



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Department of Public Health  
250 Washington Street  
Boston, MA 02108

CHARLES D. BAKER  
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO  
Lieutenant Governor

MARYLOU SUDDERS  
Secretary

MONICA BHAREL, MD, MPH  
Commissioner

Tel: 617-624-6000  
[www.mass.gov/dph](http://www.mass.gov/dph)

**Memorandum**

**TO:** Non-Healthcare Essential Service Workers and Their Employers

**FROM:** Larry Madoff, MD, Medical Director, Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences

**SUBJECT:** Safety Practices for Non-Healthcare Essential Service Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19

**DATE:** April 14, 2020

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) continues to work with state, federal and local partners on the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2.

In accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidance for critical infrastructure workers and to ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, the Department of Public Health (DPH) advises that workers performing essential services<sup>1</sup> that are not healthcare services<sup>2</sup> ("Non-Healthcare Essential Service Workers") may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, **provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community.**

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in the Essential Services List issued pursuant to Governor Baker's March 23, 2020 Emergency Order, updated March 31, 2020. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-essential-services>

<sup>2</sup> Healthcare workers, including all healthcare personnel listed in the Essential Services List, all healthcare facility workers and personnel, and emergency medical services personnel, are instructed to follow DPH's Revised Guidance for Allowing Asymptomatic Health Care Personnel and Emergency Medical Technicians to Work Following a Known Exposure to COVID-19 which can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/revised-guidance-for-allowing-asymptomatic-health-care-personnel-and-emergency-medical/download>

A potential exposure means being a household contact or having close contact within 6 feet of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time<sup>3</sup>. The timeframe for having prolonged, close contact with an individual includes the period of time when the individual has COVID-19 and 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic.

Non-Healthcare Essential Service Workers who have had an exposure but remain asymptomatic should adhere to the following practices prior to and during their work shift:

- **Pre-Screen:** Employers should measure the worker's temperature with a non-contact thermometer and assess symptoms prior to them starting work. Temperature checks should happen before the individual enters the facility and the thermometer should be disinfected between worker use.
- **Regular Monitoring:** As long as the worker does not have a temperature of greater than 100.0 F, or respiratory symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, sore throat), they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program.
- **Wear a Facemask:** The worker must wear a facemask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure. Employers should issue facemasks, such as surgical masks. Facemasks may include cloth face coverings if approved PPE is not available.
- **Social Distance:** The employee should maintain 6 feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit in the workplace.
- **Disinfect and Clean work spaces:** Clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment routinely.

If the worker becomes sick during the day, they should be [sent home immediately](#). Surfaces in their workspace should be [cleaned and disinfected](#). Information on persons who had contact with the ill employee during the time the employee had symptoms and 2 days prior to symptoms should be compiled. Others at the facility with prolonged, close contact within 6 feet of the employee during this time would be considered exposed.

If the worker is tested for COVID-19 and continues to have no symptoms:

- If the test result is positive, then the worker must remain out of work for seven days from the day of the specimen collection and wear a facemask and follow the exposure guidance listed above for the remaining seven days once they return to work.
- If the test result is negative, then the worker must continue to wear a mask and follow the exposure guidance listed above for the entire fourteen-day period.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the CDC, data are insufficient to precisely define the duration of time that constitutes a prolonged exposure. Recommendations vary on the length of time of exposure from 10 minutes or more to 30 minutes or more. In healthcare settings, it is reasonable to define a prolonged exposure as any exposure greater than a few minutes because the contact is someone who is ill. Brief interactions are less likely to result in transmission; however, symptoms and the type of interaction (e.g., did the person cough directly into the face of the individual) remain important.

CDC's *Interim Guidance for Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19* may be found using the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html>.

To the fullest extent possible, DPH recommends that Massachusetts employers implement CDC's recommendations in the [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019](#) to help prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Additionally, please visit DPH's website that provides up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Massachusetts: <https://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus>.