

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE WORKERS AND COVID-19 EXPOSURES

This guidance is for employees who are essential workers as defined by the [United States Department of Homeland Security](#).

The North Dakota Department of Health strongly recommends that all close contacts of individuals infected with COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days past the last day they were in contact with the person who tested positive. The risk is high that a close contact of someone infected with COVID-19 will go on to develop COVID-19. Unless there are critical workforce shortages, close contacts to COVID-19 cases should be quarantined for 14 days.

Signs and symptoms of COVID-19

Signs and symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, runny nose, congestion, sore throat, chills, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, loss or sense of taste and/or smell.

Exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19

Potentially exposed coworkers or close contacts, defined as individuals who were within 6 feet of the case for 15 cumulative minutes or longer, should be furloughed and stay at home for 14 days from last exposure to a COVID-19 case (unless both the infected person and the close contact were consistently and correctly wearing appropriate masks at all times during the potential exposure). The following options may be used as alternative reduced quarantine periods, with continued symptom monitoring and masking occurring through day 14:

- a. If the close contact remains symptom-free, he/she may be released from quarantine AFTER DAY 10.
- b. If the close contact remains symptom-free and has a negative result from a COVID-19 PCR or antigen test administered within the previous 48 hours of release, he/she may be released from quarantine AFTER DAY 7.

If you become sick and are tested for COVID-19 during this period and your test is **Positive**, the NDDoH will work with you on continuing your monitoring as a confirmed case of COVID-19. If your test is **Negative**, you still should complete your recommended quarantine period.

If I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19, can I go back to work?

According to [CDC guidance](#), individuals who are considered critical infrastructure and who are household or close contacts to people testing positive for COVID-19 may return to work with several safety practices in place. Employers and employees should use caution in implementing this guidance as it is possible to spread COVID-19 48 hours prior to developing symptoms or feeling ill, so there is risk in allowing these employees to go back to work. Unless there are critical workforce shortages, employers should furlough close contacts to COVID-19 cases for 14 days.

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

- **Notify:** Employees should notify a supervisor and/or occupational health of contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.
- **Pre-Screen:** Employers should measure the employee's temperature and assess symptoms prior to them starting work. Ideally, temperature checks should happen before the individual enters the facility.
- **Regular Monitoring:** As long as the employee doesn't have a temperature or symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program.
- **Wear a Mask:** The employee should wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure. Employers can 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 workspaces:** Clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment routinely.

Critical infrastructure workers should only attend work (if deemed necessary) or be at home during their 14-day quarantine period. It is important that close contacts be tested after exposure to someone with COVID-19.

What should I do if I become ill during this monitoring period?

Unless it is an emergency, DO NOT GO to a clinic or hospital without first calling ahead. Calling first will help the clinic or hospital prepare to greet you and take care of you in the safest possible way. If you must go to the hospital before calling, notify staff immediately that you are being monitored for COVID-19. If you have a negative COVID-19 test at any time during your monitoring period, you still should remain under self-quarantine for the remaining the 14-days.

If you become sick while at work, you should go home immediately. All surfaces in the workplace should be [cleaned and disinfected](#).

While you are ill, remain at home or in a comparable setting. Avoid congregate settings, avoid public activities, and practice social distancing. This means you should remain out of public places where close contact with others may occur (e.g., shopping centers, movie theaters, stadiums), workplaces, schools and other classroom settings, and public conveyances (e.g., bus, subway, taxi, ride share) for the duration of your monitoring period unless approved by the state or local health department. Even though you are considered critical infrastructure, you may not go to work if you have tested positive for COVID-19.