

Key Messages for Workplaces:

COVID-19 is spreading in Virginia and we cannot let our guard down. All workplaces must facilitate ways for people to stay at least 6 feet from others, wear masks, practice frequent handwashing, and avoid crowds. Below are some key messages and public health recommendations for workplaces.

Evaluate the risk posed by break rooms/common areas where employees gather.

- When employees socialize they tend to stand closer together than is recommended to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. This is a higher risk when employees are eating because masks are not worn. Consider closing break rooms or placing chairs and tables at least 6 feet apart to reinforce appropriate physical distancing and prevent outbreaks.

For employees who have had close contact with a person with COVID-19, a negative COVID-19 test does not end quarantine early.

- Current Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines require that close contacts quarantine for 14 days after exposure, even if they test negative during that 14-day timeframe. Testing close contacts helps identify infected employees sooner, but it does not allow the employee to end their quarantine early. More information about isolation and quarantine guidelines can be found in this [infographic](#) that describes when it is safe to end isolation and quarantine and go back to work.
- The [VDH Interim Guidance for Critical Infrastructure \(Non-Healthcare\)](#) provides information about public health requirements for those settings. Critical Infrastructure describes sectors of the workforce that are necessary for our society to function, such as utilities, public works, and healthcare. More information about critical infrastructure can be found [here](#).

Staff with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should not come to work while ill.

- **Encourage employees to stay home when they are sick.** Ensure that employees are aware of the signs/symptoms of COVID-19 and that they should not come to work when sick. For more recommendations about screening employees, consult the [VDH Interim Guidance for Daily COVID-19 Screening of Employees \(Non-healthcare Workers\)](#).
- [This algorithm](#) can help employees and businesses understand when employees should stay at home or seek medical care if they have symptoms of COVID-19. Some people with COVID-19 never develop symptoms and some develop only minor symptoms (e.g., headache, sore throat).
- If an employee develops symptoms while at work, ensure that they **are able to promptly separate from other workers**. Employees should be encouraged to isolate at home as soon as possible.
- **Provide telework options for staff whenever possible.** This can decrease the number of people in the building and help decrease the risk of COVID-19 transmission for those whose jobs are not conducive to telework.

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Thank you for collaborating with your local health department when they contact your business to investigate an outbreak or request assistance with contact tracing. Timely reporting and responsiveness to questions can help mitigate disease spread more quickly.

Employers are important in assisting public health with case investigation and contact tracing to help contain the spread of COVID-19. In order to follow up on positive reports and help prevent the spread of disease, VDH needs to receive identifying information on each person with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 (e.g., name, date of birth, and contact information). Businesses can also educate their employees about signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and encourage employees to stay home when sick. Below are some key messages:

- The new **COVID-19 standard** adopted by the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry requires all employers to report positive cases of COVID-19 to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH).
- The **Emergency Temporary Standard** also provides that “The employer shall notify the **Virginia Department of Labor and Industry** within 24 hours of the discovery of three (3) or more employees present at the place of employment within a 14-day period testing positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus during that 14-day time period.”
- **COVID-19 case reports must be filed through the Virginia Department of Health’s (VDH) online reporting portal.** By using this portal, these case reports will ensure VDH and DOLI reporting compliance. The new online reporting portal allows employers to submit up to ten COVID-19 positive cases at one time. Please provide all of the information requested by this online form to support VDH in following up with these cases. The contact tracing process helps identify people who may have been exposed to people with COVID-19 so that those people can stay home and avoid exposing other people.