

COVID-19

Best Practices to Prevent COVID-19 Spread in the Workplace

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AIHA Provides Most Comprehensive Guidelines and Recommendations for Protecting Employers and Employees Against the Spread of COVID-19 and Virus Variants

[AIHA](#), the association for scientists and professionals committed to preserving and ensuring occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS) in the workplace and community, continues to lead the way in the development of comprehensive COVID-19 resources and guidelines for employers and employees.

Commit To C.A.R.E.

[AIHA](#), in partnership with [IBEC](#), The Integrated Bioscience and Built Environment Consortium, launched [Commit To C.A.R.E.](#), a new public education initiative that encourages employers and employees to commit to reducing the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace and communities by minimizing the risk of spreading COVID-19 and preparing buildings against the spread. The initiative is funded by a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Control and Prevention (CDC).

[Commit To C.A.R.E. \(Community, Awareness, Responsibility, Equity\)](#) strives to debunk myths about the spread of the COVID-19 virus, make the complexities of the science easier to understand through no-cost, engaging multi-media tools available in nine different languages, help prepare facilities against airborne viruses, and encourage businesses to pledge their commitment to C.A.R.E. for the health and well-being of their employees, clients, and customers.

The comprehensive resources, developed in non-technical terms, include micro-training videos, checklists and webtools designed to assess an individual's risk, a web-based interactive assessment tool, videos addressing why masks work and how to wear them, what is ventilation and why it's important to reduce the risk of transmission, how to develop a vaccination and testing policy and more. The free resources also include downloadable posters and fliers for use in the workplace. For more information about becoming a C.A.R.E. Partner, or accessing free multimedia resources such as checklists, posters, flyers, videos and to take the C.A.R.E. pledge, visit: [Commit2Care.org](#)

Back to Work Safely

In 2020, AIHA developed the "Back to Work Safely" (BTWS) initiative to help small businesses get back to work safely with industry sector specific guidelines and resources. AIHA's [Back to Work Safely Guidelines, 2nd Edition](#), are now available for small to mid-size businesses in 27 sectors (see below chart). The free guidance documents, available in English and Spanish, provide clear and actionable steps towards the safe operations of a variety of workplaces through prevention, early detection, and control of COVID-19. The 2nd editions offer practical guidance for employers to implement multiple layers of risk mitigation strategies in order of most effective to least effective – through



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the elimination of a hazard, substitution of a hazard, use of engineering controls (e.g., increased ventilation and air filtration), administrative controls (e.g., staggered shifts), and personal protective equipment (e.g., respirators and gloves).

The authors of each of these documents are volunteer scientists and professionals who come from a variety of diverse backgrounds and experiences. The team was comprised of experts in the fields of ventilation, exposure assessment, risk assessment, industrial hygiene in schools, construction, TV/film and media, and distribution/warehouse sectors to name a few (comprehensive list of business sectors is listed below). The guidelines have had more than 3.5 million downloads and can be found on: [www.backtoworksafely.org](#).

- Amateur Sports
- At-Home Service Providers
- Bars
- Business Services (i.e., banks, dry cleaners)
- Childcare Services

- Construction Sites
- Dental Office Settings
- General Office Settings
- Gyms and Workout Facilities
- Hair and Nail Salons
- Houses of Worship
- Institutions of Higher Education
- Laboratory Environments
- Libraries
- Museums and Collecting Institutions
- Outdoor Recreation Activities
- Physical/Occupational/Massage Therapy
- Restaurants
- Retail
- Rideshare Services (Taxi, Limo and Other Passenger Driver-for-Hire)
- Schools K-12
- Small Manufacturing and Maintenance Shops

- Small Sports and Entertainment Venues (i.e., mini-golf, arcades)
- Small Lodging Establishments
- Street Vendors and Farmers Markets
- Transit Systems
- Warehousing/Transportation

Engineering Controls Resources

In addition to the BTWS guidelines AIHA has free, detailed engineering controls resources, including:

- [Guide for Recovering from COVID-19 Building Closures](#)
- [Reducing the Risk of COVID-19 Using Engineering Controls](#)
- [Employers Guide to COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfection in Non-Healthcare Workplaces](#)
- [Effective and Safe Practices, Guidance for Custodians, Cleaning and Maintenance Staff](#)

- [Occupational Safety and Health Guide for Surface Disinfection Practices Using Germicidal Ultraviolet Radiation](#)

About AIHA

AIHA is the association for scientists and professionals committed to preserving and ensuring occupational and environmental health and safety in the workplace and community. Founded in 1939, we support our members with our expertise, networks, comprehensive education programs and other products and services that help them maintain the highest professional and competency standards. More than half of AIHA's nearly 8,500 members are Certified Industrial Hygienists, and many hold other professional designations. AIHA serves as a resource for those employed across the public and private sectors, as well as to the communities in which they work. For more information, please visit www.aiha.org.

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Contact Randy at 586-227-9344 or randy@rdgmedia.net to see how we can put the right one to work for your company.



The Spread Stops HERE!

Introducing the NEW Comfort-Air®Nx NIOSH Approved Reusable N95/ P100 Respirators

Dentec Safety is a leading manufacturer and distributor of safety products in the North America since 2004. Dentec Safety is dedicated to providing the highest quality safety products and solutions delivering enhanced value and comfort. Our expertise from decades of experience in Industrial Safety and our innovative design technologies have solidified us as thought leaders in the field. Protection and comfort are at the core of everything we do at Dentec. As a leading manufacturer of Safety Solutions, it is our mission to help organizations do the right thing, keep their employees safe and exceed Industry Health & Safety Standard.

Dentec purchased a respirator manufacturing facility in Kansas (2014) that has been manufacturing NIOSH certified and Health Canada approved reusable respirators for 30 years. When COVID initially invaded Canada (March

2020), we focused our attention to our reusable half mask with our N95 replaceable filters. This was an overwhelming success due to providing an airtight seal. Many hospitals and frontline professionals have utilized our products in Canada and the US.

