



Interim Guidance for Construction Sites

August 7, 2020

Governor Cooper has implemented a phased approach to slowly lift restrictions while combatting COVID-19, protecting North Carolinians and working together to recover the economy.

Businesses and organizations should follow the guidelines below to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Guidelines for Construction: Any scenario in which many people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. All businesses and agencies that congregate people in an enclosed space should create and implement a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission at their site. The following guidance is intended for employers and employees in the construction industry including but not limited to carpentry, ironworking, plumbing, electrical, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, masonry and concrete work, utility construction work, and earthmoving activities.

This guidance covers the following topics:

- Exposure Risk Among Construction Workers
- Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure
- Cloth Face Coverings
- Cleaning and Hygiene
- Monitoring for Symptoms
- Protecting Vulnerable Populations
- Communications and Combatting Misinformation
- Additional Resources

Exposure Risk Among Construction Workers

Construction sites are busy places with multiple employees. The environment constantly changes. The hazard of occupational transmission of COVID-19 depends on several factors including:

- Distance between workers – Some tasks on construction sites require workers to be close to one another. Workers may also be near one another at other times such as when taking or giving instructions, clocking in or out, during breaks, or in locker/changing rooms. Every effort should be made to maintain 6 feet of physical distance between workers wherever possible.
- Duration of contact – Construction workers may have prolonged contact with other workers. Continued contact with potentially infectious individuals increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Type of contact – Construction workers may be exposed to the infectious virus through respiratory droplets in the air—for example, when workers who have the virus cough or sneeze. It is also possible that exposure could occur from contact with contaminated surfaces or objects,

such as tools, workstations, or break room tables. Shared spaces such as break rooms, locker rooms, and entrances/exits to the site may contribute to their risk.

- ❑ Other distinctive factors that may increase potential for exposure include:
 - A common practice at some construction sites of sharing transportation such as ride-share vans or shuttle vehicles, car-pools, and public transportation.
 - Frequent contact with fellow workers in community settings in areas where there is ongoing community transmission.

Construction sites are often complex workplaces with several contractors, subcontractors, vendors, delivery of supplies and removal of waste consultants, residents, and visitors at a site. Construction work may occur indoors, outdoors and conditions may change frequently. All construction sites should create plans for continuing operations in the setting of COVID-19 occurring among workers or in the surrounding community. Plans should:

- ❑ Include an assigned qualified workplace coordinator responsible for COVID-19 assessment and control planning. All workers on the site should know how to contact the identified coordinator with any COVID-19 concerns.
- ❑ Involve state and/or local public health officials and occupational safety and health professionals and establish ongoing communications to make sure they are getting relevant and up-to-date information concerning COVID-19.
- ❑ Comply with all federal regulations and public health agency guidelines.
- ❑ Include a process for periodic work site assessments to identify COVID-19 risks and prevention strategies—including processes for testing and workplace contact tracing (identifying person-to-person spread) of COVID-19 workers who tested positive in a work site risk assessment, following available CDC guidance.

Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure

[Social distancing](#) is one of the few tools we currently have to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing (“physical distancing”) means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people; do not gather in groups; stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings.

It is recommended that construction sites:

- ❑ Develop and implement social distancing guidance for the job site to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between workers when possible.
- ❑ Modify work schedules to stagger work, provide alternating workdays or extra shifts to reduce the total number of workers on a job site at any given time. Coordinate work so that subcontractors or trades are cohorted or compartmentalized to reduce the number of people working in the same area and minimize the risk of close contact with potentially infectious individuals.
- ❑ Restrict access to reduce the number of workers in enclosed and confined areas at one time. Confined and enclosed areas (e.g., trailers, small rooms in buildings under construction) should be identified and access should be restricted to essential personnel only. Enclosed spaces (e.g., toilets, break areas) are potential transmission areas and should be treated accordingly. Time spent in these areas should be minimized.
- ❑ Rearrange administrative area workstations so that workers can stay at least 6 feet away from other workers.
- ❑ Install shields or barriers, such as plexiglass barriers, where possible.

