



COVID-19: Job health, safety resources for Oregon contractors

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown’s “Stay Home, Save Lives” [executive order](#) – issued in light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak – does not include construction among the businesses that must close.

However, the order requires all businesses that continue to operate to follow [social-distancing guidelines](#) and to designate an employee or officer to enforce social-distancing policies consistent with guidance from the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).

Construction contractors that continue to operate are encouraged to work closely with their safety specialists and, as appropriate, their legal counsels to ensure they operate in compliance with these requirements.

The following information serves as a resource for contractors. Do not consider it legal advice. Do not rely on it to prevent a health or safety violation from being issued by an authority with jurisdiction.

Construction worksite safety

As construction projects continue, contractors are encouraged to incorporate COVID-19 safety planning and worksite-specific safety practices into their projects. Contractors should continually evaluate specific risks associated with a particular job site in light of guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), OHA, and the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Here are links to relevant web pages and documents:

- [OHA - COVID-19 Updates](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Workplaces and Employers](#)
- [CDC Guidance - What to Do If You Are Sick](#)
- [OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)
- [OSHA COVID-19](#) (includes overview and information about hazard recognition and standards)

Worker responsibilities

- Employees need to take steps to protect themselves. Consult the CDC’s [How to Protect Yourself](#).

- If employees have symptoms of acute respiratory illness (i.e., fever, cough, shortness of breath), they must stay home and not come to work until free of symptoms for at least 72 hours, without the use of medicine, or as recommended by the CDC's [What To Do if You Are Sick](#).
- If employees are sick, they must notify their supervisors and stay home. If they develop symptoms of acute respiratory illness, they must seek medical attention.

Social distancing

- Limit work in occupied areas to only those tasks that are strictly necessary.
- Limit physical contact with others. Direct employees to increase personal space to at least six feet where possible.
- When possible, limit out-of-office meetings and replace them with phone or online meetings.
- Take breaks and lunch in shifts to reduce the size of the group in the lunch area at any one time to fewer than 10 people.
- Subcontractor foremen and project managers should communicate with their general contractors about prohibiting large gatherings (currently no more than 10 people) on the job site, such as the all-hands meeting and all-hands lunches.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- **Gloves:** Gloves should be worn at all times while on site. The type of glove worn should be appropriate to the task. If gloves are not typically required for the task, then any type of glove is acceptable, including latex gloves.
- **Eye protection:** Eye protection should be worn all times while on site.
- **Face masks:** The CDC is currently not recommending that healthy people wear face masks. On March 17, 2020, the federal government asked all construction companies to donate N95 masks to local hospitals and forego future orders. Contractors should continue to provide – and direct employees to wear – face masks if the work requires it.

Sanitation and cleanliness

- Promote frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds. Employers should also provide hand sanitizer when hand-washing facilities are not available. Consult the CDC's [When and How to Wash Your Hands](#).
- All workers should wash their hands often, especially before eating, smoking, or drinking, and after blowing their noses, coughing, or sneezing. They should refrain from touching their faces.
- All sites should have hand-washing stations readily available to all workers. If you have a large site, get a hand-washing station from your portable job site toilet provider.

- Providing hand sanitizer is acceptable in the interim between the availability of hand-washing facilities.
- All workers should wash their hands before and after entering any workspace, as well as regularly and periodically throughout the day.
- Some job sites may have access to hot water for hand washing. If this is an option, please get permission from the facility owner to use their sink and disinfect frequently.
- If on a remote project, fill an Igloo-type water cooler with water (hot water, if available) and label it “hand washing only.” This is a good option for vehicles, too. The CDC has [posters](#) and [fact sheets](#) available for posting.
- Subcontractor foremen and project managers should communicate with their general contractor about what steps the general contractor is taking to provide adequate sanitary/handwashing facilities on the project.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces within the workplace multiple times each day. Consult the CDC’s [Clean & Disinfect](#).
- Disinfectant wipes should be available and used to periodically wipe down each day any surfaces (doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, etc.) that are commonly touched.
- Portable job site toilets should be cleaned by the leasing company at least twice per week (disinfected on the inside). Double check that hand sanitizer dispensers are filled – if they are not, fill them. Frequently touched items (door pulls and toilet seats) should be disinfected frequently, ideally after each use.
- Job site offices/trailers and break/lunchrooms should be cleaned at least twice per day.
- Employees performing cleaning must be issued proper PPE, such as nitrile gloves and eye or face protection as needed.
- Maintain Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for all disinfectants on site.
- Employers should provide tissues and encourage employees to cover their noses and mouths with a tissue (or elbow or shoulder if a tissue is not available) when coughing or sneezing. Wash your hands after each time you cough, sneeze, or blow your nose, and any time before touching your face or food. Consult the CDC’s [Coughing & Sneezing](#).
- Any trash from the trailers or the job site should be changed frequently by someone wearing gloves. After changing the trash, employees should throw the gloves away and wash their hands.

