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COVID-19 Instructions for Supervisors

Directory of Services

Assistant Vice President for Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)	540-231-9044
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The following are instructions for responding to reported cases (suspected or confirmed) of COVID-19 in your work unit. Supervisors will likely be contacted directly by their employees to report COVID-19 cases. 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.

The guidance provided in this document covers the following issues:

- Individuals experiencing flu-like symptoms (suspected COVID-19 case);
- COVID-19 case assessment for impact on university operations;
- Identifying and restricting access to work areas and equipment in close contact with a COVID-19 case;
- Individuals in close contact with a COVID-19 case (close contacts);
- Individuals in shared work area/equipment but not deemed a close contact (shared contacts);

- Individuals and vendors in a building with a COVID-19 case; and
- Guidelines for potential workplace exposure to COVID-19 related to workers' compensation.

1. General guidance

Based on CDC's recommendations, EHS recommends that cloth face coverings/masks be worn in work areas while maintaining physical distances of at least six (6) feet. This is especially important because individuals might be infected but have no visible symptoms.

If your department has a policy in place about mandatory safety procedures (including physical distancing, face coverings, gloves, etc.) during this time, supervisors should address non-compliance by partnering with your department's Human Resources team.

2. Guidance to individuals experiencing flu-like symptoms (suspected COVID-19 case)

COVID-19 Symptoms: These symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Provide the following guidance to employees if they experience flu-like systems that could be due to COVID-19:

- **Self-isolate:** Individuals who develop these symptoms at work should leave immediately after notifying their supervisor. Individuals who develop these symptoms while away from work should stay home.
- **COVID-19 phone screen:** Individuals should be instructed to either:
 - Contact their personal healthcare provider for a phone screen assessment for COVID-19 or

- Complete the New River Health District [online assessment](https://redcap.vdh.virginia.gov/redcap/surveys/index.php?s=9CCFTLFDK9) at <https://redcap.vdh.virginia.gov/redcap/surveys/index.php?s=9CCFTLFDK9>.
- **Contact supervisor/manager:** Instruct the individual to contact their supervisor/manager and provide the following information. Supervisors should be familiar with this information as well:
 - Record that “Suspected COVID-19” is the reason for the individual’s absence.
 - Confirm and record the individual’s work location and supervisor information.
 - Record the date that the individual last worked onsite.
 - Record the names of other people with whom the ill individual came into close contact (within 6 feet) over the course of their last few working days.
 - Notify your department human resources team immediately.
- **Future test results:** Instruct the individual to report results of COVID-19 test to your department’s human resources team. This will help clarify if self-quarantine for individuals and work area closures are required to remain in effect or can be suspended. This also determines whether an accident report should be filed.
- **Guidance:** Helpful instruction sheets which may be sent to ill staff or students.
 - [Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick.](#)
 - [Ten ways to manage respiratory symptoms at home.](#)

3. COVID-19 Case Assessment for impact on university operations

As a general reference for supervisors:

- The incubation period for COVID-19 is believed to be 2-14 days.
- According to the CDC, the COVID-19 virus will die naturally within 72 hours on most surfaces.

Case assessment steps:

- a. Has the COVID-19 affected employee been in contact with students, faculty or staff since becoming ill with COVID-19?
- b. Has the COVID-19 affected employee been on campus in the past 14 days?
 - **If the answer is NO to both assessment questions, then no further action required.**
 - **If the answer is YES, Please call the Virginia Department of Health's COVID-19 call center at 540-267-8240 for a risk assessment, quarantine/isolation guidelines, and/or testing.**

4. Identify and restrict access to work areas and equipment in close contact with COVID-19 case

Supervisors should work with their deans, directors, or department heads to identify and restrict access to areas using the following guidelines.

- a. Restrict access to areas and equipment that were in close contact with a COVID-19 case by posting a **“COVID-19 Case Reported – Access Prohibited” sign.**
- b. CDC defines “close contact” as:
 - i. Being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time; close contact can occur while sharing office space, sitting in an office for a conversation, riding in a vehicle with a COVID-19, etc. The CDC defines a “prolonged period of time” as more than 15 minutes.
 - ii. Having direct contact with infectious COVID-19 secretions (e.g., being coughed on).
 1. Employees who will not comply with the 6 feet or more distance (and possibly those that are not masked) must be warned and possibly disciplined.
 2. EHS can assist with writing SOP for persons that must do tasks within 6 feet of each other. Contact Sarah Owen, sowen@vt.edu, 540-231-4034.

