



Dear Tulare County Employers:

Thank you for all that you are doing to ensure your employees are safe and preventing the spread of COVID-19 at the workplace. This overview is intended to assist a wide variety of employers that fall under the CalOSHA [COVID-19 Prevention Emergency Temporary Standards \(ETS\)](#). This does not include employers where there is stricter, setting-specific guidance such as healthcare nor congregate settings including detentions, nursing homes or care homes.

### **What to Do When Someone at the Workplace Tests Positive**

#### **1. Provide instructions to the employee with COVID-19**

- a. They are considered contagious, so they need to go home immediately and isolate until they meet criteria to return. This applies to all persons who test positive regardless of whether they have symptoms, are vaccinated, or recently had COVID-19 infection.
  - i. [CDPH English Self-Isolation Fact Sheet \(Testing Positive\)](#)
  - ii. [CDPH Spanish Self-Isolation Fact Sheet \(Testing Positive\)](#)
- b. Communicate with the employee on when they can return to work. Note: the day symptoms start is day 0 (use test date is day 0 if they never have symptoms).
  - i. Table of return criteria from CalOSHA is [here](#)
  - ii. County return-to-work letter is [here](#)

#### **2. Identify all close contacts to the worker with COVID-19**

- a. The employer must determine which employees, if any, had close contact with the positive employee. Close contact is defined as someone within 6 feet for more than 15 total minutes within a 24-hour period while the person with COVID-19 was contagious (aka exposure period).
- b. The exposure period begins 48 hours before symptoms start (or 48 hours before positive test if they do not have symptoms) and ends when the person with COVID-19 is sent home to isolate.
- c. This process may be done by looking at work schedules and/or asking the positive employee. Employers should maintain confidentiality in line with federal and state laws—exposed employees do not need to know exactly who has COVID-19, just when they may have been exposed.
- d. Employees who are identified as close contacts should be individually notified and given instructions. Work exclusion (i.e. who needs to quarantine) as well as testing and return-to-work criteria should be reviewed. Note: day 0 is the last day of exposure.
  - i. CalOSHA table of work exclusion and return criteria is [here](#)
  - ii. County return-to-work letter is [here](#)
  - iii. [CDPH English Self-Quarantine Fact Sheet \(Exposed\)](#)
  - iv. [CDPH Spanish Self-Quarantine Fact Sheet \(Exposed\)](#)

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**3. Communicate with all employees**

- a. All employees are to be notified of COVID-19 at the worksite as per AB 685 and CalOSHA requirements. They should be advised to watch for symptoms for 10 days—if they develop, they should stay home and get tested. They should also be given information on where to get tested. See CalOSHA ETS for specifics on employer obligations related to testing after workplace exposure(s).

**4. Determine if you need to report to Tulare County Public Health**

- a. Outbreaks are required to be reported to local public health per AB 685 and CalOSHA regulations. An outbreak is defined as 3 or more cases in the workplace within a 14-day timeframe. Individual cases are generally not required to be reported.
- b. By reporting cases, it does not mean they've been proven to be work-related; all cases *associated with* the worksite should be included. A good rule of thumb is if the individual was at the worksite within the prior 14 days of getting COVID-19 or while contagious—it counts towards the outbreak number. So this does include if the employee was at home when symptoms started, had a sick family member at home, tested off-site, etc.
- c. Outbreak reporting is done via [SPOT \(Shared Portal for Outbreak Tracking\)](#). Employers request access to report via this confidential CDPH system.

**5. Report hospitalizations or deaths to CalOSHA**

- a. Any serious injury, illness, or death occurring in any place of employment or in connection with any employment must be reported by the employer to the local CalOSHA. For COVID-19, this includes hospitalizations and deaths among employees even if work-relatedness is uncertain.
  - i. [CalOSHA: severe illness reporting info](#)

**6. Disinfection after a confirmed COVID-19 case in the workplace**

- a. Cleaning and disinfecting the workplace (work area, equipment, materials, etc) is required by CalOSHA ETS if the space will be used by another employee within 24 hours of the case.
  - i. [CDC info on disinfecting](#)
  - ii. [EPA best practices in cleaning flyer](#)

**7. Preventing transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace**

- a. Review and follow all CalOSHA ETS requirements as indicated.
- b. Ensure appropriate mask use, work exclusions, and testing as per CalOSHA (these are required in some instances and recommended in others).
- c. Communicate COVID-19 prevention plan and expectations with employees, especially as requirements and guidance has changed over time.
- d. Consider preventive measures to enact short-term or long-term such as:



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- i. Encouraging regular use of masks indoors that offer higher levels of protection (e.g. surgical masks, KN95, or N95 respirators) via policies or offering supplies on-site—particularly when community transmission is high.
- ii. Changes to workflow and/or worksite layouts that allow for more social distancing in the workspace (e.g. outdoor or Zoom meetings).
- iii. Evaluating ventilation .
- iv. Encouraging access to regular handwashing (e.g. providing sanitizer).
- v. Encouraging vaccination.