Workers entering occupied buildings and homes

Many contractors and service technicians perform construction and maintenance activities within occupied homes, office buildings, and other establishments. Although these are not large job sites, they present their own unique hazards involving potential COVID-19 exposures. Plumbers, electricians, and heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning technicians are examples of workers who perform work at such locations. All such workers should evaluate the specific hazards when determining best practices.

- Require the customer to clean and sanitize the work area before workers arrive on site.
- Technicians should sanitize the work areas themselves when they arrive, throughout the workday, and immediately before they leave. Consult the CDC's [Clean & Disinfect](#).
- Require customers to keep household pets away from the work area.
- Ask that occupants keep a personal distance of at least 10 feet.
- Do not accept payments on site (no cash or checks exchanged). Require electronic payments over the phone or online.
- Workers should immediately wash hands before starting and after completing the work. Consult the CDC's [When and How to Wash Your Hands](#).

Job site visitors

- Restrict the number of visitors to the job site, including the trailer or office.
- All visitors should be screened in advance. If the visitor can answer “yes” to any of the following questions (without identifying which question applies), the visitor will not be permitted to access the facility.
 - Have you been asked to self-quarantine since December 2019?
 - Have you been in close contact with anyone who has been asked to self-quarantine since December 2019?
 - Have you experienced a recent onset of any illness-related symptoms, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath?
 - Have you traveled outside of North America in the past 14 days?
 - Have you been in close contact with anyone who has traveled outside of North America in the past 14 days?
 - Have you been in close contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19?

General job site/office practices

- Employers should refer to the CDC's [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#). Employers should frequently check CDC recommendations and update their Job Hazard Analyses (JHAs) and safety plans accordingly.
- Employers should consider designating a representative to monitor for signs of illness in the workplace, and, if someone is showing symptoms, ask them to leave. The person showing symptoms should NOT be allowed to enter any occupied area before leaving.
- Employers should consider designating a representative to take employees' temperatures with a digital forehead thermometer that is disinfected appropriately between applications. NOTE: Some people with COVID-19 may not have a fever, so this should not be the only means of detection.

- If an employee is well, but has a family member at home with COVID-19, the employee should notify his or her supervisor. Consult the CDC's guidance on [how to conduct a risk assessment](#).
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, inform fellow employees of possible exposure to the virus in the workplace. However, maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). Ask the affected employee to identify other employees whom she or he came into contact with before the employee leaves. Employees who worked in close proximity (three to six feet) to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should also be sent home and referred to the CDC's guidance on [how to conduct a risk assessment](#).
- Attendance at safety meetings should be communicated verbally and the foreman/superintendent will sign in each attendee. Contractors should not pass around a sign-in sheet or mobile device (iPad, tablet, or mobile phone) to confirm attendance.
- Mobile device and iPad use should be limited to a single user.

Additional State of Oregon resources

Oregon OSHA

- [Infectious disease page](#)

Oregon Construction Contractors Board

- [COVID-19 health and safety resources for contractors](#)
- [Governor's request for donations of surplus PPE](#)

Construction industry resources

Any guidelines obtained through the following links must be read in the context of official guidance, and the specific circumstances of a job site.

Associated General Contractors – Oregon Columbia Chapter: [COVID-19 Safety and Health](#)

Oregon Homebuilders Association (OHBA): [COVID-19 Job Site Practices](#)

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW): [COVID-19 Prevention Guidelines for Construction Trades](#)

NECA (electrical contracting industry): [Managing COVID-19 In the Workplace](#).