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Subchapter 7. General Industry Safety Orders

Introduction

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§3205. COVID-19 Prevention.

(a) Scope.

(1) This section applies to all employees and places of employment, with the following exceptions:

(A) Places of employment with one employee who does not have contact with other persons.

(B) Employees working from home.

(C) Employees when covered by section 5199.

(2) Nothing in this section is intended to limit more protective or stringent state or local health department mandates or guidance.

(b) Definitions. The following definitions apply to this section and to sections 3205.1 through 3205.4.

(1) “COVID-19” means coronavirus disease, an infectious disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

(2) “COVID-19 case”

(A) Means a person who:

1. Has a positive “COVID-19 test” as defined in this section;

2. Is subject to a COVID-19-related order to isolate issued by a local or state health official; or

3. Has died due to COVID-19, in the determination of a local health department or per inclusion in the COVID-19 statistics of a county.

(B) A person is no longer a “COVID-19 case” in this section when a licensed health care professional determines that the person does not have COVID-19, in accordance with recommendations made by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) or the local health department pursuant to authority granted under the Health and Safety Code or Title 17, California Code of Regulations to CDPH or the local health department.

(3) “COVID-19 exposure” means being within six feet of a COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or greater in any 24-hour period within or overlapping with the “high-risk

exposure period” defined by this section. This definition applies regardless of the use of face coverings.

(4) “COVID-19 hazard” means exposure to potentially infectious material that may contain SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Potentially infectious materials include airborne droplets, small particle aerosols, and airborne droplet nuclei, which most commonly result from a person or persons exhaling, talking or vocalizing, coughing, sneezing, or procedures performed on persons which may aerosolize saliva or respiratory tract fluids, among other things. This also includes objects or surfaces that may be contaminated with SARS-CoV-2.

(5) “COVID-19 symptoms” means fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea, unless a licensed health care professional determines the person's symptoms were caused by a known condition other than COVID-19.

(6) “COVID-19 test” means a viral test for SARS-CoV-2 that is:

(A) Approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or has an Emergency Use Authorization from the FDA to diagnose current infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus; and

(B) Administered in accordance with the FDA approval or the FDA Emergency Use Authorization as applicable.

(7) “Exposed workplace” means any work location, working area, or common area at work used or accessed by a COVID-19 case during the high-risk period, including bathrooms, walkways, hallways, aisles, break or eating areas, and waiting areas. The exposed workplace does not include buildings or facilities not entered by a COVID-19 case.

(A) Effective January 1, 2021, the “exposed workplace” also includes but is not limited to the “worksite” of the COVID-19 case as defined by Labor Code section 6409.6(d)(5).

(8) “Face covering” means a tightly woven fabric or non-woven material with no visible holes or openings, which covers the nose and mouth.

(9) “High-risk exposure period” means the following time period:

(A) For persons who develop COVID-19 symptoms: from two days before they first develop symptoms until 10 days after symptoms first appeared, and 24 hours have passed with no fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications, and symptoms have improved; or

(B) For persons who test positive who never develop COVID-19 symptoms: from two days before until ten days after the specimen for their first positive test for COVID-19 was collected.

(c) Written COVID-19 Prevention Program. Employers shall establish, implement, and maintain an effective, written COVID-19 Prevention Program, which may be integrated into the employer's Injury and Illness Program required by section 3203, or be maintained in a separate document. The written elements of a COVID-19 Prevention Program shall include:

(1) System for communicating. The employer shall do all of the following in a form readily understandable by employees:

(A) Ask employees to report to the employer, without fear of reprisal, COVID-19 symptoms, possible COVID-19 exposures, and possible COVID-19 hazards at the workplace.

(B) Describe procedures or policies for accommodating employees with medical or other conditions that put them at increased risk of severe COVID-19 illness.

(C) Provide information about access to COVID-19 testing. If testing is required under this section, section 3205.1, or section 3205.2, the employer shall inform affected employees of the reason for the COVID-19 testing and the possible consequences of a positive test.

(D) In accordance with subsection (c)(3)(B)3., communicate information about COVID-19 hazards and the employer's COVID-19 policies and procedures to employees and to other employers, persons, and entities within or in contact with the employer's workplace.

