

## **Guidance for Construction Employers in Maine for Addressing COVID-19**

**The spread of COVID-19 presents hardships across all industries in Maine, and all industries will face their own unique challenges when managing the health of their workforce during this Global Pandemic. Construction workers are designated as one of Maine's Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforces. To keep employees healthy and productive employers will need facts about the spread of the virus and precautions for limiting the spread among the workforce. Maine Employers need a plan to support sick workers.**

### **The following is information from the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention**

#### **What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus. For some, the respiratory virus causes mild symptoms like the common cold or influenza (flu), for others it can cause severe pneumonia that requires medical care or hospitalization and in severe cases, death can result.

#### **What are the Symptoms?**

Symptoms of COVID-19 may include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, sore throat (in some patients). Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure. Most patients experience mild symptoms and can recuperate at home, but others, particularly those with underlying medical conditions, may experience more severe respiratory illness.

#### **How does it spread?**

The virus appears to spread in similar ways to influenza (flu) and the common cold. This may include spreading through:

- The air by coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes

The virus can spread from person-to-person and in some locations, there is an apparent community spread, meaning some people are infected and are not sure how or where they became infected.

#### **How can I help to prevent the spread?**

There are simple steps you can take to reduce the possible spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses such as influenza and the common cold:

1. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
2. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
4. Stay home while you're sick and avoid close contact with others.

Currently there is no vaccine available to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

(<https://www.maine.gov/DHHS/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus.shtml>)

### **Best Practices for Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 and Supporting Sick Workers**

An outbreak that spreads to the entire workforce of a construction site could lead to serious health outcomes, including death, for those most vulnerable to the virus (those over 60 and with underlying health conditions) and cause devastating financial impacts for the business. Such an outbreak also increases the risk that the virus spreads to the surrounding community. In order to prevent the spread of the virus among workers, employers need to take the following steps:

#### **Ideas for Social Distancing (more than 6 feet) on Construction Sites**

- Stagger trades work and work shifts.
- Limit work to tasks that are strictly necessary with the goal of maintaining distance.
- Employers may need to schedule multiple smaller meetings for crews, including safety meetings, trainings and rest/lunch breaks with no more than 10 staff at any one time in one location.
- Hold meetings outdoors if possible.
- Prohibit large gatherings (currently no more than 10 people) on the job site.
- Establish a 'social distance monitor' – similar to a safety monitor but a person whose job it is to reinforce the six-foot distance.
- Ensure supervisors model ideal behavior.
- Use stairs instead of lifts or hoists when possible.
- One person in an elevator at a time.

#### **Employer Actions**

- Require that sick workers stay at home or go home if they start to feel/look ill.
- Require handwashing just prior to eating food, drink, or using tobacco products.
- Promote frequent hand washing by setting up multiple locations.
- Ensure frequent re-supply of soap and running water on all jobsites.
- Implement regular cleaning at the site, particularly in common areas and touch points including:
  - Taps and washing facilities
  - Toilet flush and seats
  - Door handles and push plates
  - Hand rails on staircases and corridors
  - Lift and hoist controls

- Machinery and equipment controls
- Food preparation and eating surfaces
- Telephone equipment
- Key boards, photocopiers and other office

[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html)

- Maintain Safety Data Sheets (SDS) of all disinfectants on site.
- Make sure written Accident Prevention Programs, Safety and Health Plans and policies are communicated to employees and are easily accessible.
- All types of PPE must be selected based upon the hazard to the worker.
- Workers working near or with others in close quarters, such as confined space work, should wear a NIOSH-approved respirator certified as N95 or higher implemented under a full respiratory protection program.
- Provide workers with up-to-date education and training on coronavirus risk factors and protective behaviors (e.g., cough etiquette and care of PPE).
- Develop a procedure if a worker becomes ill while at work or if a worker notifies the employer they have become ill while not at work. (notify others etc.)
- Develop a procedure to discover if a worker is ill. Provide telework options for office staff when possible.

### **Employee actions**

- Don't go to work if you are feeling sick.
- Wash hands just prior to consumption of food, water, and tobacco.
- Don't shake hands or bump elbows with others.
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissues if you cough or sneeze, or cough/sneeze into your elbow.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Pay attention to official sources of information such as the CDC.
- Don't share tools (including phones, desks, etc.) or PPE.
- Don't share food with others on the jobsite until further notice.
- Appropriate PPE for jobsite hazards should be worn.

### **Respirator Conservation**

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) currently does not recommend healthy people wear respirators. However, they do recommend the use of facemasks for protection from coronavirus other than in healthcare settings.

There is currently a shortage of N95 disposable respirators on the open market. Disposable half-face respirators are widely used in many industries when employers must provide a minimum level of respiratory protection. OSHA respiratory protection rules still apply even though there may be a limited number of specific respirators available to buy. Employers must continue to provide and direct employees to wear respirators if required by the work. If respirators cannot be obtained, delaying the work until the appropriate type of respirator can be obtained and provided to employees is one option. In some circumstances using better controls, local exhaust ventilation, or dust suppression (such as wet

methods) may reduce or eliminate the need for respirators. An N95 is the minimal level of respiratory protection. Especially when employees already have other respirators assigned for work, any other particulate respirator will be as protective. When giving a worker new respiratory protection they must be medically cleared and fit tested to wear the new respirator. All requirements of OSHA respiratory protection standard

[1910.134 - Respiratory Protection.](#)

[1910.134 App A - Fit Testing Procedures \(Mandatory\).](#)

[1910.134 App B-1 - User Seal Check Procedures \(Mandatory\).](#)

[1910.134 App B-2 - Respirator Cleaning Procedures \(Mandatory\).](#)

[1910.134 App C - OSHA Respirator Medical Evaluation Questionnaire \(Mandatory\).](#)

[1910.134 App D - \(Mandatory\) Information for Employees Using Respirators When not Required Under Standard.](#)

Employers should reference the CDC's Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers:  
[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html)

Employers should check CDC recommendations frequently and update Job Hazard Analysis forms and safety plans accordingly.

**Additional links:**

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html>

<https://www.maine.gov/labor/covid19/>

**Questions on interpretation of the Governor's order** (i.e. is a particular company an essential business) should be directed to the Department of Economic and Community Development:

**1-800-872-3838** in Maine

**1-800-541-5872** from outside of Maine

e-mail: [business.answers@maine.gov](mailto:business.answers@maine.gov).

**Questions on safety and/or health** (public or private sector):

**1-877-723-3345** or **207-623-7923**

## **To file a safety and/or health complaint:**

### **Maine State Plan Office**

The Maine State Plan Office covers all state and local government employees in the state. Federal government employees, including those employed by the United States Postal Service and those on military bases, are covered by OSHA. OSHA also exercises jurisdiction over maritime employers and Indian sovereignty workplaces, as well as most private sector employers in the State of Maine.

#### **Maine State Plan Office**

Maine Department of Labor Workplace Safety and Health Division 45 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0045

Phone (207) 623-7900

Fax (207) 623-7934

### **OSHA Area Office**

These federal OSHA offices cover private sector employers and workers in Maine:

#### **Augusta Area Office**

E.S. Muskie Federal Bldg 40 Western Ave., Room G-26, Augusta, ME 04330

Phone (207) 626-9160

Fax (207) 622-8213

#### **Bangor District Office**

Margaret Chase Smith Federal Building, 202 Harlow St., Room 20900, Bangor, ME 04401

Phone (207) 941-8177

Fax (207) 941-8179