



Arkansas Department of Health

4815 West Markham Street • Little Rock, Arkansas 72205-3867 • Telephone (501) 661-2000
Governor Asa Hutchinson
Nathaniel Smith, MD, MPH, Secretary of Health

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COVID-19 Guidance for Business and Industry Facilities

What actions can you expect from the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) if there is a confirmation of COVID-19 at your facility?

This guidance is provided from ADH to help you prepare for the possibility of an employee at your facility testing positive for COVID-19, and to help you understand the actions that ADH recommends you take. This is a rapidly evolving situation. These recommendations will be updated as new information becomes available.

Who will notify you that an employee has tested positive for COVID-19?

The official notification will most likely come as a phone call with a nurse from ADH assigned to follow the employee's case. It is important to note that ADH can only notify you that there is a positive in your workforce if they know that the person associated with the test result works at your facility, so it is dependent on the employee providing accurate employment information during their case investigation.

For more efficient communication, it is suggested that you work with a limited number of health care providers if you identify an employee that should be sent home from work to seek medical attention and possible testing based on their symptoms. Health care providers should understand the importance of identifying the person being referred as an employee working in your facility. It is important that this "tag" happen at the beginning of the evaluation process. Your health care provider should know that ADH will prioritize testing for employees working in congregate settings through the ADH Public Health Laboratory should the symptoms warrant that a test be conducted. Therefore, they should contact ADH to arrange for testing through the ADH lab.

As is common practice now, employees displaying symptoms should be sent home for medical evaluation (fever, dry cough and respiratory issues for example). However, you are encouraged to consider screening all employees as they arrive for work and before they enter the facility for travel from a high risk area as defined by the CDC, as well as for fever (temperature of 100.4 F or greater), cough, or other respiratory symptoms.

What happens if there is a positive in your workforce?

Again, ADH must first know that the person works for you. That seems obvious of course, but it underscores the importance of the employee identifying where they work as they begin the medical evaluation process.

A phone call will most likely be placed to your facility. It is advisable that you prepare for that by identifying the people in your company who should be on that initial call - human resources, upper management, internal health care staff for example. It is also important to involve someone who is deeply familiar with production and staffing at your facility. This person should be able to identify where the confirmed employee worked and the type of exposure this person might have had with other employees.

During that call, you will begin an evaluation of where the confirmed person worked over a certain period of time and which specific people in your facility that they might have had close contact with. ADH considers close contact within 6 feet for 30 minutes or longer, but it may depend on other circumstances as well, such as whether the worker had on a mask or not. This consideration should be part of the evaluation that takes place when you have to come up with initial steps in response to a confirmation in your facility.

Your management team and ADH will develop a plan to identify the employees who have a higher risk of exposure with the confirmed employee, and you will develop a response plan based on that information.

A confirmation in your facility does not mean that your operation will be automatically shut down.

The key is being in a position to identify the department that is affected and the additional employees that are at higher risk based on the confirmed employee's interactions with other employees.

What can facilities do to be prepared and lessen the risk of exposure and spread of COVID-19?

We know that facilities have been taking extraordinary steps to reduce the risk since the situation began. Employee screening; sending employees with symptoms home to seek medical attention; additional hand washing/sanitizing stations that are monitored; increased sanitation frequency in common areas are some examples.

Additionally, other options are staggering breaks and taking other measures that will lessen the opportunities for employees to have close, higher risk and prolonged contact with each other. We suggest that you focus on measures that you can take to minimize such close and prolonged contact among employees with a focus on the 6-foot standard as an indicator of when close contact becomes riskier. We understand that preventing employees from coming within 6 feet of each other at all times is not possible in many facilities, but it can be part of your considerations when developing your mitigation strategies. For example, if you have a manager that moves throughout the plant or department, that

person should, to the extent practical, maintain as much separation as possible from other employees while avoiding prolonged interactions with employees standing or sitting near them.

In other words, to the extent possible, work the 6-foot principle into your mitigation strategies recognizing that it is not always possible to maintain this distance between employees and that prolonged interactions inside the 6-foot zone longer than 15 minutes represent a high risk. In other words, if you have a confirmation, you want the number of additional employees that you ultimately identify as having higher risk exposure to be as small as possible.

Summary - We recommend that you prepare the team that will interact with ADH should you receive a call confirming that you have an employee that has contracted COVID-19.

Be prepared to identify the high-risk contacts that any employee in your facility would have had prior to the confirmation so that you can respond quickly.

Implement mitigation strategies that reduce the number of additional employees that might be identified as having high risk contact with an employee that is confirmed positive.

Review the extensive mitigation steps that you already have in place with a focus on minimizing prolonged close contact among employees as much as possible.

Who can you call if you have more questions about anything related to COVID-19?

ADH has activated a call center to answer questions from health care providers and the public about the novel coronavirus. During normal business hours (8:00am – 4:30pm), urgent and non-urgent calls, please call 1-800-803-7847 or email ADH.CoronaVirus@arkansas.gov.

Additional References:

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

<https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/home>