COVID-19 Guidance for Businesses

As businesses continue to operate, **it remains critical to both the state's public health as well as our economic health** that we all individually and collectively continue to follow guidelines that will minimize the spread of COVID-19. **Please see the [AccelerateSC webpage](#) for additional guidance.**

Another helpful webpage is the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s home page for Businesses and Employers as it relates to COVID-19.](#) SC DHEC also has a [Regulatory Assistance page related to COVID-19](#) that includes information for businesses as well as links to more specific guidance.

To highlight a few key points:

1. Antigen test screening guidelines for non-healthcare related businesses can be found here: **[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/workplaces-businesses/antigen-testing.html.](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/workplaces-businesses/antigen-testing.html)** Repeatedly testing employees can help detect infections and prevent COVID-19 from spreading to other workers. CDC recommends using two [community indicators](#) over the past 7 days to decide how often to test employees

    a. Additional information about local vaccine rates and prevalence of COVID-19 disease can be found here:

    https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home

    https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view

    b. Individuals with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and those who have recently had a known exposure should be tested for the disease. This is called **diagnostic testing.**

    c. Repeatedly testing a percentage of asymptomatic employees, or some groups at increased risk (e.g., business travelers or those who work in crowded indoor spaces) is called **screening testing.** This can be useful in areas where there is high community spread to identify COVID positive staff with no symptoms and to block further spread as soon as possible

    d. Considerations for developing workplace protocols for screening testing can be found at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/workplaces-businesses/antigen-testing.html

    e. Asymptomatic employees who test positive on a screening antigen test should have a PCR test performed and quarantine at home while waiting for results. If the results of the PCR test are positive, infection is confirmed and isolation guidelines apply.

    f. Employees who were not known close contacts of a case and who test negative can work.

    g. Non-fully vaccinated asymptomatic employees who were close contact to a case and have a negative antigen test need to quarantine until the results of a PCR test return negative. They should continue to take steps to [protect themselves and others.](#)

    h. Re-infection is rare within 90 days of infection with COVID-19. Asymptomatic employees with documented COVID-19 (positive antigen or PCR test, not antibody) should not participate in screening programs if prior infection within 90 days because of possible persistent positive results.

    i. **PPE:** Screeners need to be trained on how to properly put on, take off and dispose of all PPE. Upon arrival, the screener should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol and put on a facemask or respirator, eye protection (goggles or disposable face shield that fully covers the front and sides of the face), and a single pair of disposable gloves. Extended use of a facemask or respirator and eye protection may be implemented. A gown could be considered if extensive contact with an employee is anticipated. Gloves should not be worn continuously for more than for four hours

2. In general, fully vaccinated workers with no COVID-like symptoms do not need to quarantine or be tested following an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. However, those who work in congregate settings or other high-density workplaces (e.g., meat and poultry processing and manufacturing plants) should be tested after an exposure; however, they do not need to quarantine. For more guidance on quarantine and testing of fully vaccinated people, please visit Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People

3. Fully vaccinated household contacts of a case are a special situation
   a. Testing of vaccinated close contacts living in a household with someone in isolation that cannot be separated should occur 3-5 days after the *initial* exposure, and again 3-5 days after the end of isolation for the person diagnosed with COVID-19. They should continue wearing a mask in public indoor settings until they obtain the results of their final test.

4. Employees should be strongly encouraged to wear masks or cloth face coverings, especially when around other people, regardless of vaccination status, to help reduce spread of virus

5. Continue to encourage telework when feasible with business operations. Consider alternate work schedules such as staggering start times or shifts for employees who are on site.