**FAQs:**

**#What if an employee has symptoms, but has not been tested for COVID-19?**

Persons with symptoms in the workplace should be treated presumptively as if they have COVID-19 until it's proven otherwise; therefore, anyone with COVID-19 symptoms should be sent home ASAP on isolation and advised to test. Persons with COVID-19 may be contagious for up to 10 days even if their symptoms go away before that. Symptoms may be very similar to cold, allergy, or flu symptoms.

They may return with a negative test result or doctor's note attesting symptoms are due to another condition. If persons do not want to test or see a doctor, they should not return until after they meet criteria to discontinue standard isolation: at least 10 days have passed, no fever, and symptoms improved.

**#Do all isolated (positive) employees have to test on day 5? What if positive employees continue to have symptoms after isolation?**

No, isolated employees are not required to test on day 5. The shortened isolation periods are an allowance to see if persons are able to return prior to the standard 10-day isolation. If someone does not meet all return criteria on day 5, they should not return and should continue isolation through 10 days. This includes: if they do not test on day 5 and/or; if they test positive on day 5 and/or; if they feel their symptoms have not improved by day 5 and/or; if they have a fever on day 5. Any of these would disqualify employees from returning to work prior to 10 days.

The shortened isolation periods are the *minimum* amount of time for work exclusion. If an individual is evaluated by their provider and they determine a longer time off of work is indicated, the medical note should be followed. Illness severity and other health conditions may preclude some persons from ending isolation prior to 10 days and this is a clinical determination.

Some persons will continue to have residual symptoms after they are deemed no longer contagious and this may impact their ability to work. A provider may determine a person needs longer to recover from illness (unrelated to contagiousness/isolation, similar to any other medical leave). A medical evaluation may be indicated for persons with residual symptoms if it causes concern about fitness for duty and/or ability to safely perform duties (e.g. with or without accommodations).

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**#Are employees still exposed if they were wearing a mask when around the positive person?**

Employees within 6 feet for 15 or more minutes (cumulatively within 24 hours), then they are considered a close contact during an exposure risk assessment—even if they are wearing a mask. While masks are a very critical and effective way to prevent COVID-19 transmission in the workplace, like all preventive measures—they are not 100%. So this person is still *more at risk* than their colleagues so then would need to follow guidance (testing +/- quarantine) indicated depending on other risk factors such as vaccination status.

**#What if employees already had COVID-19 recently? Or if someone in their home gets it after they just had it?**

Generally, once someone completes their isolation they do not have to re-quarantine or re-test after an exposure for 90 days (i.e. if persons had COVID-19 within the past 90 days, they are not required to quarantine or test after an exposure as long as they have no symptoms). This is because it is very unlikely for them to get infected again this quickly. Masking indoors for 10 days after an exposure is still required for all employees regardless of vaccination status.

However, employers and employees should be advised that reinfections are possible and are much more common with the Omicron variant. This means if someone has COVID-19 symptoms—even if they had COVID-19 in the past 90 days—they should be excluded from work and get evaluated by a provider to determine if COVID-19 testing is indicated.

**#What if employees refuse testing?**

Just like with other medical treatments or procedures, we do not require persons to test for COVID-19. Current state guidance still allows persons to return from isolation and quarantine without testing. Exposed employees stay home for 10 days (returning day 11) without testing; symptomatic employees (COVID-19 unconfirmed) stay home for 10 days (returning day 11) without testing as long as their symptoms have improved and they have no fever.

Some work settings may have testing requirements per specific state health officer orders (e.g. schools, healthcare, congregate settings, corrections, etc)—those are not addressed in this employer overview.

