

What Transit Workers Need to Know about COVID-19

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2. Symptoms often include a fever, cough, or shortness of breath. Our understanding of how the virus spreads is evolving as we learn more about it, so check the **CDC website** (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/howcovid-spreads.html>) for the latest information.

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.

Recent studies indicate that the virus can be spread by people before they develop symptoms (pre-symptomatic) or who never develop symptoms (asymptomatic). It also may 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. However, this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at **higher risk for more serious complications** (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-athigher-risk.html>) from COVID-19.

CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>) in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. Cloth face coverings may prevent people who don't know they have the virus from transmitting it to others. These face coverings are not surgical masks or respirators and are not appropriate substitutes for them in workplaces where masks or respirators are recommended or required.

As a bus transit operator, how can I protect myself?

For bus transit operators, potential sources of exposure include having close contact with a bus passenger with COVID-19, by contacting surfaces touched or handled by a person with COVID-19, or by touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

- Limit close contact with others by maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet, when possible.
- Consider asking bus passengers to enter and exit the bus through rear entry doors.
- Request passengers avoid standing or sitting within 6 feet of the bus driver.
- Avoid touching surfaces often touched by bus passengers.
- Use gloves if required to touch surfaces contaminated by body fluids.
- Practice routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces, including surfaces in the driver cockpit commonly touched by the operator.
- **Proper hand hygiene** (<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html>) is an important infection control measure. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Key times to clean hands in general include:
 - Before, during, and after preparing food
 - Before eating food
 - After using the toilet
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- Additional times to clean hands on the job include:
 - Before and after work shifts
 - Before and after work breaks
 - After touching frequently touched surfaces, such as fareboxes and handrails
 - After putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

What steps should my employer take?

Employers of bus transit operators should develop a COVID-19 health and safety plan to protect employees according to **CDC Business Guidance** (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidancebusiness-response.html>). This plan should be shared with you and your coworkers. Your employer should:

- Institute measures to physically separate or force distance greater than 6 feet between bus transit operators and passengers. These may include use of physical partitions or visual cues (e.g., floor decals, colored tape, or signs to indicate to passengers where they should not sit or stand near the bus operator).
- **Take steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if an employee is sick** (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>). Actively encourage sick employees to stay home. Sick employees should not return to work until **the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met** (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>), in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.
- Provide information on who to contact if employees become sick.
- 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.
- Designate someone to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Employees should know who this person is and how to contact them.
- Provide employees with correct information about COVID-19, how it spreads, and risk of exposure.
- Conduct worksite assessments to identify COVID-19 prevention strategies.
- Provide employees training on **proper hand washing** (<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html>) practices and other routine infection control precautions. This will help prevent the spread of many diseases, including COVID-19.
- Provide employees access to soap, clean running water, and drying materials, or alcohol-based hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol at their worksite.
- Provide employees with appropriate gloves when necessary and provide training on properly using them.

- Provide disposable disinfectant wipes so that surfaces commonly touched by the bus operator can be wiped down. To disinfect, use **products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2** (<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>), diluted household bleach solutions, or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and are appropriate for the surface. Provide employees training on manufacturer's directions for use.
- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
- Place posters that encourage **staying home when sick** (<https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceuticalinterventions/tools-resources/educational-materials.html>), **covering coughs and sneezes** (https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html) and **washing hands often** (<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/materials.html>) at the entrance to the workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
- Reach out to local public health officials to establish ongoing communications to facilitate access to relevant information before and during a local outbreak.
- Follow all applicable federal regulations and public health agency guidelines.

Where can I get more information?

Stay informed. Talk to your employer, supervisor, union representative, or agency personnel who are responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. See these sources for more information on worker exposures to COVID-19:

- **CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) website:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidancebusiness-response.html>
- **NIOSH Workplace Safety and Health Topic website:** www.cdc.gov/niosh/emres/2019_ncov.html
- **CDC COVID-19 website:** www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/
- **OSHA COVID-19 website:** www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html
- **CDCINFO: 1-800-CDC-INFO** (1-800-232-4636) | TTY: 1-888-232-6348 | website: <https://wwwn.cdc.gov/dcs/ContactUs/Form>