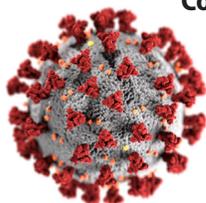# What Airline Workers Need to Know about COVID-19

AIRPORT BAGGAGE AND CARGO HANDLERS

Accessible version: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/airport-baggage-cargo-handlers.html

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/how-covid-spreads.html) or the latest information.

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

6 ft 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-at-higher-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 an airport baggage or cargo handler, how can I protect myself?

For baggage or cargo handlers, while the general risk remains low, potential sources of exposure could include 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.

- Practice routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces. These include baggage or cargo transport devices, vehicles, scanners, and shared/common two-way radios or other mobile devices. Follow the directions on the cleaning product's label.

- Follow your employer's normal guidance for handling animals in transit and biological cargo.

- 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 handling, loading, and unloading baggage, packages, or cargo
  » After touching frequently touched surfaces
  » After putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

cdc.gov/coronavirus

What steps should my employer take?

Your employer should develop a COVID-19 health and safety plan to protect employees. This plan should be shared with you and your coworkers. Your employer should:

- **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 accurate information about COVID-19, how it spreads, and risk of exposure.

- Provide 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.

- Providing employees with access to soap, clean running water, and drying materials, or alcohol-based hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol at their worksite.

- Provide disposable disinfectant wipes so that commonly touched surfaces including baggage or cargo transport devices, vehicles, scanners, and communication systems such as two-way radios or other mobile devices can be wiped down by employees before and after each use. For disinfection, 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. Follow manufacturer's directions for use.

- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.

- Conduct frequent cleaning of employee break rooms, rest areas, and other common areas.

- Place posters that encourage **staying home when sick** (https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/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.

- 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 airport personnel who are responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. See these sources for more information on reducing the risk of 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/guidance-business-response.html

NIOSH Workplace Safety and Health Topic website: www.cdc.gov/niosh/emres/2019_ncov.html

CDC COVID-19 website: https://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

cdc.gov/coronavirus