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- Remove or rearrange chairs and tables or add visual cue marks in break areas to support social distancing practices between workers. Identify alternative areas to accommodate overflow volume.
- Maintain social distancing when visiting lunch trucks or construction site vendors.
- Limit casual (social) conversations that normally occur at work and ensure that interactions between workers during breaks occur at a distance of at least 6 feet.
- Cancel or postpone in-person meetings/trainings whenever possible. If you must meet, spread out to a distance of 6 feet or more between attendees.
- Reduce the number of individuals at meetings, including worker orientations, to increase the distance between individuals.
- To limit the number of people on a jobsite, allow non-essential personnel to work from home when possible.
- Identify areas where workers are forced to stand together, such as hallways, hoists and elevators, ingress and egress points, break areas, and buses, and put in place policies to maintain social distancing.
- Minimize interactions when picking up or delivering equipment or materials.
- Encourage workers to avoid carpooling to and from work, if possible. If carpooling or using company shuttle vehicles is a necessity for workers, the following control practices should be used:
 - Limit the number of people per vehicle as much as possible.
 - Encourage employees to maintain social distancing as much as possible.
 - Encourage employees to use hand hygiene before entering the vehicle and when arriving at the destination.
 - Keep windows open to increase air circulation, if weather is permitting
 - Require employees in a shared van or car space to [wear cloth face coverings](#).
 - [Clean and disinfect](#) commonly touched surfaces after each carpool or shuttle trip (e.g., door handles, handrails, seatbelt buckles).
 - Encourage employees to follow coughing and sneezing [etiquette](#) when in the vehicle.

Cloth Face Coverings

There is growing evidence that wearing a [face covering](#) can help reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially because people may be infected with the virus and not know it. CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings as a protective measure in addition to social distancing. Cloth face coverings may be especially important when social distancing is not possible or feasible based on working conditions.

Cloth face coverings are not PPE. They are not appropriate substitutes for PPE such as respirators (like N95 respirators) or medical facemasks (like surgical masks) in workplaces where respirators or facemasks are recommended or required to protect the wearer.

It is **required** that construction sites:

Ensure employees wear cloth face covering when they are or may be within six (6) feet of another person, pursuant to [Executive Order 147](#) issued June 24th, 2020.

Construction sites should also ensure that cloth face coverings:

- Fit over the nose and mouth and fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face;
- Are secured with ties or ear loops;
- Include multiple layers of fabric;

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- Allow for breathing without restriction;
- Can be laundered using the warmest appropriate water setting and machine dried daily after the shift, without damage or change to shape (a clean cloth face covering should be used each day)
- Are not used if they become wet or contaminated;
- Are replaced with clean replacements, provided by the employer, as needed.
- Are handled as little as possible to prevent transferring infectious materials to or from the cloth;
- Are not worn with or instead of respiratory protection when respirators are needed.
- Conduct a hazard assessment to determine if hazards are present, or are likely to be present, for which workers may need personal protective equipment (PPE). CDC and OSHA have recommended PPE for some types of work activities when engineering and administrative controls cannot be implemented or are not fully protective.
 - Employers are required to determine, select, provide, and train on correct PPE use and application for their workers' specific job duties (see [29 CFR 1926 Subpart E](#)).

It is recommended that construction sites:

- Provide cloth face coverings to all employees.

Cleaning and Hygiene

Washing hands with soap for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of transmission.

It is recommended that construction sites:

- Provide training to employees on proper [handwashing](#) practices and other routine preventative measures. This will help prevent the spread of many diseases, including COVID-19.
- Provide workers with access to soap, clean running water, and materials for drying their hands, or if soap and water are not readily available provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol at stations around the construction site. Hand sanitizers may not be effective on visibly soiled hands, so at job sites without soap and water, employees should be provided alternative methods for cleaning hands, such as wipes or hand cleaning compound, prior to using hand sanitizer.
- Place handwashing stations and/or hand sanitizers in multiple locations (including in or adjacent to portable restrooms) to encourage hand hygiene.
- Explore alternative ways to promote hand hygiene if there is difficulty sourcing hand sanitizer and running water is not available on site. Some examples may include:
 - Install [temporary](#) or mobile handwashing stations, making sure there is an adequate supply of water, soap, and single-use paper towels.
 - Provide a large (5+ gallon) bucket with a lid and tap that can be used to provide water for handwashing. If this method is used, the water tap should be regularly cleaned and disinfected, and the contaminated wastewater must be collected and treated in accordance with local laws and environmental regulations. Provide fresh clean water daily.
 - Depending on the size or configuration of the job site, there may need to be multiple handwashing stations available to accommodate the workforce while maintaining social distancing, and stations may need to be restocked during the course of the day to maintain adequate handwashing supplies.
- Disinfect break or lunchroom areas between each group using the areas.

