



OVERVIEW: The following represents general guidance for employees working on Penn State campuses and will be updated as additional information becomes available. The health and safety of our employees is extremely important to the University and these are current strategies to reduce the likelihood of spreading COVID-19. Utilizing OSHA guidelines, most Penn State employees are classified at a “Lower Exposure Risk” level. This category includes jobs that do not require contact with people known to be, or suspected of being, infected with COVID-19, nor those that require frequent close contact with (i.e., within six feet of) the general public. **Please note highlighted sections of this document, for most recent updates.**

PREVENTIVE MEASURES: COVID-19 is a severe respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus. CDC has updated COVID-19 symptoms to include the following: cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever or chills, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, fatigue, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea. This is a new disease and we are still learning how it spreads but it is believed to be through close contact with an infected person (through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice). These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. It may also be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Knowing the facts and how to protect yourself is critical to help avoid infection.

Maintain Physical Distancing:

- Avoid close contact (maintain distancing of at least six feet) with other individuals, handshaking, or gatherings of ten people or more.
- Establish a limit of one individual per vehicle. Special arrangements should be put into place if this cannot be accomplished including but not limited to:
 - All individuals must wear a mask,
 - Minimize the time that the individuals are in the vehicle,
 - Try to pair or maintain the same individuals in a vehicle between different trips to help with contact tracing should someone become symptomatic,
 - Clean and disinfect the high touch surfaces of the vehicle after each use,
 - Increase ventilation in the vehicle if possible – for example, by opening the windows or setting the air ventilation/air conditioning on non-recirculation mode.
- Avoid sharing tools, phones, desks, and other objects in the workplace.
 - o If this is unavoidable, work with your Supervisor to develop a hard surface cleaning procedure prior to use.
- Departments that would like to clean their work areas should develop a procedure using the University’s hard surface cleaning guidance.
- Supervisors should evaluate alternative work arrangements for individuals that need to share workspaces where possible (i.e., rotate individuals coming on campus, stagger start/stop times).

Maintain Good Personal Hygiene:

- Wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds with warm water and soap.
- Avoid touching your face and eyes with your hands.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of your elbow.
- Stay home when you are sick and notify your supervisor.

GENERAL WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY MEASURES:

- **Universal Masking:** In accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and public health guidelines, wearing face masks and adhering to physical distancing practices, including maintaining six feet of physical distance between another person, are critical components in helping to maintain the health and safety of our employees. Masks are required to be worn at all times in campus buildings (e.g., must be worn in offices, classrooms, labs, hallways, stairways, etc.). Pursuant to recent [CDC guidance](#) and [PADOH requirements](#), vaccinated individuals are not required to wear masks outdoors. Those who are not vaccinated must wear masks outdoors on campus when they cannot be physically distant from individuals outside their family or “pod”. Refer to [Penn State Health Guidelines and current masking, distancing and gatherings information](#) for additional information. Masks do not need to be worn when eating or drinking, when isolated in a private office or vehicle, or when use adversely affects an employee’s safety or health (refer to Exceptions for Wearing Cloth Masks below). The University will make cloth masks available through Penn State General Stores (Item # Z11683000) as available in the [eBuy catalog](#). As additional supplies are being obtained, in the interim limited amounts of surgical masks (Item # Z11682008) can be used until cloth masks are available. Proper use and care guidance is available via the following link: [Cloth Mask Guidance](#).
 - Note: Masks with exhaust valves are not acceptable (the valves allow air and respiratory droplets to escape the mask, which results in less protection for others).
 - Note: There is evidence that single-layer face coverings, including many types of neck gaiters, are not as effective in stopping respiratory droplets as multi-layer face coverings. At this time, it is recommended that all faculty, staff, and students wear a multi-layer mask or a procedure mask.
- **Shared Work Areas:** Maintain physical distancing, wash your hands often, wear cloth mask, and establish cleaning procedures for common touch points with your supervisor.
- **Common Areas:** In accordance with the Secretary of Health order, additional efforts are required to reduce the number of employees in common areas at any given time and to maintain a physical distance of six feet. Supervisors should consider staggering break times and limiting employees in common areas (e.g., locker rooms, kitchen areas, break rooms) at the same time. Additional steps may be required to enhance the ability to maintain physical distancing (e.g., removing tables/chairs, designating one-way traffic, etc.).
- **Tasks Where Physical Distancing Cannot be Maintained:** Certain tasks which have been determined to be critical may not allow for adequate physical distancing. When there are no alternative means of completing such work employees must wear cloth masks, cover any coughs or sneezes, and avoid touching their faces. Hands are to be immediately washed and any shared tools must be cleaned when the task is complete.
- **Working Alone:** Due to the scarce number of individuals on campus during this unique situation, establish a periodic check-in protocol (recommended minimum every 2 hours) with your supervisor or designee.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** For employees in the “Lower Exposure Risk” level, additional PPE is not recommended except for what would ordinarily be used as protection against routine

hazards.

- **Temperature Screening:** At this time employee temperature screening requirements will only apply in work units with a probable or confirmed COVID-19 case in accordance with the requirements specified in the [COVID 19 Supervisors Instructions](#).
- Notify your supervisor, work unit Safety Officer, or contact EHS directly (<https://ehs.psu.edu/contact-us>) if you have any questions or concerns.

DEPARTMENTAL CLEANING: If your department would like to clean a work area during the workday, (which is encouraged), you should first establish a schedule and determine who will conduct the cleaning. Doing so will help conserve your cleaning supplies. It is recommended to clean frequently touched surfaces at least daily. Only EPA registered disinfectants such as Betco Quat Stat 5 or Betco GE FightBac are effective against the coronavirus. Contact your facility representative or work unit Safety Officer for necessary supplies and for specific departmental cleaning procedures.

- Always clean surfaces prior to the use of disinfectants in order to reduce general dirt and debris, which can reduce the effectiveness of disinfectants. Use regular cleaning products or detergent like dish soap and water. Follow the instructions on the specific product label and be aware of the requirements of the area being cleaned (i.e., electronic cleaning without the use of liquids).
- Employees are reminded to ensure procedures for safe and effective use of all products are followed (e.g., disinfectants may require a certain amount of contact time). Safety instructions are listed on product labels and include the proper PPE when handling the material.
 - Additional guidance is available via the following links: Penn State - [Guidelines for Cleaning Computer Products](#), [Cleaning Guidelines for Laboratories and Research Facilities](#), and [CDC – Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)

EXCEPTIONS FOR WEARING CLOTH MASKS: The use of cloth masks should not create an unsafe condition for the employee when operating equipment, executing a task, or restricting their ability to breathe while working. Employees should notify their supervisor and/or Safety Officer if wearing a mask presents a health and safety concern when conducting a work activity or impedes their vision.

Cloth masks do not need to be worn when conducting the following activities:

- Eating or drinking
- Isolated in a private office or vehicle
- Activities where heat stress represents a health and safety concern to the wearer of the cloth mask and physical distancing cannot be maintained, then a face shield can be worn as an alternative face covering.

Note employees **must have a cloth mask in their possession at all times** and then immediately worn prior to entering buildings or otherwise in close proximity to other individuals.

REFERENCES:

CDC – [How Coronavirus Spreads](#)

CDC – [Guidance for Institutes of Higher Education](#)

OSHA – [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

CDC – [Cloth Face Covers](#)

Penn State - [Penn State Health Guidelines webpages](#)

Last updated: 05/20/2021
EHS-0046ati