

# IMPERIAL COUNTY COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN



Brenda Olivas

Rev. April 15, 2020

# COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN

The County of Imperial has planned and prepared its workplace to help prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19. It has prepared to 1) respond in flexible ways to the varying levels of the disease transmission in our community and 2) refine our response plans as the situation changes. The County has coordinated with local, state, and federal officials so that timely and accurate information guides its response. Do understand that our local conditions influence the decisions that our public health officials take regarding community-level strategies.

Like all other employers, the County of Imperial has considered how best to decrease the spread of COVID-19 and lower the impact at its workplace. This has included activities to help 1) reduce transmission among employees; 2) maintain healthy business operations; and 3) maintain a healthy work environment.

## REDUCING TRANSMISSION AMONG EMPLOYEES

To reduce transmission, the County of Imperial has actively encouraged sick employees to stay home.

- Employees who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) have been asked to notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Sick employees are asked to follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees placed on self-quarantine by a healthcare provider should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home quarantine are met, in consultation with healthcare provider and the County's designated COVID-19 Multidisciplinary Team.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow CDC recommended precautions.

The County of Imperial has also identified where and how employees may be exposed to COVID-19 at work:

- OSHA guidance, including the guidance for employers, is used to protect workers from potential exposures.
- It is aware that some employees may be at higher risk for serious illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions. For such reason, it has taken action to minimize face-to-face contact between these employees, has assigned work tasks that allow them to maintain a distance of six feet from other workers, as well as customers and visitors, and to telecommute whenever possible.

The County of Imperial has also established COVID-19 related protocols for County of Imperial Department Heads. The protocols apply to all employees who are working in the office or are telecommuting. Protocols have been established for the following scenarios:

- Protocol 1: Employee tests positive for COVID-19
- Protocol 2: Employee displays COVID-19 symptoms

- Protocol 3: Employee is potentially exposed a family/household member or co-worker who has tested positive, but the employee tests negative and/or displays no symptoms.

Employees play an important role in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19 at the workplace and in our community. They are reminded of the following:

- Employees can take steps to protect themselves at work and at home. It is known that older people and people with serious chronic medical conditions are at higher risk for complications.
- Follow the leave-related policies and procedures of the employer.
- Stay home if you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Inform your supervisor if you have a sick family member at home with COVID-19.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs. Dirty surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA’s criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2, the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- Avoid using other employees’ phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Practice social distancing by avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet) from others when possible.
- Use face coverings, remembering that maintaining 6-foot social distancing and all other prevention measures must continue to be practiced to slow the spread of the virus.

## MAINTAIN HEALTHY BUSINESS OPERATIONS

The County of Imperial understands the need to maintain healthy business operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has a team of County departments responding to the needs of its employees.

It has implemented flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices.

- It has ensured that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- It has maintained flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures.
- Human resources policies are reviewed to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing state and federal workplace laws (i.e., Department of Labor and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission).

- Employee assistance program (EAP) resources and community resources are made available, as needed.

To ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue work following [potential exposure](#) to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community. A potential exposure means being a household contact or having close contact within 6 feet of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. The timeframe for having contact with an individual includes the period of time of 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic.

Critical Infrastructure workers who have had an exposure, but remain asymptomatic should adhere to the following practices prior to and during their work shift if working onsite:

- **Pre-Screen:** employee's temperature will be measured, and symptoms assessed prior to them starting work.
- **Regular Monitoring:** As long as the employee doesn't have a temperature or symptoms, they should self-monitor.
- **Wear a Face Covering:** The employee should wear a face covering at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure. The County will issue facemasks or can approve employees' supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.
- **Social Distance:** The employee should maintain 6 feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit in the workplace.
- **Disinfect and Clean Work Spaces:** All areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment are cleaned and disinfected routinely.

If the potentially exposed employee becomes sick during the day, he/she will be [sent home immediately](#). Surfaces in their workspace will be [cleaned and disinfected](#). Information on persons who had contact with the ill employee during the time the employee had symptoms and 48 hours prior to symptoms will be compiled. Others at the facility with close contact within 6 feet of the employee during this time will be considered exposed.

The County is constantly assessing its essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on our services.

- It is prepared to change business practices, as needed, to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize existing customers, or temporarily suspend some of the operations if needed).
- It will continue to identify alternate supply chains for critical goods and services. Some goods and services may be in higher demand or unavailable.
- The County has ongoing conversations with partners about local response plans. It shares best practices with other others in our community, both in the public and private sector, to improve community response efforts.

There are ongoing conversations about how the County of Imperial will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from childcare or school.

The County has:

- Planned to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace.
- Implemented plans to continue the essential business functions in case it experiences higher than usual absenteeism.
- Has prepared to institute flexible workplace and leave policies.
- Has and will continue to cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.

The County of Imperial has established practices for social distancing. Social distancing has been implemented as recommended by local, state and/or federal authorities. Social distancing means avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet) from others when possible. The strategies used by the County have included, but are not limited to the following:

- Implemented flexible worksites (e.g., telecommute);
- Implemented flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts);
- Increased physical space between employees at the worksite;
- Increased physical space between employees and customers;
- Implemented flexible meetings and travel options (e.g., postponed non-essential meetings or events);
- Downsized operations; and
- Delivered services remotely (e.g. phone, video, or web).

Since the County of Imperial has more than one business location, it has provided Directors with the authority to take appropriate actions based on services that each department provides.

## **MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT**

Maintaining a healthy work environment is important. Therefore, the County of Imperial supports proper respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene for employees, customers, and worksite visitors.

The County:

- Provides tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
- Provides soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. If hands are visibly dirty, soap and water should be chosen over hand sanitizer. It ensures that adequate supplies are maintained.
- Places hand sanitizers in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.

- Places posters that encourage hand hygiene to help stop the spread at the workplace and in areas where they are likely to be seen.
- Discourages handshaking and encourages the use of other noncontact methods of greeting.

Additionally, the County performs routine cleaning and disinfection of workplace areas.

- Routinely cleans and disinfects all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.
- Discourages workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, they are encouraged to clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Provides cleaning supplies so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

It has a plan to perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility. If a sick employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, the Imperial County Public Works Department will be contacted to coordinate the cleaning of the facility the employee was in.

The Public Works Department is notified by the County Executive Office (CEO) or Human Resources Department of the COVID-19 case within a County Department. The CEO, Human Resources Department, and/or Director of the affected department, will determine which areas to isolate from employees and/or the general areas.

The following is the protocol followed by the Public Works Department:

- The Department Director or designated staff of the affected department is contacted to confirm areas necessary for cleaning and disinfecting (i.e., offices, common areas, vehicles, etc.)
  - CEO and Human Resources will be notified of what areas and items will be cleaned.
- Time and date for cleaning is confirmed with the Department Director. Generally, cleaning occurs after hours when employees/public are not present. Additionally, funding will be identified, and reimbursement sought through Emergency Operations Center (EOC) as part of the COVID crisis. The Department Director shall coordinate with EOC.
  - Date and time will be provided to CEO and Human Resources.
- Contract with a qualified vendor to coordinate and confirm date and time for cleaning.
- Access is provided to vendor. After cleaning is complete, Public Works notifies the Department Director, Human Resources, Public Health and County Executive Office.