Our Comfort-Air®Nx series respirator is made of a unique elastomeric rubber formulation and can be used in the frontline and general workplace sectors to help stop the spread of the COVID-19 / Omicron and avoid business and school shut down. Our respirator is safer due to an airtight seal and two-way filtration. It is less expensive than disposable respirators and the waste reduction is significant.

Our Comfort-AirNx® (Nx stands for NO exhalation valve) respirator provides the following additional advantages:

- **AMERICAN MADE!** 100% of our materials are sourced and manufactured in our plant in Kansas.
- **SAFER!** Two-way filtration for breathing in and out. Disposable respirators have failure rates of 20 – 50% when conducting quantitative fit testing.
- **MORE COMFORTABLE** – Internal temperature recordings inside the mask are 2° C cooler than wearing a disposable respirator including a surgical style mask. Say goodbye to face rash and mask acne!
- **BETTER FIT FOR ALL FACES** – NIOSH sizing protocols drastically underrepresent women and Asian face shapes and sizes for FFR's. Therefore, we designed our Elastomeric Comfort-AirNx® Respirator in two sizes to provide a better fit/ seal qualities for all face shapes and sizes.
- **MORE AFFORDABLE** The N95 and P100 filter housing can be disinfected and therefore the filter can be reused. An Ontario based hospital purchased our reusable respirator solution in April 2020 and changed out the N95 filters in January 2021 for



the FIRST TIME. Our reusable respirator will reduce consumption by hundreds of thousands and millions of units annually depending on the number of users versus disposable respirators.

- **REDUCED WASTE AND LANDFILL COSTS** With less consumption comes less cost which makes our product so much more sustainable than disposables. Our Comfort-Air®Nx reusable respirator will reduce landfill waste by millions of pounds annually. It will also reduce incineration costs for those that dispose of the mask and help reduce carbon emissions.

To learn more about the NEW Comfort-Air®Nx Series of reusable N95/ P100 respirators visit: [USA - Dentec Safety \(shopdentecsafety.com\)](https://www.shopdentecsafety.com) or contact us at dentec@dentec-safety.com to chat with a Safety Specialist. ■





Elastomeric N95/ P100 Reusable
Respirator **WITHOUT** an Exhalation Valve



The Spread Stops **HERE!**



American Made High-Grade Respiratory Protection For Americans



- NIOSH Approved
- Safer (Air-tight Seal)
- Less Waste
- Less Cost



Improving Disinfection Processes Through Industrial Hygiene

By: **Rich Prinz**

As the saying goes, “it takes a village” to keep workers safe, particularly in industrial settings such as manufacturing facilities, processing plants, and other occupations with a higher potential for health hazards. It is a collaboration between organizations like OSHA, NIOSH, and AIHA, along with occupational environmental health and safety, facility management, and, of course, industrial hygiene (IH) practitioners.

According to the American Board of Industrial Hygiene, IH is the science of protecting and enhancing the health and safety of people at work and in their communities. Certified industrial hygienists have a wide range of responsibilities which, now encompass hazards far outside the norm. Though biosafety has always been one of the four elements in IH, the pandemic moved biological exposure management to the head of the line. This article focuses on ways IH professionals can improve disinfection processes to prevent infectious outbreaks in the workplace.

Expanded Role of Industrial Hygiene

Pre-Covid, infection control was not a priority in any sector, including industrial environments, and primarily amounted to nightly cleaning by custodial staff. Now, IH professionals are faced with identifying potential biological contaminants such as bacteria, fungus, and other microorganisms, while prioritizing and developing enhanced infection control measures to shield workers from exposure.

A recent peer-reviewed article in *Toxicology and Industrial Health* evaluated the IH decision-making framework (Anticipate, Recognize, Evaluate, Control, and Confirm) related to managing risks for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases in the workplace. Conclusions indicate that traditional IH tools were not designed to address the unique challenges of pathogenic pandemics. Consequently, IH

professionals are now required to have expanded knowledge and be capable of applying multiple internal controls to mitigate disease transmission from external sources.

Biological Hazard Considerations

Currently, there are four qualitative risk groups (RG) for biological agents based on pathogenicity established by the National Institute of Health and adopted by the AIHA. Biosafety guidance states that SARS-CoV-2 and other coronavirus strains are classified as RG3 viruses and are agents associated with serious or lethal human diseases. Though Covid is transmitted primarily through exposure to respiratory droplets, it may also occur indirectly through fomite transmission when touching surfaces contaminated by settled respiratory secretions from infected individuals. However, risks for occupational transmission of infectious diseases are not limited to SARS-CoV-2 but include everything from common illnesses to harmful pathogens, which cost businesses billions in productivity losses every year.

NIOSH established a Hierarchy of Controls for mitigating occupational hazard exposure, which prioritizes actions by their effectiveness. Eliminating hazards and replacing them with health-enhancing practices are the most effective, followed by installing engineering controls that include implementing appropriate cleaning, sanitation, and disinfection processes.

In manufacturing plants with assembly lines and other busy production areas, workers are in close contact, contributing to potential exposures. Engineering controls such as social distancing, facial coverings, and hand hygiene are fundamental protection strategies. Yet, the risk remains for contracting infections from contaminated surfaces (fomites.) Moreover, improper cleaning and disinfection procedures can further exacerbate risks for cross-contamination.

Adapting to Pandemic Scenarios

The traditional workplace paradigm has shifted to one in which community plays a significant role. Unfortunately, there are no definitive occupational health standards for managing the risks of pathogens that cause infectious community outbreaks.

The NIOSH hierarchy of controls was developed before infection control was top of mind and primarily meant to control chemical hazards, not highly contagious pathogens. In addition, they focus on reducing risks associated with pre-existing agents versus novel viruses that present a unique set of considerations.