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- ❑ Ensure that all tools and workstations are regularly [cleaned and disinfected](#), including at least as often as workers change workstations or move to a new set of tools or workstation. Assign tools to individuals or small groups of workers to reduce potential contamination.
- ❑ Disinfect frequently touched surfaces in workspaces and break rooms (e.g., microwave and refrigerator handles, vending machine touchpads, knobs, levels, and sink handles) at least once per shift with an [EPA approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2](#) (the virus that causes COVID-19).
- ❑ Frequently clean push bars and handles on any doors that do not open automatically and handrails on stairs or along walkways. If physical barriers are being used, then these should be cleaned frequently.
- ❑ Utilize disposable gloves where appropriate. Instruct workers to remove gloves properly and to wash hands after removing gloves.
- ❑ Identify specific locations and practices for daily trash such as: paper, hand towels, food containers, etc. Instruct workers responsible for trash removal in proper PPE/hand washing practices.
- ❑ Consider instructing workers to change work clothes prior to arriving home; and to wash clothes and cloth face coverings in hot water with laundry sanitizer.
- ❑ Consider installing no touch hand towel dispensers and no-touch trash receptacles.
- ❑ Consider other workplace programs to promote personal hygiene, such as:
 - Building additional short breaks into staff schedules to increase how often staff can wash their hands.
 - Providing tissues and no-touch trash receptacles for workers to use.
- ❑ Educate workers to avoid touching their faces, including their eyes, noses, and mouths.

Monitoring for Symptoms

Conducting regular screening for symptoms can help reduce exposure to COVID-19. Workers should be encouraged to self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath and be aware that a person can become infectious before they become ill, or without becoming ill. If they develop symptoms, workers should [stay home](#). More information on [how to monitor for symptoms](#) is available from the CDC.

It is recommended that construction sites:

- ❑ Screen workers for COVID-19 [symptoms](#) and temperature checks. Options to screen workers for COVID-19 symptoms include:
 - Conduct daily symptom screening (use this standard interview questionnaire [English](#) | [Spanish](#)) of employees at entrance to workplace.
 - Provide verbal screening in appropriate language(s) to determine whether workers have had [symptoms](#) including a cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell in the past 24 hours.
 - Check temperatures of workers at the start of each shift to identify anyone with a fever of 100.4°F or greater (or reported feelings of feverishness). Ensure that screeners are trained to use temperature monitors and monitors are accurate under conditions of use (such as cold temperatures) and wear appropriate PPE.
- ❑ Do not let employees enter the construction site if they have a fever of 100.4°F or greater (or reported feeling feverish), or if screening results indicate that the worker is suspected of having COVID-19 or worker had close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19..
 - Encourage workers to [self-isolate and contact a healthcare provider](#);

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- [Provide information on the construction site's return-to-work policies](#) and procedures; and
 - Inform the supervisor (so the worker can be moved off schedule during illness and a replacement can be assigned, if needed).
- ❑ Ensure that personnel performing screening activities, including temperature checks, are appropriately protected from exposure to potentially infectious workers entering the construction site.
 - ❑ Implement engineering controls, such as physical barriers or dividers or rope and stanchion systems, to maintain at least 6 feet of distance between screeners and workers being screened.
 - ❑ If screeners need to be within 6 feet of workers, provide them with appropriate PPE based on the repeated close contact the screeners have with other workers.
 - Such PPE may include gloves, a gown, a face shield, and, at a minimum, a face mask.
 - N95 filtering facepiece respirators (or more protective) may be appropriate for workers performing screening duties and necessary for workers managing a sick employee in the work environment (see below) if that employee has signs or symptoms of COVID-19. If respirators are needed, they must be used in the context of a comprehensive respiratory protection program that includes medical exams, fit testing, and training in accordance with OSHA's [Respiratory Protection standard](#) (29 CFR 1910.134).
 - ❑ Immediately separate from others at the construction site and send home workers who appear to have [symptoms](#) upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day. Require symptomatic employees to wear face coverings until they have left the worksite.
 - ❑ Cleaning and disinfecting procedures should be implemented by designated personnel following CDC guidelines once sick employee leaves.
 - ❑ Ensure that personnel managing sick employees are appropriately protected from exposure. When personnel need to be within 6 feet of a sick colleague, appropriate PPE may include gloves, a gown, a face shield and, at a minimum, a face mask. N95 filtering facepiece respirators (or more protective) may be appropriate for workers managing a sick employee if that employee has signs or symptoms of COVID-19. If respirators are needed, they must be used in the context of a comprehensive respiratory protection program that includes medical exams, fit testing, and training in accordance with OSHA's [Respiratory Protection standard](#) (29 CFR 1910.134).
 - ❑ Provide information on whom to contact if employees become sick. If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, 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).
 - ❑ If a worker becomes or reports being sick, or testing positive for COVID-19, disinfect the workstation used and any tools handled by the worker.
 - ❑ Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices. Consider drafting non-punitive emergency sick leave policies if sick leave is not offered to some or all employees. Employers should not require a positive COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work.
 - ❑ Analyze sick leave policies and consider modifying them to allow for paid sick leave for any worker who is isolated due to symptoms or a diagnosis of COVID-19 or in quarantine due to close contact with someone who was diagnosed with COVID-19
 - ❑ Per CDC guidelines, if an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is presumed positive by a medical professional due to symptoms, the employee should be excluded from work until
 - No fever for at least 24 hours since recovery (without the use of fever-reducing medicine) AND

