

Construction Industry Employers and COVID-19

Related Professionals

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Practices

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In the current pandemic, it is important for construction employers to understand safety and health best practices to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus.

While no OSHA standards relate specifically to communicable diseases, there are requirements that may come into play during the pandemic, such as the “general duty clause” of the Occupational Safety and Health Act and OSHA’s PPE standard, among others. The general duty clause requires employers to provide a workplace that is “free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious harm to employees.” The PPE standard mandates that protective equipment, clothing, and barriers be provided whenever necessary to prevent employees from being exposed to environmental hazards.

Applying general actions recommended by the CDC and OSHA, below is a checklist for employers to consider to protect construction industry workers from infection in the workplace:

- Educate employees on how to protect themselves and others by following practices recommended by the CDC and by posting CDC posters
- Ensure sufficient handwashing stations with soap and running water and hand sanitizer
- Keep workers six feet apart whenever possible
- Provide compensable time to wipe down tools and equipment
- Avoid sharing tools and equipment if possible
- Sanitize office trailers
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces on job sites and in offices, such as break areas, portable toilets, control panels on equipment, hand rails, door knobs, light switches, tables, phones, and computer keyboards

- Use appropriate PPE
- Stagger schedules for pre-shift meetings, new employee orientations, and breaks
- Stagger sub-contractors to prevent spread
- Develop protocols to exclude from job sites employees, sub-contractors, and visitors who have:
 - Traveled to areas with known spread of COVID-19 in the last 14 days
 - Come in close contact (within six feet) with anyone who has a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis in the last 14 days
 - A fever greater than 100.4 degrees or symptoms of lower respiratory illness such as cough and shortness of breath
- Encourage sub-contractors to develop similar protocols
- Allow office staff to work from home if possible
- Schedule project meetings by teleconference if possible
- Track and report instances of workers contracting COVID-19 on the job, in accordance with OSHA guidance
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, inform co-workers of their possible exposure, maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, as recommended by the CDC

Let us know if you have specific questions about practices for construction industry employers to consider to keep employees safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, construction is considered an essential industry in many state and local stay-at-home orders. If we can assist with preparing essential worker certification cards for construction industry employees, please let us know.

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