Though specific to healthcare, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) addresses guidance for protecting workers from infectious disease which, can be adapted to some aspects of industrial settings. The CDC also offers supplementary Covid mitigation strategies. Nonetheless, available guidelines do not specifically prepare workplaces for pandemics, even influenza epidemics, let alone the possibility of “twindemic” outbreaks.

Consequently, to improve disinfection processes and effectively prevent illnesses, IH must adapt current regulatory guidelines and take an integrated approach to decision-making. Ultimately, the data obtained from risk assessments are fundamental to a successful action plan for preventing viral transmission in the workplace.

Strategic Mitigation Plan

Regular worksite assessments to identify risks and gaps in existing controls are the foundation for sound infection control processes that will protect everyone entering or working in a plant.

Beyond maintaining routine housekeeping practices, IH must direct more robust infection control procedures, emphasizing high-touch surface disinfection. Contaminated surfaces or objects present one of the highest risks for exposure to contagious viruses, including handles, handrails, switches, keyboards, phones, furniture, and a myriad of other commonly touched objects throughout a facility.

Protocols also must be established for increased disinfection frequency, with a special focus on workstations and public areas like breakrooms and restrooms. For tool-intensive operations, equipment must be regularly cleaned and disinfected at least once per shift.

Decontamination plans should also consider incorporating alternative cleaning technologies that complement and enhance disinfection processes. For instance, electrostatic sprayers have been transformative for the cleaning industry in many ways. Our EvaClean infection prevention system includes portable backpack sprayers that are specifically designed to disinfect large spaces and can expedite disinfection processes by as much as 80% or 10-times faster than manual methods using mops and cloths. Electrostatic technologies also help address labor shortages as fewer staff members can accomplish much more. In addition to time and labor savings, electrostatics can cover triple the surface area by creating a wrap-around effect, even reaching hidden spaces. Additionally, because electrostatic sprayers are a touchless technology, they help eliminate risks of cross-contamination.

However, as transformative as electrostatic technologies may be, their effectiveness is contingent upon using the right chemistry. At minimum, a disinfectant should be EPA-approved for electrostatic sprayer application and registered on List N against emerging viral pathogens. Tablet concentrates are the ideal format as it ensures more accurate dilution and eliminate incidents of splashing or spilling.

Sustaining Safety and Efficacy

IH is also responsible for establishing controls to protect workers from potential cleaning chemical hazards. OSHA and NIOSH highlight the need for safer sanitizers and

disinfectants and stress the importance of using Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) to ensure ingredients will not pose health risks for workers.

In recent years, innovative new chemistries have arisen such as NaDCC, which is intrinsic to EvaClean's entire infection prevention solution as it delivers efficacy without sacrificing safety. NaDCC creates HOCl when the tablets are dissolved in water, which has proven to have four-times the anti-microbial killing power of bleach. This chemistry also has the highest level 2C Emerging Pathogen Claim and a 1 to 4-minute contact time against bacteria, viruses, and fungi, including *C. diff*, MRSA, norovirus, Covid-19, and other microorganisms. Yet, NaDCC also has optimal safety ratings across the board, with an HMIS of 0/0/0, neutral pH, and the lowest EPA inhalation toxicity category, which dramatically reduces health risks.

Historically, most facilities use an average of seven to ten different cleaning chemicals to accomplish various tasks, resulting in a complex collection of products, each with its own set of instructions. Best practices for simplifying and improving processes begin with choosing one broad-spectrum chemistry that will serve multiple purposes. Evaluating the chemicals a facility uses is an integral part of the IH site assessment as it also alleviates health concerns when hazardous products are replaced with safer solutions.

The concept of chemical standardization is still relatively new to the cleaning industry but is rapidly gaining popularity. Processes are significantly simplified by following one set of instructions to accomplish the many different cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting tasks, including high touch surfaces, floors, windows, tools/equipment, and more. In addition to having an excellent safety and efficacy profile, the aforementioned NaDCC chemistry is also an NSF D2 Certified Food Contact Surface Safe Sanitizer at 100ppm with no rinsing required, which works for cafeterias, food and beverage processing, and other food service areas.

Beyond increased safety and compliance, standardization will invariably yield other benefits in the form of higher levels of productivity, efficiency, and economy. In addition,

this approach promotes long-term sustainability by reducing chemical consumption and waste.

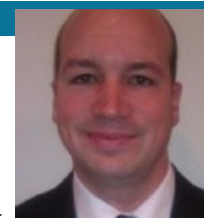
Sustaining safer environmental health in the workplace correlates to using more sustainable cleaning products that are eco-friendly and user-friendly. Because NaDCC disinfectants come in concentrated tablet form, it means less packaging and transportation impact plus ensures accurate dilution to the correct strength every time.

However, full benefits will not be realized without targeted education on current cleaning technologies and the proper implementation of disinfection protocols. To guarantee improvement of disinfection processes, IH professionals must design training programs tailored to the specific work environment and intermittently update them to align with adapted multi-layered guidelines.

An industrial hygienist's job carries heavy responsibilities which, have been compounded by the pandemic. Burdens will be significantly lighter by improved disinfection processes that better protect worker health.

About Richard Prinz

Rich Prinz is Global Vice President of Sales and Marketing for [EvaClean](#) by EarthSafe, the safer more sustainable infection prevention solution. Rich has over two decades of experience in leadership positions at major health-care, hospitality, and industrial supply organizations. Highly skilled in partnership management and targeted education, Rich has developed process improvement Initiatives for healthcare networks throughout the Country. He has established training programs consistent with Joint Commission Standards for operating rooms, infection prevention, environmental services, and sterile processing. Originally from Chicago, Rich relocated to MA in 2014 with his family. He enjoys traveling, hiking, and running with his two daughters.



