

Contact Tracing Guidelines

Contact Tracing is the process to identify the employees, visitors, contractors or other persons that have been in “close contact” with someone who has a presumptive positive case of COVID-19.

Why is Contact Tracing Important?

It is important for employers to take responsible steps to prevent the unnecessary transmission of the Coronavirus. Contact tracing can help minimize the spread of COVID-19 to others in the workplace and the community. Contact tracing can help an employer understand the area(s) that need enhanced cleaning, and help minimize the impact by avoiding a full-scale shut down and allowing business continuation.



What is a ‘Close Contact’?

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) defines a ‘close contact’ as someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the person is isolated.

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has declared that the use of face covering can reduce the number of close contacts. If both individuals were wearing a face covering, the IDPH suggests the exposure should not be considered a close contact. Other potential factors to consider include how physically close was the contact, total duration of the contact and the environment (e.g. indoors versus outdoors).

Conducting Contact Tracing:

The company should appoint a contacting tracing investigator who will meet with the infected employee by phone or video. The investigator will also meet with the employee’s co-workers and likely exposed contacts. Other potential contacts should also be reviewed including visitors, contractors or delivery drivers.

Utilize the “6-15-48” Analysis to determine close contacts:

- Who was within 6 feet of the infected individual;
- And had a cumulative 15 minutes of close contact during a 24 hour period over multiple interactions;
- From current to 48 hours prior to the infected individual showing symptoms

The zoning of facilities, split shifts, entry logs and surveillance cameras have proven to be useful in the contact tracing efforts. The use of contact tracing technology has also significantly aided in this process, and proven to be an effective tool to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

What to do After Contact Tracing:

After conducting a contact tracing investigation, a business should do the following:

- Request the infected individual and close-contacts to quarantine or self-isolate per CDC guidelines.
- Identify the areas the infected individual were in
- Isolate, evacuate and close those areas temporarily
- Communicate to staff (and community if needed) of status, action taken and next steps
- Conduct a deep-cleaning and disinfection of designated area(s)
- Resume operations in affected areas 24 to 48 hours after cleaning

Isolation versus Quarantine:

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that individual that test positive for COVID-19 to isolate themselves for 10 days. They can return to work after 10 days of isolation if their symptoms start to improve and their fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without the use of medicine.

Individuals exposed to infected individuals (close-contacts) should self-quarantine for 14 days per the CDC guidelines. Essential employees in a critical industry can return to work immediately if they were wearing a face covering and no symptoms appear.

Additional Resources

- [Responding to a COVID-19 Exposure](#), SHRM
- [New CDC Guidance Makes Contact Tracing More Difficult for Employers](#), SHRM
- [CISA Essential Critical Infrastructure Worker Information](#)

Iowa Department of Public Health Recommendations:

- [COVID-19 Response: When to Quarantine](#)

CDC Recommendations:

- [Contact Tracing Overview](#)
- [Contact Tracing Steps - Infographic](#)
- [Contact Tracing – Glossary of Terms](#)
- [Quarantine and Isolation](#)

For help responding to the COVID-19 emergency or implementing a response plan, contact:

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