NOTE: See subsections (c)(3)(C) and (c)(3)(D) for confidentiality requirements for COVID-19 cases.

(2) Identification and evaluation of COVID-19 hazards.

(A) The employer shall allow for employee and authorized employee representative participation in the identification and evaluation of COVID-19 hazards.

(B) The employer shall develop and implement a process for screening employees for and responding to employees with COVID-19 symptoms. The employer may ask employees to evaluate their own symptoms before reporting to work. If the employer conducts screening at the workplace, the employer shall ensure that face coverings are used during screening by both screeners and employees and, if temperatures are measured, that non-contact thermometers are used.

(C) The employer shall develop COVID-19 policies and procedures to respond effectively and immediately to individuals at the workplace who are a COVID-19 case to prevent or reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace.

(D) The employer shall conduct a workplace-specific identification of all interactions, areas, activities, processes, equipment, and materials that could potentially expose employees to COVID-19 hazards. Employers shall treat all persons, regardless of symptoms or negative COVID-19 test results, as potentially infectious.

1. This shall include identification of places and times when people may congregate or come in contact with one another, regardless of whether employees are performing an assigned work task or not, for instance during meetings or trainings and including in and around entrances, bathrooms, hallways, aisles, walkways, elevators, break or eating areas, cool-down areas, and waiting areas.

2. This shall include an evaluation of employees' potential workplace exposure to all persons at the workplace or who may enter the workplace, including coworkers, employees of other entities, members of the public, customers or clients, and independent contractors. Employers shall consider how employees and other persons enter, leave, and travel through the workplace, in addition to addressing fixed work locations.

(E) For indoor locations, the employer shall evaluate how to maximize the quantity of outdoor air and whether it is possible to increase filtration efficiency to the highest level compatible with the existing ventilation system.

(F) The employer shall review applicable orders and guidance from the State of California and the local health department related to COVID-19 hazards and prevention, including information

of general application and information specific to the employer's industry, location, and operations.

(G) The employer shall evaluate existing COVID-19 prevention controls at the workplace and the need for different or additional controls. This includes evaluation of controls in subsections (c)(4), and (c)(6) through (c)(8).

(H) The employer shall conduct periodic inspections as needed to identify unhealthy conditions, work practices, and work procedures related to COVID-19 and to ensure compliance with employers' COVID-19 policies and procedures.

(3) Investigating and responding to COVID-19 cases in the workplace.

(A) Employers shall have an effective procedure to investigate COVID-19 cases in the workplace. This includes procedures for verifying COVID-19 case status, receiving information regarding COVID-19 test results and onset of COVID-19 symptoms, and identifying and recording COVID-19 cases.

(B) The employer shall take the following actions when there has been a COVID-19 case at the place of employment:

1. Determine the day and time the COVID-19 case was last present and, to the extent possible, the date of the positive COVID-19 test(s) and/or diagnosis, and the date the COVID-19 case first had one or more COVID-19 symptoms, if any were experienced.

2. Determine who may have had a COVID-19 exposure. This requires an evaluation of the activities of the COVID-19 case and all locations at the workplace which may have been visited by the COVID-19 case during the high-risk exposure period.

NOTE: See subsection (c)(10) for exclusion requirements for employees with COVID-19 exposure.

3. Give notice of the potential COVID-19 exposure, within one business day, in a way that does not reveal any personal identifying information of the COVID-19 case, to the following:

- a. All employees who may have had COVID-19 exposure and their authorized representatives.

- b. Independent contractors and other employers present at the workplace during the high-risk exposure period.

4. Offer COVID-19 testing at no cost to employees during their working hours to all employees who had potential COVID-19 exposure in the workplace and provide them with the information on benefits described in subsections (c)(5)(B) and (c)(10)(C).

5. Investigate whether any workplace conditions could have contributed to the risk of COVID-19 exposure and what could be done to reduce exposure to COVID-19 hazards.

(C) Personal identifying information of COVID-19 cases or persons with COVID-19 symptoms shall be kept confidential. All COVID-19 testing or related medical services provided by the employer under this section and sections 3205.1 through 3205.4 shall be provided in a manner that ensures the confidentiality of employees.