Mitigating Risks, Preventing the Spread of COVID-19

By: **Barbara Nessinger**, *Editor-in-Chief, Industrial Hygiene in the Workplace*

OSHA recently published guidance intended for employers and workers, in workplace settings outside of healthcare, to help identify risks of being exposed to and/or contracting COVID-19. Also designed to help employers determine appropriate control measures to implement, here is an overview of OSHA's detailed guidance.

This OSHA guide contains recommendations, as well as descriptions of mandatory safety and health standards. The recommendations are, according to OSHA, "advisory in nature; informational in content; and are intended to assist employers in providing a safe and healthful workplace."

Covered in the guidance are what employees need to know about COVID-19; a detailed discussion of face coverings; and the roles of both employers and employees in responding to COVID-19.

What Employees Need to Know about COVID-19

- The best way to protect yourself is to **stay far enough away from other people** so that you are not breathing in particles produced by an infected



Not all face coverings are the same; the CDC recommends face coverings be made of at least two layers of a tightly woven, breathable fabric, such as cotton, and should not have exhalation valves or vents. (photo courtesy Adobe Stock)

person—at least 6ft (about 2 arm lengths)—however, this is not a guarantee, especially in enclosed spaces or those with poor ventilation.

- **Practice good personal hygiene** and wash your hands often. Always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use the inside of your elbow and do not spit. Monitor your health daily and be alert for COVID-19 symptoms.
- **Face coverings** are simple barriers to help prevent your respiratory droplets or aerosols from reaching others. Not all face coverings are the same; the CDC recommends face coverings be made of at least two layers of a tightly woven breathable fabric, such as cotton, and should not have exhalation valves or vents. The main function of wearing a face covering is to protect those around you, in case you are infected but not showing symptoms. Studies show that face coverings reduce the spray of droplets when worn over the nose and mouth. Although not their primary value, studies also show that face coverings can reduce wearers' risk of infection in certain circumstances, depending upon the face covering. This means wear a face covering even when there are no symptoms present. Asymptomatic workers can spread the virus to others.

It is especially important to wear a face covering when you are unable to stay at least 6ft apart from others, since COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact with one another. But wearing a face covering does not eliminate the need for physical distancing or other control measures (e.g., handwashing). It is also vital to wear a face covering and remain physically distant from co-workers and customers, even if you have been vaccinated, because it is not known at this time how vaccination affects transmissibility.

In addition, there are many employer prevention programs that include important steps to keep workers safe—from telework to flexible schedules to PPE and face coverings. All workers should be aware of such prevention options.

The Roles of Employers & Workers

Under the OSH Act, employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace, free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm. Implementing a workplace COVID-19 prevention program is the most effective way to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 at work, according to the OSHA guidance.

This includes a 16-step guideline for minimizing risk, including education and training; establishment of an effective communication system; and consideration of employees who might be at higher risk of contracting COVID-19, through established policies and practices.

The new guidance also contains multiple links for in-depth reference for both employers and employees. See the "Additional Resources" section, below, for more.

Additional Resources:

- "Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace," <https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/safework>
- "Scientific Brief: Community Use of Cloth Masks to Control the Spread of SARS-CoV-2," <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/masking-science-sars-cov2.html>
- CDC's "People at Increased Risk and Other People Who Need to Take Extra Precautions," <https://tinyurl.com/jwveuss8>
- "Implement Physical Distancing in All Communal Work Areas," <https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/safework#implement-physical-distancing>

Biomist Power Sanitizing Systems

Now more than ever, improved sanitation methods are needed to provide healthier working and learning environments. Uncontrolled pathogens are responsible for thousands of lives and cost billions of dollars to economies every year. Founded in 2001, Biomist manufactures sanitizing and disinfecting systems used to kill pathogens in commercial, institutional and industrial workplaces.

Many disinfection procedures are time-consuming and labor intensive, using a common hit-or-miss approach with trigger-spray bottles of disinfectant and wiping that can spread or introduce germs to new surfaces. In addition, many of the chemicals traditionally used for sanitation can create hazardous fumes or damage sensitive equipment. But with the right tools, you can disinfect your facilities quickly, efficiently and safely.

Alcohol has long been recognized as a powerful sanitizing agent. It kills bacteria by

physically destroying the cell membrane and denaturing proteins within them. Because alcohol is flammable, it is often diluted rendering it less effective in killing germs. Biomist has solved this problem with patented technology that encases the alcohol in a stream of CO₂ gas, displacing any oxygen that could cause combustion. This allows the solution to be sprayed safely, even in places where there is the possibility of electrical sparks or open flames. After the alcohol has evaporated, a four-chain quaternary ammonium compound in our hospital-grade Formula D2 disinfectant continues the sanitizing effect.

Biomist Power Sanitizing Systems atomize Formula D2 into microparticles that penetrate into cracks and crevices to kill pathogens that are impossible to reach with other methods. The sanitizing mist diffuses uniformly throughout the space being treated and settles onto surfaces up to 15 feet away. Since the systems efficiently atomize the disinfectant, much less solution is used to cover more surface area than trigger or garden-type sprayers. The operator doesn't have to wait at the location to wipe, so they can move on to disinfect other surfaces. No wiping reduces labor, but most importantly, it eliminates the spread of pathogens. High-touch surfaces like door handles and rails should be cleaned and disinfected frequently to minimize the risk of infection and exposure.

Biomist Formula D2 is premixed and ready-to-use, so there's no guesswork or



math involved when trying to determine if you have the correct chemical concentration. No special PPE is required to use Biomist, just safety glasses and gloves are recommended for incidental contact. The formula is non-corrosive to metals and safe for use on electronics and other sensitive equipment. It is also safe for food contact surfaces, so it can also be used to sanitize



kitchens and living areas to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

Committed to quality, Biomist is an FDA-registered medical device manufacturer whose products have been tested and approved by Underwriters Laboratories and Intertek (ETL). We constantly innovate new processes and sanitizing technologies through research and development without compromise.

