Construction: What You Need to Know about COVID-19 on the Job

In San Francisco, construction workers are one of the groups most likely to be infected with COVID-19

How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 mostly spreads from person-to-person through a virus that is in an infected person's breath. The virus spreads through the air when an infected person breathes, especially when the person talks, coughs, or sneezes. Other people get infected when they breathe the virus in the air, or when the virus from the person's breath lands in their eyes, nose and mouth.

People can also get infected from touching a surface that the virus has landed on, then touching their eyes, nose and mouth, but this is less common.

Why are construction workers getting infected with COVID-19?

- **Working close to other people**
  In construction, workers often have to work close to each other. The closer you are to a person who is infected, the more likely you are to catch COVID-19.

- **Working in enclosed spaces**
  Construction work often involves small indoor spaces, job site elevators and trailers. Virus from someone's breath can float in the air for a longer time in small, poorly ventilated areas.

- **Physical labor**
  When people are doing heavy labor, they breathe harder and faster than usual. If there is any virus in the air, they are more likely to breathe it in. If someone is infected with COVID-19, breathing harder will put more virus in the air.

- **Using face masks less**
  Construction sites are often noisy. Noise from construction and nearby traffic can make it hard to understand what people are saying when they are wearing facemasks. Workers also may not like wearing a mask while performing physically demanding work because they have to work harder to breathe through it.

- **Eating together during breaks**
  A common way that workers get infected is by eating or drinking together. Eating together is high-risk because people have their masks off at the same time. They are also touching their mouths, and people often talk while having lunch or coffee together, which produces more respiratory droplets.

- **Other risk factors: Smoking or vaping**
  Smoking and vaping increases the risk of getting COVID-19, because the person has to take their mask off. Smoking also increases the risk of severe COVID-19 illness if a person does get infected.

What can you do to lower your risk?

- Keep a face covering **over your mouth and nose** at all times.

- **Stay at least 6 feet away from other people** as much as you possibly can. Especially when you're indoors.

- **Eat or drink alone,** at least 6 feet away from other people. Eat outside if you can.

- At meals and breaks, eat or drink first, then put your mask **back on before starting conversation** with other people.

- **If you smoke or vape, do it alone** and at least 6 feet away from other people.

- **Do not take off your face mask to speak.** Talking, especially loudly, can spread more virus. If people cannot hear what you are saying, try to stop any machinery to reduce noise, write your message, or go to a quieter location.

- Try **not** to share **small indoor spaces** with other people.

- **Open windows and doors** to bring in fresh air.

- **Avoid carpooling to work if** you can. If you must carpool, try to ride with the same group of people each day. Have everyone wear a face mask. Open the windows and turn the fan up, set to fresh air.

Many people with COVID-19 may be sick but not know it

Most COVID-19 infections are caused by people who have no symptoms at all. They can infect others by simply breathing out virus particles which is why it is so important to wear a face covering.

Before you go to work, you must answer daily personnel screening questions. It is important to answer these questions truthfully. There are resources to support workers who cannot go to work because they need to isolate or quarantine due to COVID19.

- **If you have COVID-19 symptoms**, do not go to work. Get tested for COVID-19 as soon as you can. Until you get your test result, try to stay away from other people, in a separate room and use a separate bathroom if you can. Wear a face mask if you have to be around other people.

- **If someone in your home is sick,** try to stay in a separate room from them, wear a mask around them, and open the windows inside.

Eligibility for sick pay

You may be entitled to sick leave benefits if you contract COVID-19. Visit **sfgov.org/olse/pslo** for more details.

City & County of San Francisco
sf.gov/Coronavirus