EXCEPTION: to subsection (c)(3)(C): Unredacted information on COVID-19 cases shall be provided to the local health department, CDPH, the Division, the National Institute for

Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), or as otherwise required by law immediately upon request.

(D) The employer shall ensure that all employee medical records required by this section and sections 3205.1 through 3205.4 are kept confidential and are not disclosed or reported without the employee's express written consent to any person within or outside the workplace.

EXCEPTION: 1 to subsection (c)(3)(D): Unredacted medical records shall be provided to the local health department, CDPH, the Division, NIOSH, or as otherwise required by law immediately upon request.

EXCEPTION: 2 to subsection (c)(3)(D): This provision does not apply to records that do not contain individually identifiable medical information or from which individually identifiable medical information has been removed.

(4) Correction of COVID-19 hazards. Employers shall implement effective policies and/or procedures for correcting unsafe or unhealthy conditions, work practices, policies and procedures in a timely manner based on the severity of the hazard. This includes, but is not limited to, implementing controls and/or policies and procedures in response to the evaluations conducted under subsections (c)(2) and (c)(3) and implementing the controls required by subsection (c)(6) through (c)(8).

(5) Training and instruction. The employer shall provide effective training and instruction to employees that includes the following:

(A) The employer's COVID-19 policies and procedures to protect employees from COVID-19 hazards.

(B) Information regarding COVID-19-related benefits to which the employee may be entitled under applicable federal, state, or local laws. This includes any benefits available under workers' compensation law, the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act, Labor Code sections 248.1 and 248.5, Labor Code sections 3212.86 through 3212.88, local governmental requirements, the employer's own leave policies, and leave guaranteed by contract.

(C) The fact that COVID-19 is an infectious disease that can be spread through the air when an infectious person talks or vocalizes, sneezes, coughs, or exhales; that COVID-19 may be transmitted when a person touches a contaminated object and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth, although that is less common; and that an infectious person may have no symptoms.

(D) Methods of physical distancing of at least six feet and the importance of combining physical distancing with the wearing of face coverings.

(E) The fact that particles containing the virus can travel more than six feet, especially indoors, so physical distancing must be combined with other controls, including face coverings and hand hygiene, to be effective.

(F) The importance of frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and using hand sanitizer when employees do not have immediate access to a sink or hand washing facility, and that hand sanitizer does not work if the hands are soiled.

(G) Proper use of face coverings and the fact that face coverings are not respiratory protective equipment.

(H) COVID-19 symptoms, and the importance of not coming to work and obtaining a COVID-19 test if the employee has COVID-19 symptoms.

(6) Physical distancing.

(A) All employees shall be separated from other persons by at least six feet, except where an employer can demonstrate that six feet of separation is not possible, and except for momentary exposure while persons are in movement. Methods of physical distancing include: telework or other remote work arrangements; reducing the number of persons in an area at one time, including visitors; visual cues such as signs and floor markings to indicate where employees and others should be located or their direction and path of travel; staggered arrival, departure, work, and break times; and adjusted work processes or procedures, such as reducing production speed, to allow greater distance between employees.

(B) When it is not possible to maintain a distance of at least six feet, individuals shall be as far apart as possible.

(7) Face coverings.

(A) Employers shall provide face coverings and ensure they are worn by employees over the nose and mouth when indoors, when outdoors and less than six feet away from another person, and where required by orders from the CDPH or local health department. Employers shall ensure face coverings are clean and undamaged. Face shields are not a replacement for face coverings, although they may be worn together for additional protection. The following are exceptions to the face coverings requirement:

1. When an employee is alone in a room.
2. While eating and drinking at the workplace, provided employees are at least six feet apart and outside air supply to the area, if indoors, has been maximized to the extent possible.
3. Employees wearing respiratory protection in accordance with section 5144 or other title 8 safety orders.
4. Employees who cannot wear face coverings due to a medical or mental health condition or disability, or who are hearing-impaired or communicating with a hearing-impaired person.
5. Specific tasks which cannot feasibly be performed with a face covering. This exception is limited to the time period in which such tasks are actually being performed, and the unmasked employee shall be at least six feet away from all other persons unless unmasked employees are tested at least twice weekly for COVID-19.

