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*Revised October 12, 2020*

# COVID-19 Instructions for Supervisors

## Directory of Services

Assistant Vice President for Environmental Health & Safety (EHS)	540-231-9044
Hazardous Materials Management Laboratory	540-231-2982
Occupational Safety and Health	540-231-5985
Radiation Safety	540-231-5364
Biological Safety	540-231-5864

Instructions are provided here for responding to COVID-19-related situations that may occur in your work unit. For information regarding face coverings, gloves, and prevention tips, please refer to [EHS COVID-19 Guidance](#). If you need more information related to COVID-19 that is not covered in this document, please contact EHS at 540-231-3600 or [VT-EHS@vt.edu](mailto:VT-EHS@vt.edu).

This document provides the following information:

- Expectations and requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- What to do when individuals you supervise experience flu-like symptoms (suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases).
- What it means to be in close contact with a COVID-19 case.
- What to do when individuals you supervise:
  - Have been in close contact with a COVID-19 case (close contacts).
  - Have worked in shared areas or used shared equipment with a COVID-19 case (shared contacts) but are not deemed close contacts with the case.
  - Work in a building with a COVID-19 case but have had no contact with the case.
- Workers compensation guidelines for potential workplace exposure to COVID-19.

# 1. Expectations and requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic

## Proper hygiene

Virginia Tech employees are expected to practice proper hygiene for the safety of the whole community:

- Maintain a 6-foot physical distance from every person present at a location whenever possible.
- Wear a face covering or mask unless working alone in a workspace with a closed door or a residence hall room with the door closed. If working or studying in an open-air cubicle, wear a face covering. Wear a face covering or mask at all times. Even if you're momentarily alone, you can expect that you will encounter someone. The only instance in which you can exercise without a face covering is if you are alone, but you need to be prepared to put one on if you encounter someone. However, even under these outdoor conditions, wearing a face covering will set a good example to the community at large.
  - The exception would be for those with a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a face covering.
    - In these instances, these individuals should wear a face shield.
    - Employees who are unable to wear a face covering or face shield should be referred to the university's ADA and Accessibility Services office.
    - Both face shields and face coverings with clear space over the mouth are available for order by colleges and departments through Virginia Tech Procurement).
    - Face shields or face coverings with clear spaces should be used in:
      - Speaking with those who are hard of hearing.
      - Lecturing in situations where wearing a mask would make them inaudible.
- Make use of appropriate barrier protection, if available, when a 6-foot distance cannot be maintained.
- Conduct meetings virtually if possible and limit occupancy of in-person meetings.
- Frequently wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Regularly clean high-touch surfaces.
- Avoid shaking hands.

Supervisors should address non-compliance with these practices by partnering with your department's Human Resources team.

## COVID-19 screening

During the pandemic, employees are asked to complete a daily health verification survey prior to

coming to campus or other Virginia Tech location. Use the Hokie Health ✓ screening tool in the [Hokie Ready](#) public safety and preparedness mobile app. Those who do not have a smartphone can complete the survey [online](#) or reference a paper information sheet specifically for [faculty, staff, and wage employees](#). Supervisors should ensure that employees needing paper information sheets have access to them. Employees working in higher-contact public areas may be asked to comply with additional screening protocols.

### Notification

- If an employee has tested positive for COVID-19 or is a close contact of a COVID-19 case, that employee is required to promptly notify their supervisor. NOTE: The term employee includes employed faculty and staff, graduate students, and undergraduate students who are wage employees.
- The supervisor then must report the information to the EHS occupational health nurse at [reportacase@vt.edu](mailto:reportacase@vt.edu) or 540-231-8733.
- If an employee who tested positive has not yet been contacted by VDH to begin contact tracing, the supervisor should supply the employee with the telephone number of the health district in which they reside so the employee can promptly place that call. See table below.

Regional Facility	Health District	Health Department Phone (COVID-19 Hotline)
Alexandria	Alexandria	703-746-4988
Arlington/Ballston	Arlington	703-228-7999
Blacksburg	New River	540-267-8240
Falls Church	Fairfax County	703-267-3511
Hampton Roads	Hampton	757-594-7069
Leesburg	Loudon	703-737-8300
Occoquan	Prince William	703-872-7759
Richmond	Richmond City	804-205-3501
Roanoke	Alleghany/Roanoke City	855-949-8378

- Employees who are directed by VDH to self-isolate or quarantine are expected to work with VDH, the EHS occupational health nurse, Human Resources, and their supervisors to determine return-to-work dates.