To learn more, visit our website www.biomistinc.com or give us a call at 1-847-850-5530. ■



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- Biomist Formula D2 is Bactericidal, Virucidal & Tuberculocidal

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Workplace Health Scientists Urge Employers: Regardless of Supreme Court Ruling on Vax Mandates Employers and Employees Can Take Critical Steps to Reduce the Risk of COVID-19 in the Workplace

AIHA and national health organizations call on employers and employees to take the Commit to C.A.R.E. Pledge

As employers and businesses await the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on OSHA's COVID-19 vaccination and testing mandates in the workplace, leading health organizations urge employers and employees to pledge to make their organizations and communities healthier and safer from COVID-19. Businesses and public health organizations have taken the [Commit To C.A.R.E.](#) pledge including: National Safety Council, Society for Critical Care Medicine, the Association of Occupational Health Professionals in Healthcare, and Indoor Air Quality Association Australia, among others.

[AIHA](#), the association for scientists and professionals committed to preserving and ensuring occupational and environmental health and safety in the workplace and community, in partnership with [IBEC](#), The Integrated Bioscience and Built Environment Consortium, launched [Commit To C.A.R.E.](#), a new public education initiative that encourages employers and employees to commit to reducing the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace and communities

by minimizing the risk of spreading COVID-19 and preparing buildings against the spread. The initiative is funded by a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Control and Prevention (CDC).

"The economic toll on businesses and employees is immense. To return to work safely, both employers and their employees play a role in keeping their work environments and communities safe. While vaccination is one way to reduce the transmission and severity of COVID-19, there are other steps organizations should take to mitigate its spread and protect what matters most — people," said AIHA CEO Lawrence Sloan. "Commit To C.A.R.E. resources include the most comprehensive tools that employers and employees can use to better understand their risk and take action to protect themselves and others," he added.

According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center, a quarter of U.S. adults say they or someone in their household has been laid off or lost a job because of the coronavirus outbreak, and 32% say they or someone else in their household has taken a pay cut due to reduced hours or demand for their work. And, most workers (60%) who lost wages during the pandemic are still earning less.

[Commit To C.A.R.E.](#) (Community, Awareness, Responsibility, Equity) strives to debunk myths about the spread of the COVID-19 virus, make the complexities of the science easier to understand through no-cost, engaging multi-media tools available in nine different languages, help prepare facilities against airborne viruses, and encourage businesses to pledge their commitment to C.A.R.E. for the health and well-being of their employees, clients, and customers.

The comprehensive resources, written in non-technical terms, include micro-training videos (i.e., addressing the importance of control strategies such as ventilation and respiratory protection), checklists, a web-based interactive assessment tool, other informational pieces on such topics as in-house vaccination and testing policy, and more. The free resources also include downloadable posters and fliers for use in the workplace. For more information about becoming a C.A.R.E. Partner, or accessing free multimedia resources such as checklists, posters, flyers, videos and to take the C.A.R.E. pledge, visit: [Commit2Care.org](#).

Ways employers and employees can get involved:

- Share information about Commit To C.A.R.E. with your employers and clients. Visit: [www.BackToWorkSafely.org/CDC](#) to download a tool kit of materials to get started;



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- Request that your employer send an email to employees asking them to take the Commit To C.A.R.E pledge;
- Ask your employer to include information about Commit To C.A.R.E in the company newsletter and on social media;
- Tell colleagues in your company about Commit to C.A.R.E.;
- Ask a business owner you know to take the pledge and Commit to C.A.R.E.;
- Send Commit To C.A.R.E. videos, checklists, etc. that you download to friends and family via email or your social media network!

“The resources included in Commit to C.A.R.E. align to most of the topic areas within the OSHA ETS and help create a common understanding of the issues across the workforce, building a solid framework for more detailed training within an organization,” said Kenneth Martinez, Chief Science Officer at IBEC. “The resources go one step further by targeting the content specifically to key industries: general business, healthcare, and long-term care facilities,” he added.

About AIHA

AIHA is the association for scientists and professionals committed to preserving and ensuring occupational and environmental health and safety in the workplace and community. Founded in 1939, we support our members with our expertise, networks, comprehensive education programs, and other products and services that help them maintain the highest professional and competency standards. More than half of AIHA’s nearly 8,500 members are Certified Industrial Hygienists, and many hold other professional designations. AIHA serves as a resource for those employed across

the public and private sectors, as well as to the communities in which they work.

In 2020, AIHA developed the “Back to Work Safely” initiative to help small businesses get back to work safely with industry sector specific guidelines and resources. AIHA’s [Back to Work Safely Guidelines](#), 2nd Edition, are now available for small to mid-size businesses in 27 sectors. The free guidance documents, available only in English and Spanish), provide clear and actionable steps towards the safe operations of a variety of workplaces through prevention, early detection, and control of COVID-19. The 2nd editions offer practical guidance for employers to implement multiple layers of risk mitigation strategies in order of most effective to least effective – through the elimination of a hazard, substitution of a hazard, use of engineering controls (e.g., increased ventilation and air filtration), administrative controls (e.g., staggered shifts), and personal protective equipment (e.g., respirators and gloves). For more information, please visit www.aiha.org.

About IBEC

IBEC, the Integrated Bioscience and Built Environment Consortium, strives to bridge the gap between science and real-world applications so that people can feel safe gathering together again in indoor spaces. A membership-based organization founded in March 2020, IBEC brings together scientists, OEHS professionals, disaster response, and healthcare specialists to help accelerate the contributions of science and technology for healthily built environments. For more information, please visit www.weareibec.org. ■

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5 Tips to Comply With OSHA's New COVID-19 ETS Safety Mandate

On November 5, 2021, OSHA published an Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) to protect American workers from COVID-19 by requiring vaccination or testing ([1910 Subpart U COVID-19 §1910.501-509](#)).

This is OSHA's response to the ongoing pandemic as an issue of workplace safety. Nearly all companies operating in the United States with at least 100 employees are affected by the rule.