NOTE: CDPH has issued guidance for employers that identifies examples when wearing a face covering is likely not feasible.

(B) Employees exempted from wearing face coverings due to a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability shall wear an effective non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom, if their condition or disability permits it.

(C) Any employee not wearing a face covering, face shield with a drape or other effective alternative, or respiratory protection, for any reason, shall be at least six feet apart from all other persons unless the unmasked employee is tested at least twice weekly for COVID-19. Employers may not use COVID-19 testing as an alternative to face coverings when face coverings are otherwise required by this section.

(D) No employer shall prevent any employee from wearing a face covering when not required by this section, unless it would create a safety hazard, such as interfering with the safe operation of equipment.

(E) Employers shall implement measures to communicate to non-employees the face coverings requirements on their premises.

(F) The employer shall develop COVID-19 policies and procedures to minimize employee exposure to COVID-19 hazards originating from any person not wearing a face covering, including a member of the public.

(8) Other engineering controls, administrative controls, and personal protective equipment.

(A) At fixed work locations where it is not possible to maintain the physical distancing requirement at all times, the employer shall install cleanable solid partitions that effectively reduce aerosol transmission between the employee and other persons.

(B) For buildings with mechanical or natural ventilation, or both, employers shall maximize the quantity of outside air provided to the extent feasible, except when the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Air Quality Index is greater than 100 for any pollutant or if opening windows or letting in outdoor air by other means would cause a hazard to employees, for instance from excessive heat or cold.

(C) Employers shall implement cleaning and disinfecting procedures, which require:

1. Identifying and regularly cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs, elevator buttons, equipment, tools, handrails, handles, controls, bathroom surfaces, and steering wheels. The employer shall inform employees and authorized employee representatives of cleaning and disinfection protocols, including the planned frequency and scope of regular cleaning and disinfection.

2. Prohibiting the sharing of personal protective equipment and to the extent feasible, items that employees come in regular physical contact with such as phones, headsets, desks, keyboards, writing materials, instruments, and tools. When it is not feasible to prevent sharing, sharing shall be minimized and such items and equipment shall be disinfected between uses by different people. Sharing of vehicles shall be minimized to the extent feasible, and high touch points (steering wheel, door handles, seatbelt buckles, armrests, shifter, etc.) shall be disinfected between users.

3. Cleaning and disinfection of areas, material, and equipment used by a COVID-19 case during the high-risk exposure period.

NOTE: Cleaning and disinfecting must be done in a manner that does not create a hazard to employees. See Group 2 and Group 16 of the General Industry Safety Orders for further information.

(D) To protect employees from COVID-19 hazards, the employer shall evaluate its handwashing facilities, determine the need for additional facilities, encourage and allow time for employee handwashing, and provide employees with an effective hand sanitizer. Employers shall encourage employees to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds each time. Provision or use of hand sanitizers with methyl alcohol is prohibited.

(E) Personal protective equipment.

1. Employers shall evaluate the need for personal protective equipment to prevent exposure to COVID-19 hazards, such as gloves, goggles, and face shields, and provide such personal protective equipment as needed.
2. Employers shall evaluate the need for respiratory protection in accordance with section 5144 when the physical distancing requirements in subsection (c)(6) are not feasible or are not maintained.
3. Employers shall provide and ensure use of respirators in accordance with section 5144 when deemed necessary by the Division through the Issuance of Order to Take Special Action, in accordance with title 8, section 332.3.
4. Employers shall provide and ensure use of eye protection and respiratory protection in accordance with section 5144 when employees are exposed to procedures that may aerosolize potentially infectious material such as saliva or respiratory tract fluids.

NOTE: Examples of work covered by subsection (c)(8)(E)4. include, but are not limited to, certain dental procedures and outpatient medical specialties not covered by section 5199.

(9) Reporting, recordkeeping, and access.

(A) The employer shall report information about COVID-19 cases at the workplace to the local health department whenever required by law, and shall provide any related information requested by the local health department.

(B) The employer shall report immediately to the Division any COVID-19-related serious illnesses or death, as defined under section 330(h), of an employee occurring in a place of employment or in connection with any employment.

