\)

**Case Assessment Steps:**

a. Has the COVID-19 affected employee been in contact with students, faculty or staff since becoming ill with COVID-19?

b. Has the COVID-19 affected employee been on campus in the past 14-days?

**If the answer is NO to both assessment questions, then no further action required.**

**If the answer is YES, Please call the Virginia Department of Health’s COVID-19 call center at 540-267-8240 for a risk assessment, quarantine/isolation guidelines, and/or testing.**

4. **Identify and Restrict Access to Work Areas and Equipment in Close Contact with COVID-19 Case**

Supervisors should work with their Deans, Directors or Department heads to identify and restrict access to areas using the following guidelines.

a. Restrict access to areas and equipment that were in close contact with COVID-19 Case by posting a **“COVID-19 Case Reported – Access Prohibited” sign.**

b. CDC defines “close contact” as
   i. Being **within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time;** close contact can occur while sharing office space, sitting in an office for a conversation, riding in a vehicle with a COVID-19, etc. Virginia Department of Health defines “prolonged period of time” as more than 10 minutes.
   ii. Having **direct contact with infectious COVID-19 secretions (e.g., being coughed on).**
      1. Employees who will not comply with the 6 feet or more distance (and possibly those that are not masked) must be warned and possibly disciplined.
      2. EHS can assist with writing SOP for persons that must do tasks within 6 feet of each other. Contact Sarah Owen, sowen@vt.edu, 1-4034.

c. Considerations when assessing close contact include:
   i. The duration of exposure (e.g., longer exposure time likely increases the exposure risk).

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ii. The clinical symptoms of the person with COVID-19 (e.g., coughing likely increases exposure risk as does exposure to a severely ill patient).

iii. Was the individual wearing a mask and gloves at all times while working on campus?

d. The general rule is to restrict access to the area for 72 hours after the last time the COVID-19 affected person was present in the area. If there are essential operations that require access before 72 hours, and you suspect the area may be contaminated, notify Environmental Health and Safety, Facilities Services, Division of Student Affairs or Virginia Tech Emergency Management to arrange for the area to be cleaned.

5. Instructions for Workers in Close Contact with a known or suspected COVID-19 Case (“Close Contacts”)

Supervisors will need to assess if other employees in the area came into “close contact” with the suspected COVID-19 case using the following guidelines.

a. **COVID-19 Exposure Potential**: The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person in close contact (less than 6’) with each other. Individuals in close contact with a COVID-19 Case have increased potential to contract COVID-19.

b. The ill individual is expected to notify their supervisor and inform the supervisor of close contacts. The supervisor should notify individuals who were in close contact with a COVID-19 affected person without revealing the individual’s identity. The Supervisor is expected to notify Juliet Dadras, Occupational Health Nurse at EHS, at 1-8733.

c. Supervisors must tell “Close Contact Individual(s)” that they are required to stay home from work, self-quarantine for 14 days and self-monitor as described below:

i. “Close Contact Individual(s)” must promptly report themselves as being in “COVID-19 Self-Quarantine” to their Managers/Supervisors.

ii. **Self-quarantine** in general means the separation of a person or group of people reasonably believed to have been exposed to COVID-19, but who are not yet symptomatic, from others who have not been so exposed, to prevent the possible spread of COVID-19.

iii. **Self-monitoring** means people are expected to monitor themselves for fever by taking their temperatures twice a day and remain alert for cough or difficulty breathing. If they feel feverish or develop measured fever, cough, or difficulty breathing during the self-monitoring period, they should self-isolate, limit contact with others, and seek advice by telephone from a healthcare provider or the local health department to determine whether medical evaluation is needed.

6. Instructions for Individuals using Shared Work Areas/Equipment with COVID-19 Case but not deemed close contact (“Shared Contact”)

Supervisors should use the following guidelines to assess if other employees may have worked in the same area with a suspected COVID-19 Case, and/or used shared equipment, but were not otherwise in close contact with the individual.
a. Cleaning/disinfecting procedures and schedules should be in place and strictly followed for shared equipment and common surfaces.

b. “Shared Contact” individuals can continue to report to work but are expected to self-monitor their health conditions for potential flu-like symptoms.
   i. Self-monitoring means people are expected to monitor themselves for fever by taking their temperatures twice a day and remain alert for cough or difficulty breathing. If they feel feverish or develop measured fever, cough, or difficulty breathing during the self-monitoring period, they should self-isolate, limit contact with others, and seek advice by telephone from a healthcare provider or their local health department to determine whether medical evaluation is needed.
   ii. Maintain physical and social distancing.
   iii. Wash hands for 20 seconds on a regular basis and avoid touching face, eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.

7. Guidance for Individuals and General Public in a Building with a Reported COVID-19 Case

This guidance applies to co-workers and vendors that may frequent a building where an infected individual worked, but did not come into close contact or share work areas/equipment with that individual.

a. COVID-19 Exposure Potential: There is no more elevated risk to the general public than visiting other public spaces in the community (e.g., grocery stores, gas stations). However, the risk of exposure from touching common surfaces can be reduced by disinfecting doorknobs, elevator buttons, bathroom fixtures, etc. in the building.

b. No additional requirements than general community-based guidance:
   i. Do not enter areas closed in response to a COVID-19 Case.
   ii. Maintain physical and social distancing.
   iii. Wash hands for 20 seconds on a regular basis and avoid touching face, eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.

8. Guidelines for Potential Work Place Exposure to COVID-19 Related to Workers’ Compensation

Any employee who believes they have been exposed to COVID-19 while on the job has a right to file a Workers’ Compensation claim. If an employee has been exposed to COVID-19 in the work place, follow these procedures:

- The employee should report the exposure to their supervisor immediately.
- Review Virginia Tech’s Environmental Health and Safety (EHSS) website COVID-19 Instructions for Supervisors to determine requirements.
- Follow all guidance and direction of the EHSS Occupational Staff. Occupational Health Nurse Juliet Dadras (mjdadras@vt.edu) is Virginia Tech’s primary EHSS contact for reporting COVID-19 exposure per Health Department and CDC guidelines.
- If an employee tests positive for COVID-19 from line of duty exposure, EHSS staff will report the exposure to Human Resources’ Workers Compensation team, Teresa Lyons (tlyons@vt.edu) and Leisa Shelor (shelorl@vt.edu).
- Your department’s human resources department will work with the employee to complete an Employee’s Accident Report (EAR).
- The employee should use state-provided Public Health and Emergency Leave (PHEL) while recovering from COVID-19. Do not use the “WC” code when entering leave for an employee missing time from work for COVID-19 exposure. Any related adjustments can be made retroactively.

Please note the following:

- EARs should only be completed for employees testing positive for COVID-19 following a workplace exposure.
- Completing an EAR does not guarantee approval of Workers’ Compensation benefits.
- Managed Care Innovations (MCI) will investigate all COVID-19 claims and determine if a claim is approved or denied under the Virginia Workers’ Compensation Act.
- If medical attention is needed, the employee can advise the medical provider of a pending Workers’ Compensation claim through Virginia Tech; however, the employee should be prepared to provide personal health insurance information as well to ensure the appropriate care is provided.