The new [Emergency Temporary Standard](#):

1. Encourages vaccination as a simple, readily available, and highly effective method of protection.
2. Establishes requirements for regular testing and face covering for unvaccinated workers.
3. Sets up a system to temporarily remove infected people from the workplace.

Company Policies

The first key point of the ETS is a requirement for employers to have a COVID-19 policy. These two options are described in [§1910.501\(d\)\(1\)](#) and [\(d\)\(2\)](#), with some definitions found in [1910.501\(c\)](#).

1. Employers may adopt a mandatory vaccination policy, or
2. They may adopt a policy of regular testing and face coverings.

Mandatory Vaccination Policies

This requires that each employee at a company worksite must be fully vaccinated (or must be in the process of becoming vaccinated, with a reasonable time allowance). There are three legal exceptions that would allow a worker **not** to be vaccinated under this kind of policy:

- A vaccine is medically contraindicated for the individual (that is, a doctor says "no").
- Medical necessity requires a delay in vaccination (that is, a doctor says "not right now").

- Civil rights laws allow the individual to request reasonable accommodations for a disability or a sincerely held religious belief.

Regular Testing and Face Coverings

This policy allows more choice by employees, in exchange for more record keeping and management work for the employer. Each worker may choose:

1. To be fully vaccinated, or
2. To provide proof of regular testing for COVID-19 (generally once per week), and also to wear a face covering during most of their time at the worksite (with specific allowances, such as while eating or while alone in a closed room). This option allows workers to decline vaccination, but those workers must then take on responsibility for regular testing. The OSHA ETS does not require employers to provide or pay for the tests, although other agreements or requirements may apply.

Information to Employees

OSHA's ETS specifically requires employers to provide certain information to their employees, in a language and format that will be understood:

1. The requirements of the ETS, and the workplace policies and procedures that are in place to meet those requirements.
2. A document prepared by the CDC describing [Key Things to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines](#).
3. Information about the [protections in place against retaliation and discrimination](#).
4. Information about the laws providing for [criminal penalties for knowingly supplying false statements or documentation](#) required under the ETS.

Vaccinations for Employees

Companies must record proof of vaccination for each vaccinated employee and maintain a roster of employee

vaccination status. Workers who can't provide acceptable proof of their vaccination status must be treated as unvaccinated.

- OSHA requires employers to provide reasonable time (up to four hours) during work hours, paid at the employee's normal rate, to allow currently unvaccinated employees to get their vaccinations. This is separate from any other paid time off.
- OSHA also requires that employers allow employees to use sick leave or similar time off to recover from any side effects of the vaccination.

Routine Testing

For each employee who is not fully vaccinated, but who reports to the workplace at least once a week, the employee must be tested for COVID-19 at least once a week, and must provide proof of the most recent test's result at least once a week.

- Workers reporting to the workplace less frequently are only required to be tested at least once in the seven days prior to reporting to the workplace, and must provide proof upon arrival.
- Unvaccinated workers who can't provide the necessary proof of a test must be removed from the workplace until that proof is provided.

Any employees testing positive for infection (or being diagnosed with COVID-19) must be removed from the workplace until they:

- Receive a negative NAAT confirmation test,
- Meet the CDC's return-to-work criteria, or
- Receive a recommendation to return to work from a licensed healthcare provider.
- Testing requirements for such employees are suspended for 90 days from the first positive test (or diagnosis).

Face Coverings

Face coverings are required for all unvaccinated workers at a worksite where other workers or customers may be present. These employees must wear a face covering while indoors or in a vehicle with others, except:

- When alone in a closed room.
- Temporarily while eating or drinking.
- Temporarily for identification or security purposes, or
- While wearing a “respirator” (such as NIOSH-approved filtering masks) or “facemask” (such as surgical masks), which have their own specific legal definitions. A common N95 mask meets the legal definition of a “respirator.”
- Rare cases in which the employer can show that the use of a face covering is infeasible or creates a greater hazard.

An acceptable face covering is defined as:

- Completely covering the mouth and nose.
- Made of two or more layers of a tightly woven breathable fabric.
- Secured with ties, ear loops, or elastic bands around the head, or a “gaiter” type with fabric wrapping around the head and neck.
- Fitting snugly over the nose, mouth, and chin, without large gaps.

The face covering must be a solid piece of material, without exhalation valves, slits, or visible holes. An exception is given for face coverings that include a clear plastic window over the mouth, designed to allow for lip-reading.

Employers may not prevent any worker from voluntarily wearing a face covering, unless the employer can demonstrate that it would create a hazard of serious injury or death. Likewise, employers may not prevent a worker from voluntarily choosing to wear a more protective “respirator” instead of a face covering.

Recordkeeping and Reporting

Employee vaccination records and COVID-19 test results will need to be kept on file as long as the temporary rule remains in effect. However, these details are personal medical information, and need to be kept confidential.

Employers should also maintain an aggregated count of their vaccinated employees at the workplace, compared to the total count of employees there. These aggregated numbers don’t include any personal medical information. OSHA may request this count as an initial step to determine if further information is needed, and employees may also request this information as a way to understand their own risks.

If an employee is hospitalized for COVID-19, and a reasonable assessment finds that the illness is work-related, the hospitalization must be reported to OSHA within 24 hours. If an employee dies as a result of a work-related case of COVID-19, the fatality must be reported to OSHA within 8 hours. These requirements match OSHA’s existing reporting requirements for other work-related injuries and illnesses.

Communicating About the ETS

The policies required by OSHA’s COVID-19 ETS can be more easily managed via strong communication. This communication can be most effectively provided with signage. For example:

- Employees will need to provide some documents before reporting to work. This may be proof of COVID-19 vaccination status, or it may be proof of a recent COVID-19 test. What proof is acceptable? Where should workers deliver it?
- If workers don’t have that proof available, they’ll need to stay away from the workplace until they can provide it. Any workers with a positive COVID-19 test should also stay away until it’s safe for them to return. Who should they contact to check in?