## 2. When individuals you supervise experience flu-like symptoms (suspected COVID-19 case)

## **COVID-19 symptoms**

These symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- New gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g., nausea, vomiting, diarrhea)

### **Follow these instructions if an employee experiences symptoms:**

- If symptoms develop at work, send the individual home immediately. If an individual is unwell or develops symptoms while away from work, ask them to stay home and self-isolate.
- Employees who have symptoms and would like to get tested should contact their healthcare provider or urgent care for assessment and additional health guidance.
- Document the following:
  - “Suspected COVID-19” as the reason for the individual’s absence.
  - The individual’s work location and supervisor information.
  - The date that the individual last worked onsite.
  - Notify your department’s Human Resources team of the situation immediately.
  - Notify the EHS occupational health nurse if you have knowledge that the employee has tested positive for COVID-19.
  - Ask the individual to contact Human Resources to review leave benefits available.

### **What happens next:**

- A member of the case management team will contact the employee to provide additional guidance and to assist with resources and support.
- If an employee tests positive, VDH, in collaboration with university officials, will follow risk-based contact tracing protocols to notify individuals known to have had close contact with this individual.

## **3. What it means to be a “close contact” of a COVID-19 case**

CDC defines “close contact” as:

- Being within approximately 6-feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for more than 15 minutes; close contact can occur while sharing office space, sitting in an office for a conversation, riding in a vehicle with a COVID-19 case, etc.
- Having direct contact with infectious COVID-19 secretions (e.g., being coughed on).

Employees who do not comply with physical distancing and face covering practices must be warned and possibly disciplined. Coordinate with your department's Human Resources team as needed.

EHS can assist with writing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for persons who must perform tasks when a 6-foot distance cannot be maintained. Contact Sarah Owen, [sowen@vt.edu](mailto:sowen@vt.edu), 540-231-4034, for assistance.

**Considerations when assessing close contact include:**

- The duration of exposure (e.g., longer exposure time likely increases the exposure risk).
- The clinical symptoms of the person with COVID-19 (e.g., coughing likely increases exposure risk as does exposure to a severely ill person).
- Whether the individual was wearing a respirator, face shield, face covering/mask, and/or gloves throughout the timeframe of the exposure.

## **4. When individuals you supervise have been in close contact with a known or suspected COVID-19 case**

Ensure that the “close contact” individual understands they are required to stay home from work, self-quarantine for 14 days, and self-monitor as described below:

- Self-quarantine means that the individual stays physically apart from others for a length of time, in this case 14 days, which represents the known incubation period of the novel coronavirus. The quarantine can end if no symptoms of illness have occurred in 14 days unless otherwise directed by VDH.
- Self-monitoring means that the individual will check him/herself for symptoms of illness on a set schedule. Self-monitoring for COVID-19 includes taking and recording your body temperature twice a day and remaining alert for cough, difficulty in breathing or other symptoms. If symptoms are experienced during the self-monitoring period, the individual should self-isolate and seek advice by telephone from their health care provider or the VDH to determine whether a medical evaluation is needed.

## **5. When individuals you supervise have worked in shared areas/ used shared equipment with a COVID-19 case, but are not close contacts**

- Ensure that cleaning/disinfecting procedures and schedules are in place and strictly followed for shared equipment and common surfaces.
- “Shared contact” individuals can continue to report to work, but should self-monitor for symptoms of illness as described above.
- Encourage strict compliance with physical and social distancing among the employees under your supervision.
- Likewise, seek increased compliance with performing handwashing for 20 seconds on a regular basis, and avoiding contact with face, eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

## **6. When individuals you supervise work in a building with a COVID-19 case but have had no contact with the case**

This applies to employees as well as vendors and members of the general public who may frequent a building where an infected individual worked, but did not come into close contact or share work areas/equipment with that person:

- Individuals are at no more risk of exposure to the virus in this situation than when 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 routinely disinfecting doorknobs, elevator buttons, bathroom fixtures, etc. in the building.
- No additional measures are required beyond the general, community-based practices of maintaining physical and social distancing, wearing face coverings, regular thorough handwashing, cleaning/disinfection of high-touch surfaces, etc.

## **7. Workers compensation guidelines for potential workplace exposure to COVID-19**

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.
  - If an employee has tested positive for COVID-19, that employee is required to promptly notify their supervisor. The supervisor then must report the information to the EHS occupational health nurse at [reportacase@vt.edu](mailto:reportacase@vt.edu) or 540-231-8733.
- If an employee tests positive for COVID-19 from line of duty exposure, EHS staff will report the exposure to the Human Resources’ Workers Compensation team, Teresa Lyons ([tlyons@vt.edu](mailto:tlyons@vt.edu)) and Leisa Shelor ([shelorl@vt.edu](mailto:shelorl@vt.edu)).
- Your department’s Human Resources team will work with the employee to complete an

[Employer'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:**

- Employees testing positive for COVID-19 as a result of a workplace exposure should complete an EAR.
- 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 inform their 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.