c. Considerations when assessing close contact include:

- i. The duration of exposure (e.g., longer exposure time likely increases the exposure risk).
- ii. The clinical symptoms of the person with COVID-19 (e.g., coughing likely increases exposure risk as does exposure to a severely ill patient).
- iii. Was the individual wearing a mask and gloves at all times while working on campus?

d. The general rule is to restrict access to the area for 72 hours after the last time the COVID-19 affected person was present in the area. If there are essential operations that require access before 72 hours, contact the Facilities Department at 540-231-9614 or gregmc1@vt.edu to arrange for the area to be cleaned.

5. Instructions for workers in close contact with a known or suspected COVID-19 case (close contacts)

Supervisors will need to assess if other employees in the area came into “close contact” with the suspected COVID-19 case using the following guidelines.

- a. **COVID-19 exposure potential:** The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person in close contact (less than 6 feet) with each other. Individuals in close contact with a COVID-19 case have increased potential to contract COVID-19.
- b. The ill individual is expected to notify their supervisor and inform the supervisor of close contacts. The supervisor should notify individuals who were in close contact with a COVID-19 affected person without revealing the individual’s identity. The supervisor is expected to notify Juliet Dadras, EHS occupational health nurse, at 540-231-8733.
- c. Supervisors must tell close contact individual(s) that they are required to stay home from work, self-quarantine for 14 days, and self-monitor as described below:
 - o Close contact individual(s) must promptly report themselves as being in COVID-19 self-quarantine to their managers/supervisors.

- Self-quarantine in general means the separation of a person or group of people reasonably believed to have been exposed to COVID-19, but who are not yet symptomatic, from others who have not been so exposed, to prevent the possible spread of COVID-19.
- Self-monitoring means people are expected to monitor themselves for fever by taking their temperatures twice a day and remain alert for cough or difficulty breathing. If they feel feverish or develop measured fever, cough, or difficulty breathing during the self-monitoring period, they should self-isolate, limit contact with others, and seek advice by telephone from a healthcare provider or the local health department to determine whether medical evaluation is needed.

6. Instructions for individuals using shared work areas/equipment with a COVID-19 case but not deemed close contact (shared contact)

Supervisors should use the following guidelines to assess if other employees may have worked in the same area with a suspected COVID-19 case, and/or used shared equipment, but were not otherwise in close contact with the individual.

- a. Cleaning/disinfecting procedures and schedules should be in place and strictly followed for shared equipment and common surfaces.
- b. “Shared Contact” individuals can continue to report to work but are expected to self-monitor their health conditions for potential flu-like symptoms.
 - i. Self-monitoring means people are expected to monitor themselves for fever by taking their temperatures twice a day and remain alert for cough or difficulty breathing. If they feel feverish or develop measured fever, cough, or difficulty breathing during the self-monitoring period, they should self-isolate, limit contact with others, and seek advice by telephone from a healthcare provider or their local health department to determine whether medical evaluation is needed.
 - ii. Maintain physical and social distancing.
 - iii. Wash hands for 20 seconds on a regular basis and avoid touching face, eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

7. Guidance for individuals and general public in a building with a reported COVID-19 case

This guidance applies to co-workers and vendors that may frequent a building where an infected individual worked, but did not come into close contact or share work areas/equipment with that individual.

- a. COVID-19 exposure potential:** There is no more elevated risk to the general public than 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 disinfecting doorknobs, elevator buttons, bathroom fixtures, etc. in the building.
- b. No additional requirements than general community-based guidance:**
 - i. Do not enter areas closed in response to a COVID-19 Case.
 - ii. Maintain physical and social distancing.
 - iii. Wash hands for 20 seconds on a regular basis and avoid touching face, eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.

8. Guidelines for potential workplace exposure to COVID-19 related to workers' compensation

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.
- Review the Virginia Tech [Environmental Health and Safety \(EHS\) website](#) COVID-19 instructions for supervisors to determine requirements.
- Follow all guidance and direction of the EHS Occupational team. Occupational Health Nurse Juliet Dadras (mjdadras@vt.edu) is Virginia Tech's primary EHS contact for reporting COVID-19 exposure per health department and CDC guidelines.

- 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) and Leisa Shelor (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:

- EARs should only be completed for employees testing positive for COVID-19 following a work place exposure.
- 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 advise the 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.