- Workers who don’t have proof of vaccination already on file will need to wear face coverings in the workplace. When is it acceptable for workers to take off their face coverings?

This information can be quickly and easily provided via signs at your facility entrances, or placed logically around the worksite to provide timely reminders and increase workplace safety.

When creating new signage

- Keep your messages clear and consistent.
- Be ready to answer questions that arise
- Update your signage to reflect the current situation, policies, and requirements.

The proper use of labels and signs will aid your efforts to reduce exposure and provide OSHA-required ETS response to the ongoing pandemic as an issue of workplace safety. Facility signage can communicate needed information such as new or revised operating procedures. Correctly-placed labels and signs provide directions, critical, localized safety information and identify the locations of safety equipment. However, signs and labels only work if they are posted, their message is clear, they remain in place, and are readable.

Resources

Five ways to meet osha requirements for safety signage: <https://www.graphicproducts.com/articles/five-ways-to-meet-osa-requirements-for-safety-signage/> ■

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Emergency Temporary Standards: What they Mean for Businesses

COVID-19 continues to be a focal point for companies across the country. OSHA tried to step up its efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, announcing an emergency temporary standard (ETS) requiring COVID-19 vaccination or a testing and mask policy for employers with 100+ employees.

But, on January 13, 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court blocked OSHA's COVID-19 ETS with one exception. The court allowed for the federal government to require vaccinations for healthcare employees at Medicare- and Medicaid-certified providers and suppliers.

While it's unlikely that OSHA's ETS will ever take effect, employers should now figure out if they want to implement their own vaccine mandates.

We talked to Jill Schaefer, Director of Content Management at KPA, a provider of Environment, Health & Safety (EHS) and Workforce Compliance software and services, to learn more about what the blocked ETS means and what companies should do about protecting their staff from COVID-19.

Q What should businesses know about the ETS?

An Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) is a set of workplace safety rules that OSHA can implement at any time and for a predetermined length of time (usually six months) until a permanent standard is issued. OSHA issues an ETS when it determines that workers could be in grave danger—whether

that's due to COVID-19 or another workplace hazard. An ETS can be challenged and turned down in courts, which we saw happen in January.

Even though the federal ETS was blocked, several states have their own COVID-19 ETS, which eligible companies operating in the state must abide by. Those states include California, Oregon, Colorado, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Maine. Businesses should ensure they're aware of and acting on any testing or vaccination requirements mandated by their state, county or city.

Q How are companies responding to the rejected ETS?

Across the country, some companies may be relieved that the ETS was blocked.

A recent Kaiser Family Foundation study found that 5% of the unvaccinated workforce population quit their jobs due to employer vaccination mandates. Considering the entire U.S. workforce is about 150 million strong, that could have equated to several million people leaving their jobs if the ETS was upheld—which would have had a big impact, especially on small or medium-sized companies. That would have been on top of an already existing labor shortage.

Businesses should know that, even though the ETS was struck down, OSHA recently issued a statement that it will continue to hold employers accountable for ensuring

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the safety of their workforces. This means that OSHA will continue to leverage the COVID-19 National Emphasis Program and General Duty Clause citations. In other words, employers can still be liable for any COVID-19 exposure in the workplace.

Q Some cities and states passed their own COVID-19 vaccination and testing requirements for private sector businesses already. How does the ruling affect those local or state mandates?

With the absence of a federal standard, we anticipate that state regulating agencies will continue to pursue their own COVID-19-related requirements around vaccines, testing, face masks, etc.

For example, New York City issued its own mandate on December 7 that required all private sector employees to be fully vaccinated by December 27. This was the first state to require vaccination in the private

sector. Although as of this publication, this mandate was still temporarily blocked by a Manhattan court.

In terms of vaccine mandates, private companies in every state except Montana can require that employees are vaccinated against COVID-19. Although, many states (including Texas, Kansas, Iowa, Utah and more) have restrictions around those mandates, often related to religious or medical objections. Other states (including California, New York, Maine, Colorado, Illinois and more) require COVID-19 vaccination if you work in select industries.

Bottom line: Even though OSHA's ETS was blocked, companies must still abide by local and state requirements and do their best to keep workers safe from COVID-19 workplace outbreaks.

Q What should companies do and know now about COVID-19 in the workplace?

Even though OSHA's ETS was blocked, at KPA we recommend that employers plan and communicate how to protect employees and others in the workplace from COVID-19. Businesses should know that they can still elect to require vaccinations. As such, we recommend the following:

- 1. Gather staff vaccination records:** This should be treated as a confidential medical record. Companies should communicate their vaccination policy and how employees should indicate that they received a vaccination, along with supporting documentation. Employers should not ask why an employee is or isn't vaccinated, as this may be considered unlawful conduct.
- 2. Research COVID-19 testing and vaccination requirement options:** If an employer intends to implement testing for unvaccinated or partially vaccinated workers, it's a good idea to start thinking

about how this will look—whether that's at-home tests, tests at a COVID-19 testing site, etc. Employers should not be unreasonable or make it impossible for an employee to get tested. Best practice is for employers to pay for testing and related supplies when employers require staff to comply, as this can greatly reduce any long-term costs associated with litigation and/or wage and hour claims.

- 3. Establish and clearly communicate policies:** Employers should include vaccination, masking policy, testing and time-off to get vaccinated/recover from side effects/etc. Consider working with legal counsel to create these.
- 4. Understand state and local regulations:** Some states and localities have paid compensation laws around COVID-19. All businesses, depending on qualifying criteria, must comply with these.
- 5. Identify accommodations:** Employers should understand any religious and medical accommodations or exemptions and tell employees how to apply for one.
- 6. Communicate time-off policies:** Businesses should comply with payroll laws and provide paid time off and sick leave. State and local regulations may have specific COVID-19 requirements.
- 7. Establish OSHA reporting and recording processes:** Any COVID-19-related deaths that likely stemmed from the workplace must be reported within eight hours. Hospitalizations must be reported within 24 hours. Businesses should have a system setup to record and report these.