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- Other symptoms have improved (e.g., coughing, shortness of breath) AND
 - At least 10 days have passed since first symptoms
- ❑ Per CDC guidelines, if an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 but does not have symptoms, they should remain out of work until 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test results, assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test.
- ❑ Per CDC guidelines, if an employee has been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, they should quarantine for 14 days, as long as they remain asymptomatic or do not test positive. If they become symptomatic or test positive, they should follow the criteria for return to work for those situations, as above.
- ❑ A test-based strategy is no longer recommended to discontinue isolation or precautions and employers should not require documentation of a negative test before allowing a worker to return.
- ❑ Designate a safety and health officer to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns at every jobsite. Workers should know who this person is and how to contact them.
- ❑ Reach out to local public health officials to establish ongoing communications to facilitate access to relevant information before and during a local outbreak.

Protecting Vulnerable Populations

Information on who is at higher risk for severe disease is available from the [CDC](#) and [NCDHHS](#).

It is recommended that construction sites:

- ❑ Be aware that some employees may be at [higher risk for severe illness](#). Implement specific policies to minimize face-to-face contact for these employees or assign work tasks that allow them to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from other workers, customers, and visitors, or to telework if possible.

Communication and Combatting Misinformation

Help ensure that the information workers are getting is coming directly from reliable resources. Use resources from a trusted source like the [CDC](#) or [NCDHHS](#) to promote behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19.

It is recommended that construction sites:

- ❑ Educate and train workers and supervisors about how they can reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- ❑ Supplement workers' normal and required job training with additional training and information about COVID-19, including recognizing signs and symptoms of infection and ways to prevent exposure to the virus. Training should include information about how to implement the various infection prevention and control measures recommended here and included in any infection prevention and control or COVID-19 response plan that an employer develops.
- ❑ Provide employees with accurate information (in a language they understand) about COVID-19, how it spreads, and risk of exposure.
 - Provide workers with basic facts.
 - Conduct toolbox talks on all job sites to explain the protective measures in place.
- ❑ Put up signs, posters, and flyers at main entrances and in key areas throughout the construction site such as those found on the [Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19](#) to remind workers to use face coverings, wash hands, and stay six feet apart whenever possible (Wear, Wait, Wash).

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- [Know Your W's](#) signs are available in English and Spanish.
- ❑ Ensure posted signs:
 - Can be read from a far distance that inform visitors and workers of social distancing practices.
 - Are simple posters in all of the languages that are common in the worker population. Posters should encourage staying home when sick (or after testing positive for the virus that causes COVID-19), cough and sneeze etiquette, and proper hand hygiene practices.
 - Are placed at the entrance to the construction site and in break areas, locker rooms, and other construction site areas where they are likely to be seen.
- ❑ Provide alternative training for workers who cannot read written materials or who require other reasonable accommodations.
- ❑ Provide workers with information on how to access [resources for mental health and wellness](#) (e.g., 211 and Hope4NC Helpline 1-855-587-3463).

Water and Ventilation Systems

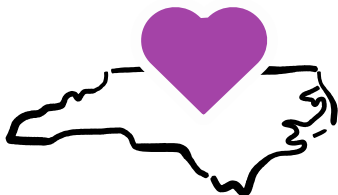
It is recommended that construction sites with these conditions:

- ❑ Consider consulting with a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning engineer to ensure adequate ventilation in construction work areas to help minimize workers' potential exposures.
- ❑ If fans, such as pedestal fans or hard-mounted fans, are used at the site, take steps to minimize air from fans blowing from one worker directly at another worker. Personal cooling fans should be removed from the workplace to reduce the potential spread of any airborne or aerosolized viruses.

Reduced use of water and ventilation systems can pose their own health hazards among construction workers. There is an increased risk for Legionella and other bacteria that come from stagnant or standing water in buildings that have closed for long periods but currently require construction work. Follow the CDC's [Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#) to minimize the risk of diseases associated with water.

Additional Resources

- NCDHHS: [North Carolina COVID-19](#)
- CDC: [What Construction Workers Need to Know about COVID-19](#)
- CDC: [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- CDC: [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
- FDA: [Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- EPA: [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)
- OSHA: [Guidance for Construction Work](#)
- HHS/OSHA: [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)
- DHS: [Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce](#)



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