

*This post is for general informational purposes only and should not be considered to constitute legal advice.*

## Employment Update: COVID-19 Exposure Protocol *Posted May 27, 2020*

Many of you have asked about protocols for employee exposure to COVID-19, and we have previously provided some information through our employment updates. Because information has evolved over time, we wanted to provide you a fresh summary. With more businesses allowed to reopen, employers need to prepare for what to do when an employee gets sick or tests positive for COVID-19, or there is a potential exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace.

The following are general guidelines to follow, but employers should examine their workplace and create more specific policies to fit their needs, if necessary. If you need assistance with this, please contact us to discuss.

### What to Do If An Employee Gets Sick or Is Exposed to COVID-19:

- Employees should not come to work if they test positive for COVID-19, have COVID-19 symptoms, or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or COVID-19 symptoms (whether a confirmed or suspected case).
- If the sick employee is at work they should be immediately separated from other employees and customers and should be sent home.
- Close off areas used by the sick employee and do not use those areas until after cleaning and disinfecting them. The CDC recommends waiting at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting, or as long as possible.
- Notify all employees who had close contact for a prolonged period of time (<6 feet for more than 15 minutes) with the sick employee that they may have been exposed to COVID-19, while maintaining confidentiality (i.e. do not reveal the sick employee's name or any other confidential medical information).
- Employees who had close contact with the sick employee as described above should self-isolate for a full 14 days and self-monitor for symptoms. If they develop symptoms, they would then follow the same protocol for sick employees. Note that the 14-day self-quarantine period is required in Sonoma County (other counties recommend pursuant to CDC guidelines).
  - The same rule applies to employees who had close contact with someone outside the workplace who tests positive for COVID-19 or has COVID-19 symptoms, such as a family member. Those employees should self-isolate for 14 days, monitor symptoms, and follow the protocols for sick employees if they develop symptoms.

- For employees that had close contact with another employee who had close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19 or has COVID-19 symptoms (i.e. two degrees of separation from the sick employee), no self-isolation is necessary unless the employee who had direct contact with a sick person develops symptoms themselves or tests positive for COVID-19. However, those employees should still be advised to self-monitor their symptoms and stay home if any symptoms develop.
- Notify County health officials and customers (if possible) of any possible case of COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Sick employees should not return to work until they have met the CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation (this is also consistent with Sonoma County's requirements):
  - If the employee had symptoms of COVID-19 or tested positive for COVID-19 they can return to work if 3 days (72 hours) have passed with no fever without the use of fever reducing medicine, their symptoms have improved, and either 10 days have passed since the symptoms first appeared or they receive 2 negative test results in a row at least 24 hours apart.
  - If the employee tested positive for COVID-19 but never developed symptoms they can return to work if 10 days have passed since the date of the test or they receive 2 negative test results in a row at least 24 hours apart.