**#Can over-the-counter (OTC) or home tests be used?**

Yes, these tests are acceptable per CalOSHA/CDPH and are reliable. However, per CalOSHA: test process (from swab, waiting, through result—typically 15 minutes) must be observed by either the employer or a telehealth provider. Employers may do this over video like FaceTime, Skype, or Zoom. Tests should be checked for results at the appropriate time per manufacturer instructions. As with most point-of-care home tests, faint lines are still considered positive if they appear during that result timeframe. Persons with COVID-19 should not report to work to do their day-5 test as it would be a potential worksite re-exposure unless proper environmental precautions are in place (e.g. outdoors preferred with PPE worn by observer, etc).



### #What information is needed for SPOT?

Information entered into SPOT is confidential and accessible by the employer, so it is a useful way for employers to keep track of this reporting requirement. Name, date of birth, a phone number and test date and/or symptom onset for each person with COVID-19 are what is needed along with employer contact information.

SPOT is accessible by public health as well as per the AB 685 requirement. The information is reviewed and employers or employees may be contacted by public health to discuss any concerns.

### #What is AB 685 and its requirements?

[AB 685](#) is a 2020 state bill. It requires that employers: report outbreaks to local public health; notify all employees on-site of potential exposure (even if not a close contact); give employees information on benefits; and create a disinfection and safety plan. All reporting to public health is done via the [SPOT](#) link.

An **outbreak** is currently defined as 3 or more cases in a worksite within 14 days. Because of this is a rolling timeframe, some employers may find it easier to do continuous reporting of all positives—this is not expressly required though. A **worksite** is defined in the CalOSHA ETS—see the ETS for more details. Typically, it may be an area where employees may have shared space(s) like conference room(s) and/or hallway(s). It may be an entire building, a floor, or another area that makes sense for your setting.

### #What does the required reporting do?

The goal of this employer reporting is to identify potential transmission early so further spread can be prevented—it is not reporting that the COVID-19 is confirmed to be from work itself and it is not punitive. Public health reviews this information and may reach out to the employer to make sure they have the information and resources they need—this may include consultation, access to testing, supplies like masks, education materials, vaccine clinics, or other supports.

### #What if an employee didn't get COVID-19 at the workplace?

It is difficult to determine where someone may have gotten infected due to the complexities of this virus (long incubation period that varies between persons, long contagious period, high number of asymptomatic infections, and large amount of COVID-19 in the community). Employers are not tasked with determining this in their reporting—they are only reporting when there are 3 or more cases *associated with* a worksite within a 14-day timeframe. Working to rule out cases as not being associated may take a lot of time and delay actions that can help prevent spread in the workplace.

Therefore, the positive employees that should be included in reporting are those who were *in the workplace within 14 days before contagious period started* (i.e. they may have been exposed from others there) or cases who were *in the workplace during the contagious period* (i.e. they may have exposed others there).



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**Employer Resources on State Requirements, Guidance, and Reporting:**

[CalOSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards \(ETS\)](#)

[CalOSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards FAQs](#)

[CalOSHA What Employers and Workers Need to Know About COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine](#)

[SPOT: Workplace Outbreak \(>3 cases within 14 days\) Reporting per AB 685 and CalOSHA ETS](#)

[CDPH COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine Guidance for the General Public](#)

[CDPH English Self-Isolation Fact Sheet \(Positive\)](#) and [Self-Quarantine Fact Sheet \(Exposed\)](#)

[CDPH Spanish Self-Isolation Face Sheet \(Positive\)](#) and [Self-Quarantine Fact Sheet \(Exposed\)](#)

**Employer and Employee Resources on State Benefits and Paid Sick Leave**

[California LWDA COVID-19 Resources for Employers and Employees](#)

[California LWDA Benefits for Workers Impacted by COVID-19 Chart](#)

[CDIR California Required COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave Eligibility](#)

[CDIR California Required COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave FAQs](#)

**Information on Prevention and Best Practices**

[CDPH COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine Guidance for the General Public](#)

[CDPH Types of Masks and Face Coverings](#)

[CDC Information on Ventilation in Buildings](#)

[CDC Information on Cleaning and Disinfection](#)

**Tulare County Local Support**

[Tulare County COVID-19 Testing Locations \(including free testing\)](#)

[Tulare County COVID-19 Business Support and Information](#)

[Tulare County COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments and Locations](#)

Questions and/or outbreak support? Email [COVID19businesshealth@tularecounty.ca.gov](mailto:COVID19businesshealth@tularecounty.ca.gov)

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