



Best Practices to Prevent COVID-19 Guidance for Office-Based Businesses

For the latest version of this guidance, please check
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncorona2019/BestPractices/Offices/>.

Updates

8-26-21:

- Updated to encourage employers to allow teleworking when it is not disruptive to operations.

Given the ongoing increase in community transmission of COVID-19 and the growing presence of the Delta variant s, masking indoors, regardless of vaccination status, is essential to slowing the spread of COVID-19 in the community. The Delta variant spreads much more easily than strains of the virus that circulated in LA in the past.

Per published reports, factors that increase the risk of infection, including transmission to people more than 6 feet away, include:

- **Enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation or air handling** that allow for build-up of exhaled respiratory fluids, especially very fine droplets and aerosol particles, in the air space.
- **Increased exhalation of respiratory fluids** that can occur when an infectious person is engaged in physical exertion or raises their voice (e.g., exercising, shouting, singing).
- **Prolonged exposure** to these conditions.

Below is a summary of requirements and best practices for businesses that operate out of offices to enhance safety for their workers, customers, and communities, and lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission within their office-based businesses. In addition to this information, please remember:

- Employers must follow the Cal/OSHA [COVID-19 Prevention Emergency Temporary Standards](#) (ETS) and the County Health Officer Order. Please note that the directives in the LA County Health Officer Order must be followed when they are more stringent than the Cal/OSHA temporary standards.

Please be sure to read and follow the [general guidance for businesses and employers](#).

The specific best practices below are intended to supplement the general guidance.

Follow mask rules for employees and visitors

- ✓ **Visitors:** Require all visitors, regardless of vaccination status to [bring and wear masks](#) when they are indoors. Make masks available for those who arrive without them.
- ✓ **Employees*:** Require all employees, regardless of vaccination status, to wear masks when working indoors and in shared vehicles. Masks need not be worn indoors if the employee is alone in a room or actively eating or drinking at a seated or stationary location. If employees must eat indoors, they should be distanced at least 6 feet from other persons.
 - ✓ Upon request, employers are required to provide employees who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 with the correct-size respirator along with basic instructions on how to use the respirator. Respirators must be replaced if they get damaged, deformed, dirty, or difficult



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to breathe through. For more information about free and low-cost PPE for businesses and organizations see: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/docs/FreeAndLowCostPPE.pdf>.

- ✓ Employees who work in a setting where they are in close contact with people who may not be fully vaccinated should be encouraged to wear a higher level of protection, such as “double-masking” (wearing a cloth mask OVER a surgical mask) or a respirator. This is particularly important if the employee is not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and is working in an indoor setting, in a crowded outdoor setting, or in a shared vehicle.
- ✓ Consider also offering staff eye protection (e.g., a face shield) in addition to a respirator if they are not fully vaccinated and have significant close contact with others who may be unvaccinated.
- ✓ See the [Los Angeles County Health Officer Order](#) and the [Cal/OSHA Emergency Temporary Standards](#) page for more information about mask requirements. Please note that the directives in the LA County Health Officer Order must be followed when they are more stringent than the Cal/OSHA ETS.

* Some independent contractors are considered as employees under the State Labor Code. For more details, check the California Department of Industrial Relations’ [Independent contractor versus employee](#) webpage.

Screen customers, vendors, and delivery people

- ✓ Post [signage](#) to remind everyone who enters your establishment that they should NOT enter if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or if they are under isolation or quarantine orders.

Reduce crowding, especially indoors

- ✓ **Continue, where feasible, to offer telework options for employees.** Given increased community transmission of COVID-19, wherever possible, continue those teleworking arrangements that do not interfere with business operations, particularly for those employees with medical risks. Telework significantly reduces the risk of exposure for employees.
- ✓ If possible, maintain an outdoor break area for employees so they can take their breaks and eat or drink outdoors. Encourage employees to eat outdoors, alone in a closed office space or distanced by at least 6 feet from others if eating in a shared indoor area.
- ✓ Remind employees who must eat indoors that when they are actively eating or drinking, they need to be seated at a table, counter, or other stationary location.
- ✓ Control access to self-service areas, such as beverage service stations, by keeping them closed or limiting access to them as self-service areas encourage employees to congregate and require use of common utensils and dispensers.
- ✓ Consider use of partitions between cubicles to protect staff who are not fully vaccinated and have frequent close contact with other employees or visitors.

Ventilate

- ✓ Make sure your building’s HVAC system is in good, working order.

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- ✓ Consider installing portable high-efficiency air cleaners, upgrading the building's air filters to the highest efficiency possible, and making other modifications to increase the quantity of outside air and ventilation in all working areas.
- ✓ When weather and working conditions allow, increase fresh outdoor air by opening windows and doors. Consider using fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows - position window fans to blow air outward, not inward.
- ✓ Decrease occupancy in areas where outdoor ventilation cannot be increased.
- ✓ See State [Interim guidance for Ventilation, Filtration, and Air Quality in Indoor Environments](#).

Support handwashing

- ✓ Place handwashing stations or hand sanitizer at entry and outside communal bathrooms with signage promoting use.
- ✓ Encourage frequent handwashing.
- ✓ Posters in multiple languages that [remind people to wash or sanitize their hands](#) and show [how to wash their hands](#) are available in the [signage section](#) of the [Best Practices for Businesses and Employers](#) webpage.

Communicate

- ✓ Post [signage](#) so that visitors who are entering your office building are aware of your policies, including the requirement for all visitors and employees to wear a face mask while indoors.
- ✓ Use your online platforms to communicate your COVID-19 safety policies to the public.