In any case, we recommend that companies always speak with competent local legal counsel before taking any action.

Q What does the blocked ETS mean for workplace safety programs?

Dr. Fauci recently said that the best-case scenario is that COVID-19 will become endemic in the U.S. and the workplace, meaning that it circulates but doesn't disrupt society. For now, COVID-19 is and will continue to be a significant threat to workplace safety across the country.

That's why a formal workplace safety and compliance program is paramount to keep staff safe. Regardless of a federal ETS, businesses should ensure their safety programs include any requirements around vaccination, testing, etc. But just updating your workplace safety programs isn't the end-all-be-all.

An effective safety program—one that mitigates workplace accidents and exposure to COVID-19—requires dedication to achieving the organization's safety goals. Management must ensure that everyone adheres to safety policies. If your company doesn't already have one, we recommend creating a dedicated EHS team, with specific roles assigned to each member to ensure the organization remains compliant. Everyone in the company should also receive regular safety training, especially training that is specific to their job duties. These training sessions should include proper ways to wear PPE and when and where it's required on the job.

If you need help getting started, talk to your EHS or workplace safety consultant. ■



Jill Schaefer, Director of Content Management at KPA

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About AccuTec-IHS

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AIHA is the association for scientists and professionals committed to preserving and ensuring occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS) in the workplace and community. Founded in 1939, we support our members with our expertise, networks, comprehensive education programs, and other products and services that help them maintain the highest professional and competency standards. More than half of AIHA's nearly 8,500 members are Certified Industrial Hygienists, and many hold other professional designations. AIHA serves as a resource for those employed across the public and private sectors and the communities in which they work.

AIHA's overall objective is to help ensure that work-related occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS) hazards are anticipated and eliminated or controlled. It seeks to achieve this by:

- Promoting the profession and OEHS practice in the industry, government, and the general community
- Improving the practice of OEHS and the knowledge, competence, and standing of its practitioners
- Providing a global forum for the exchange of OEHS information and ideas
- Representing the profession nationally and internationally

Our mission statement defines who we are and why we exist. It gives us something to work towards daily: Empowering and advancing those who apply scientific knowledge to protect all workers and their communities from occupational and environmental hazards.

Our vision statement acts as an internal compass, expressing what we hope to be the result if we continue to successfully fulfill our organization's mission: A world where all workers and their communities are healthy and safe.

AIHA members are scientists and professionals who protect the health and safety of workers and communities by reducing risks and safeguarding operations to help organizations operate efficiently and without interruption. OEHS professionals (also known as industrial hygienists) practice the science of anticipating, recognizing, evaluating, controlling, and confirming protection from hazardous workplace conditions that may cause workers injury or illness. Through a continuous improvement cycle of planning, doing, checking, and acting, OEHS professionals make sure workplaces are healthy and safe.

"AIHA University" is the association's resource for scientific-based education that help OEHS professionals:

- Stay on top of trending topics affecting their industry
- Earn contact hours for multiple certification bodies to maintain your certification
- Find training solutions for every IH and OEHS professional, including group learning

AIHA members devote volunteer time in developing consumer resources specifically aimed at educating employers and employees about getting back to work safely during the COVID-19 pandemic and staying at work safely all the time. Some of the consumer resource centers AIHA has are:

- [Back to Work Safely Resource Center](#)
- [Commit to C.A.R.E.](#)
- [Worker Health Safety](#)
- [OEHS Careers](#)
- [Mold Resource Center](#)
- [Disaster Response Resource Center](#)

To access all of AIHA's consumer resources, visit <https://www.backtoworksafely.org/consumer-resources>. ■

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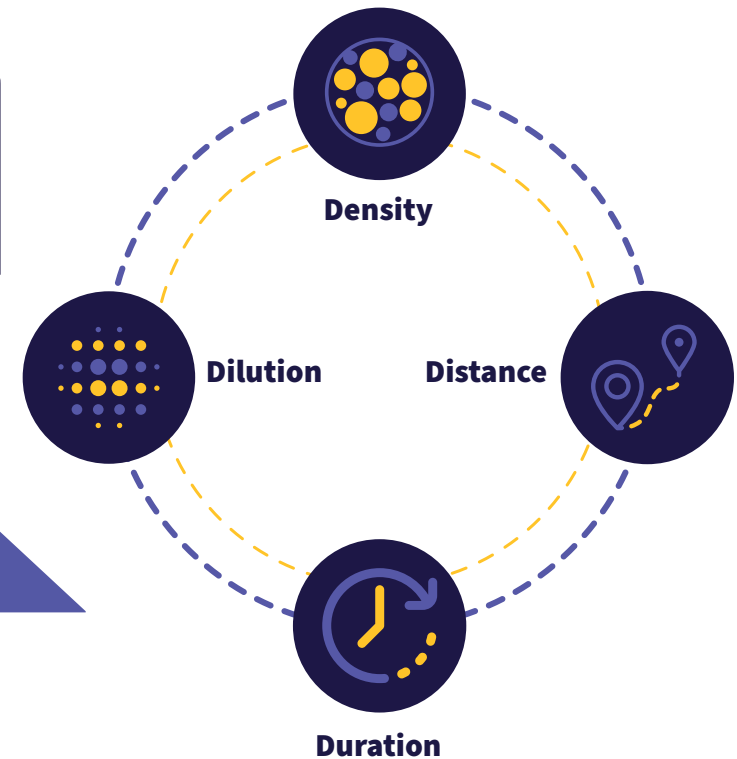
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AIHA is the association for scientists and professionals committed to preserving and ensuring occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS) in the workplace and community.

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