



Managing Outbreaks/Multiple Infections of COVID-19

1/27/2021, 11/23/2021

REVISED 5/27/2022

5/27/2022 Revision summary: In the setting of a major outbreak, testing is required for all employees in the exposed workplace twice weekly.

5/16/2022 Revision summary: During an outbreak, as defined by Cal/OSHA, departments are required by state law to reinstitute masking for all employees in the exposed workplace and offer testing during work times until the outbreak is over. Should there be 3 or more simultaneous outbreaks in a given address that affects multiple departments, DHR also strongly recommends temporary masking for all employees in the building (even if they do not work in an “exposed workplace”) when entering or exiting the building and in common spaces such as elevators, bathrooms, and breakrooms until resolution of the outbreaks.

Overview: Assembly Bill 685 and Cal/OSHA emergency regulations require employers to take specific steps when there are multiple COVID-19 cases in an exposed workplace. This includes reporting to the Department of Public Health, offering testing to employees, and identifying and correcting factors that may have contributed to the outbreak.

What is an outbreak? An outbreak is defined as three or more COVID-19 cases in an “exposed workplace” within a 14-day period. The rolling 14-day period is measured beginning with the date of the third known COVID-19 individual and looking back 14-days. The outbreak is over when there are no new COVID-19 cases detected in the exposed workplace for a 14-day period.

A “major outbreak” is defined as 20 or more COVID-19 cases in the exposed workplace within a 30-day period. Testing in this scenario is required twice weekly for all employees in the exposed workplace until the outbreak is resolved. The outbreak is over when there are fewer than 3 COVID-19 cases detected in the exposed workplace over a 14-day period.

What is an “exposed workplace” for purposes of outbreaks? An “exposed workplace” is defined by the Cal/OSHA regulations as any work location, working area, or common area at work used or accessed by a COVID-19 case during the high-risk period, which may include bathrooms, walkways, hallways, aisles, break or eating areas, and waiting areas. It does not include buildings, floors, or other parts of facilities not entered by a COVID-19 case. It also does not include areas where employees momentarily pass through without interacting or congregating with each other. It includes only those locations where transmission was more likely.

What is a “High-Risk Exposure Period”? Two days before the COVID case presented symptoms until 10 days after symptoms first appeared, or, if asymptomatic, two days before positive test was collected and 10 days after.

Procedures for Reporting and Responding to an Outbreak:

1. All employees in an exposed workgroup are required to re-mask for the duration of the outbreak. Masking requirements are: well-fitted mask, when in the company of others, or if working outside when closer than 6 feet to others. Employees may request access to N95 face covering from in their department. Masking continues until there are no new cases for 14 consecutive days, and the area is no longer considered in outbreak status.
2. Support distancing as are able and good hygiene, such as hand washing.
3. Offer employees who were present in the exposed workplace during the infectious period the opportunity to seek a COVID-19 test immediately, and again one week later. Employees must be allowed to test during working hours. Tests can be sought at CityTestSF. Home rapid antigen testing is also allowable. Departments may obtain home rapid antigen test kits via their usual procurement methods, and distribute to affected groups.
4. A. Continue to offer testing to employees who were present in the exposed workplace during the infectious period on a weekly basis until 14 days have passed with no new COVID-19 cases.
B. If it is a major outbreak, twice weekly testing is required for all employees in the exposed workplace until 14 days have passed with no new COVID-19 cases.
5. Notify the SF Department of Public Health (SFDPH) and DHR within one business day or 48 hours, whichever is later, after learning of the outbreak by emailing: cases.workplaces@sfdph.org and fiona.wilson@sfgov.org. SFDPH and DHR need the following information on the COVID case(s) and where they were working to meet state labor code:
 - a. Employee Name
 - b. Date of symptom onset
 - c. Date of COVID-19 test
 - d. Contact information
 - e. Workplace location and address
 - f. Whether hospitalized or died (if known)
 - g. North American Industry Classification Code (NAIC) of the workplace (go to <https://www.naics.com/search/> to find the code)

6. Follow the protocols in the Workplace Contact Tracing Guidance issued by DHR at: <https://sfdhr.org/sites/default/files/documents/COVID-19/Management-COVID-19-Workplace-Investigations-and-Staff-Notifications.pdf> including sending required notifications to close contacts and general advisories. All test results must be uploaded to People & Pay by employees.
7. Investigate factors that contributed to the outbreak and what could be done to reduce exposure to COVID-19. Document the results and changes that will be implemented to prevent further occurrences. Add the changes to your COVID-19 Illness Prevention Plan. Changes can include, but are not limited to, moving indoor activities outdoors, increasing telecommuting, delaying non-essential work, increasing outdoor air supply or increasing filtration systems for buildings where possible. (For Cal/OSHA Model Prevention Plan, go to: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/ETS.html> For questions, contact Peggy Sugarman peggy.sugarman@sfgov.org or her assistant, Helene Paz helene.paz@sfgov.org

Responding to Multiple Outbreaks at Exposed Workplaces in a Single Address

Effective mitigating strategies such as shelter-in-place were successful early in the pandemic. At this time with less masking and high amounts of infection circulating in communities, universal closing of buildings does not reduce COVID-19 spread, as employees working from home may have increased exposure to COVID-19 in their community. DHR therefore encourages departments to, instead, support additional masking when there are multiple outbreaks in a single building.

When three or more simultaneous outbreaks occur at different exposed workplaces at single address (not exclusively a single department), DHR highly encourages temporary adoption of universal masking for all employees and departments in the common areas of the building until resolution of the outbreaks.

This recommendation includes all employees at a single address when in transit through the building and when using common areas including, but not limited to, bathrooms, conference rooms, hallways, elevators, and stairs. Unaffected work areas without outbreak status are not required to maintain masking if there is no outbreak specific to their workplace area, though are encouraged and welcome to continue masking in their workplaces. Employees are encouraged to take continued precautions of maintaining distancing, avoiding close contacts, and avoiding maskless exposures with others. DHR will communicate when there are multiple outbreaks in a single address with the affected Departments DPOs, who in turn will communicate with their employees. Departments should strongly encourage employees to engage in universal masking in common areas and in transit during these periods.