

US Department of Commerce – Office of Business Liaison

Coronavirus Resources Conference Call

Monday, March 23, 2020

2 pm - 3 pm EDT

Call Hosts

- Patrick Wilson – Department of Commerce, Office of Business Liaison
- Loren Sweatt – Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, OSHA
- Christopher Brown – Health Scientist, Office of Emergency Management and Preparedness, OSHA

Call Information/Discussion Topics

- OSHA has an occupational exposures assessment risk pyramid available on their website for use as part of a larger guidance document titled *Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19* - <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>
- OSHA has developed flexibility around compliance with N95 fit testing requirements in the workplace and that is available at <https://www.osha.gov/memos/2020-03-14/temporary-enforcement-guidance-healthcare-respiratory-protection-annual-fit> .
- HIPAA requirements and OSHA worker protection requirements may conflict in the coronavirus situation. OSHA is aware of this and stresses providing accurate, risk-based information and avoiding speculation to minimize the conflict.
- For shared workspaces at essential businesses, there is no specific Federal guidance at that this time, other than adhering to CDC recommendations regarding social distancing, etc. and keeping up with routine cleaning along with having a plan in place for dealing with a positive test result by a worker.
- It may be difficult/impossible to tell if a COVID case is ‘work-related’ and therefore reportable to OSHA. OSHA is aware of this and considering requests for additional guidance in this area. In general, there must be a positive test, it must be work-related, and it must meet the other general reporting criteria.
- There is no new guidance from OSHA on reporting injuries incurred while working from home beyond what has previously been provided.
- Risk management upon leaving an essential industry workplace at the end of shift would not generally require steps beyond good sanitary and hygiene practices like handwashing and respiratory etiquette (ie. additional clothing removal steps like in healthcare would not be needed).
- Initial assessments are that the virus can survive on metal or plastic (non-porous surfaces) for about 48 hours, on porous surfaces like cardboard the time is less.
- Additional regulatory flexibility regarding medical issues like other respirator fit testing, hearing testing, and training requirements are under review by OSHA
- Regulatory flexibility for other requirements beyond annual testing requirements for N95 respirators such as for other respirators and for hearing tests is under consideration now by OSHA.

- OSHA is not recommending temperature scans at the start of shifts/entry to facility at this time as asymptomatic individuals can be missed leading to a false sense of security.
- Follow up questions can be directed to brown.christopher.k@dol.gov

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