6. People who develop symptoms while at work should be immediately relieved from work, tested for COVID-19 and sent home to isolate until test results are known, regardless of vaccination status. Be sure your leave policies reinforce this as well as encourage self-isolation when symptoms are present. Individuals who develop symptoms at home should be advised to not come to work, get tested and isolate until results are known. Re-infection with COVID-19 is rare within 90 days of a previous infection. Individuals who have had documented COVID-19 (antigen or PCR test, not antibody) within the previous 90 days should not be tested but should consult with a healthcare provider for an alternative diagnosis to explain their symptoms.

   a. Symptoms of COVID-19 currently include:
      - Fever (100.4°F or greater) or chills
      - Cough
      - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
      - Fatigue
      - Muscle or body aches
      - Headache
      - New loss of taste or smell
      - Sore throat
      - Congestion or runny nose
      - Nausea or vomiting
      - Diarrhea

b. Workers who were confirmed to have COVID-19 should **not** be required to have negative testing to return to work as tests may remain persistently positive without the individual being contagious

c. Instead, DHEC recommends that COVID positive employees not come to work until 10 days have passed since their symptoms began **AND** they are free of fever (100.4° F [38° C] or greater using an oral thermometer) for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines **AND** their other symptoms have improved. Employees who have tested negative and who have no known exposure to COVID-19 may return to work when their symptoms have resolved. Employers may suggest that COVID negative ill employees consult with their healthcare provider to determine the cause of symptoms.

7. As you develop your COVID-19 related processes, keep in mind the population of people who are at greater risk of contracting this virus and to having more difficulty in fighting it (those with pre-existing conditions like diabetes, heart or lung diseases, as well as the elderly).

8. Continue to follow the advice of public health officials, including:
    a. staying at least 6 feet apart
    b. wearing a cloth face covering or face mask,
    c. frequent hand washing with soap & water or use of approved hand sanitizers,
    d. regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (door handles, phones, keyboards, etc.),
    e. removing frequently touched surfaces that can be removed (for example trash can lids), and
    f. increasing ventilation air exchanges and percent outdoor air where possible.

9. If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). DHEC case investigators will contact the individual with COVID-19 to obtain close contact information. Alerting other employees heightens awareness and encourages them to self-monitor.

10. Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should monitor themselves for symptoms and may be recommended for a 14-day quarantine based on the DHEC case investigator's assessment. Please see the Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Scenarios in Businesses for generalized guidance. The area where the infected individual worked should be cleaned and disinfected. Refer to the CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidelines for additional information. Please note that if your business is not affiliated with the healthcare industry, you are not required to hire a specialized company for cleaning and disinfecting your workplace.

While cleaning and disinfecting

- Open doors and windows and use fans or HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) settings to increase air circulation in the area.
- Use products from EPA List Nexternal icon according to the instructions on the product label.
- Wear a mask and gloves while cleaning and disinfecting.
- Focus on the immediate areas occupied by the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 unless they have already been cleaned and disinfected.

- [Vacuum the space if needed](#). Use a vacuum equipped with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter and bags, if available.
  - While vacuuming, temporarily turn off in-room, window-mounted, or on-wall recirculation heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems to avoid contamination of HVAC units.
  - Do NOT deactivate central HVAC systems. These systems provide better filtration capabilities and introduce outdoor air into the areas that they serve.
- It is safe to wash dirty laundry from a person who is sick with COVID-19 with other people's items, if needed.

- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfectant products, including storing such products securely and using PPE needed for the cleaning and disinfection products

If less than 24 hours have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, clean and disinfect the space.

If more than 24 hours have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, cleaning is enough. You may choose to also disinfect depending on [certain conditions](#) or everyday practices required by your facility.

If more than 3 days have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, no additional cleaning (beyond regular cleaning practices) is needed.

Important Links

CDC Home Page for Businesses and Employers	https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html
OSHA General Guidance	https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/safework
CDC Cleaning & Disinfection	https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html
DHEC Resources for Businesses	https://www.scdhec.gov/infectious-diseases/viruses/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/businesses-employers-covid-19
DHEC Infectious Waste	https://www.scdhec.gov/environment/land-management/infectious-waste
DHEC Regulatory Relief Info	https://www.scdhec.gov/environmental-regulatory-assistance-covid-19
SC LLR OSHA COVID-19 Guidelines	https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/