(C) The employer shall maintain records of the steps taken to implement the written COVID-19 Prevention Program in accordance with section 3203(b).

(D) The written COVID-19 Prevention Program shall be made available at the workplace to employees, authorized employee representatives, and to representatives of the Division immediately upon request.

(E) The employer shall keep a record of and track all COVID-19 cases with the employee's name, contact information, occupation, location where the employee worked, the date of the last day at the workplace, and the date of a positive COVID-19 test. Medical information shall be kept confidential in accordance with subsections (c)(3)(C) and (c)(3)(D). The information shall be made available to employees, authorized employee representatives, or as otherwise required by law, with personal identifying information removed.

NOTE: Subsection (c)(9)(E) does not alter the right of employees or their representatives to request and obtain an employer's Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses (Log 300), without redaction, or to request and obtain information as otherwise allowed by law.

(10) Exclusion of COVID-19 cases. The purpose of this subsection is to limit transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace.

(A) Employers shall ensure that COVID-19 cases are excluded from the workplace until the return to work requirements of subsection (c)(11) are met.

(B) Employers shall exclude employees with COVID-19 exposure from the workplace for 14 days after the last known COVID-19 exposure to a COVID-19 case.

(C) For employees excluded from work under subsection (c)(10) and otherwise able and available to work, employers shall continue and maintain an employee's earnings, seniority, and all other employee rights and benefits, including the employee's right to their former job status, as if the employee had not been removed from their job. Employers may use employer-provided employee sick leave benefits for this purpose and consider benefit payments from public sources in determining how to maintain earnings, rights and benefits, where permitted by law and when not covered by workers' compensation.

EXCEPTION: 1: Subsection (c)(10)(C) does not apply to any period of time during which the employee is unable to work for reasons other than protecting persons at the workplace from possible COVID-19 transmission.

EXCEPTION: 2: Subsection (c)(10)(C) does not apply where the employer demonstrates that the COVID-19 exposure is not work related.

(D) Subsection (c)(10) does not limit any other applicable law, employer policy, or collective bargaining agreement that provides for greater protections.

(E) At the time of exclusion, the employer shall provide the employee the information on benefits described in subsections (c)(5)(B) and (c)(10)(C).

EXCEPTION: to subsection (c)(10): Employees who have not been excluded or isolated by the local health department need not be excluded by the employer, if they are temporarily reassigned to work where they do not have contact with other persons until the return to work requirements of subsection (c)(11) are met.

(11) Return to work criteria.

(A) COVID-19 cases with COVID-19 symptoms shall not return to work until:

1. At least 24 hours have passed since a fever of 100.4 or higher has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medications;
2. COVID-19 symptoms have improved; and
3. At least 10 days have passed since COVID-19 symptoms first appeared.

(B) COVID-19 cases who tested positive but never developed COVID-19 symptoms shall not return to work until a minimum of 10 days have passed since the date of specimen collection of their first positive COVID-19 test.

(C) A negative COVID-19 test shall not be required for an employee to return to work.

(D) If an order to isolate or quarantine an employee is issued by a local or state health official, the employee shall not return to work until the period of isolation or quarantine is completed or the order is lifted. If no period was specified, then the period shall be 10 days from the time the order to isolate was effective, or 14 days from the time the order to quarantine was effective.

(E) If there are no violations of local or state health officer orders for isolation or quarantine, the Division may, upon request, allow employees to return to work on the basis that the removal of an employee would create undue risk to a community's health and safety. In such cases, the employer shall develop, implement, and maintain effective control measures to prevent transmission in the workplace including providing isolation for the employee at the workplace and, if isolation is not possible, the use of respiratory protection in the workplace.

Note: Authority cited: Section 142.3, Labor Code. Reference: Sections 142.3 and 144.6, Labor Code.

HISTORY

1. New section filed 11-30-2020 as an emergency; operative 11-30-2020. Emergency expiration extended 60 days (Executive Order N-40-20) plus an additional 60 days (Executive Order N-71-20) (Register 2020, No. 49). A Certificate of Compliance must be transmitted to OAL by 10-1-2021 or emergency language will be repealed by operation of law on the following day. For prior history, see Register 74, No. 43.