

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information

March 23, 2020

IBEW is committed to providing a healthy and safe work environment for all members. We are providing this information to raise awareness of the coronavirus virus and provide guidance to our members.

1. Background

As the novel Coronavirus-19 virus continues to spread across the globe, the World Health Organization declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020. The federal and state governments have declared states of emergency and imposed increasing restrictions on how people live and work. The illness ("COVID-19") caused by the virus is spreading rapidly from person-to-person and is believed to spread largely through respiratory droplets from coughing and sneezing. It may also be possible to become infected by touching a contaminated surface or object and then touching one's eyes, nose or mouth.

The Centers for Disease Control ("CDC") website is <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus> and includes detailed information and many useful tools. The symptoms of COVID-19 can appear 2-14 days after exposure and may include fever, cough and shortness of breath. Older adults (60 and older) and people of any age who are immuno-compromised or have serious underlying medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes or lung disease may be at higher risk for severe illness.

Worksites where workers have minimal contact with the general public or other workers are considered low-risk for coronavirus exposure by OSHA. Most worksites fit this category. Worksite are deemed to present a medium exposure risk by OSHA if workers have high-frequency interaction with the general public or the environment is otherwise crowded. OSHA assigns the highest risk to worksites where there could be direct exposure to COVID-19 patients or pathogens, such as healthcare or deathcare facilities. If a member believes their worksite is medium or high risk of exposure, or there has been an incident with a risk of exposure, that should be reported to their foreman.

2. New Jersey "Stay-At-Home" Executive Order

On March 21, 2020, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order 107 directing the closure of non-essential retail businesses in New Jersey and directing residents to stay at home except under specific circumstances. For non-retail businesses, individual workers are permitted to be onsite if they cannot perform their functions remotely from home or through telework arrangements. Construction workers and utility workers are examples of employees who need to be physically present at their worksite in order to perform duties. In light of this, our members providing onsite electrical work may continue to work in the field. Nonetheless, certain precautions are required under the Order:

- To the extent practicable while performing electrical work, workers should maintain a distance of 6 feet from others, including other workers.

- Members should only use public transportation to worksites if they have no other feasible choice. If use of public transportation is necessary, member should use all efforts to stand or sit 6 feet away from other riders and frequently use sanitizing products.

3. Preventative Procedures

On a day-to-day basis, members are encouraged to take the following precautions both at worksites and at IBEW facilities:

- Wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds often, including before and after eating, using the restroom, coughing or sneezing. If hand-washing is not possible, workers should clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol. If hand-washing facilities and/or hand sanitizer is not available onsite, it should be reported to the Union hall.
- Shield coughs and sneezes with a tissue (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available).
- Avoid sharing tools to the extent practicable. Sanitize tools or equipment with Clorox or other disposable wipes between uses by different members or other persons. Wipes should also be used on common surfaces such as door knobs, keypads, or any surfaces touched by multiple people between uses. If wipes or cleaning supplies are not available onsite, it should be reported to the Union hall.
- To the extent practicable, when members are required to work in close proximity to one another (i.e., less than 6 feet apart), an effort should be made to work with the same member or members consistently. This may limit the number of persons subject to self-isolation in the event of COVID-19 exposure.
- Use all personal protective equipment ("PPE") provided by the worksite operator, including face masks. If PPE is not provided by the operator, it should be reported to the Union hall.
- Avoid shaking hands to reduce the risk of spreading infection.
- Members and other workers or onsite personnel should maintain 6 feet of social distance from one another during meal or other breaks, and any meetings.

4. Exposure to COVID-19

- Members who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) should stay home and not go to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 72 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants).

- Members with confirmed COVID-19 should if possible notify their foreman and not go to work until they are determined to be no longer infectious by their health care provider or in accordance with guidelines from public health authorities, including the Center for Disease Control (CDC).
- Members who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e., cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival at the worksite or become sick during the day will be separated from other workers and sent home immediately. Once the worker has left the worksite, the worksite operator should be notified so that any areas of possible contamination with the COVID-19 virus can be cleaned and disinfected.
- If a member (or other person to whom a member was exposed at a worksite) is confirmed to have COVID-19, at-risk fellow workers at their worksite(s) will be advised of the possible exposure to COVID-19 (provided that information regarding the confirmed diagnosis and exposure was conveyed to the IBEW). Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent required by any applicable statutes and regulations. Employees subject to exposure at the worksite may be required to self-isolate for 14 days.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with confirmed COVID-19 should notify their foreman and refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure. This guidance can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html>
- Members who have returned from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Europe (including but not limited to Italy, France, Germany and Spain) Iran, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Malaysia South Korea, and the United Kingdom and any other high risk area(s) as may be identified by the CDC should notify the Union hall and self-isolate for a period of 14 days (the period of incubation per CDC guidelines) before returning to work.

5. Non-Discrimination

IBEW will not discriminate against any member based on the individual having suspected or confirmed COVID-19. IBEW reserves the right to exclude a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 (or exposure to it) from all worksites and IBEW functions if, based on a medical determination or guidance provided by local, state or federal public health authorities, restriction is necessary for the welfare of the person who has suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and/or the welfare of others within the workplace or IBEW facilities. IBEW reserves the right to take whatever action it deems reasonable and necessary, and may require medical clearance for employees returning to work, if there is a potential "direct threat" to the health or safety of others.

SHARE FACTS ABOUT COVID-19

Know the facts about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and help stop the spread of rumors.

FACT
1

Diseases can make anyone sick regardless of their race or ethnicity.

Fear and anxiety about COVID-19 can cause people to avoid or reject others even though they are not at risk for spreading the virus.

FACT
2

For most people, the immediate risk of becoming seriously ill from the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be low.

Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19.

FACT
3

Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people.

For up-to-date information, visit CDC's coronavirus disease 2019 web page.

FACT
4

There are simple things you can do to help keep yourself and others healthy.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

FACT
5

You can help stop COVID-19 by knowing the signs and symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Seek medical advice if you

- Develop symptoms

AND

- Have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.



Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW: If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have it, follow the steps below to help protect other people in your home and community.

Stay home except to get medical care

- **Stay home:** People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to recover at home. Do not leave, except to get medical care. Do not visit public areas.
- **Stay in touch with your doctor.** Call before you get medical care. Be sure to get care if you feel worse or you think it is an emergency.
- **Avoid public transportation:** Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.



Separate yourself from other people in your home, this is known as home isolation

- **Stay away from others:** As much as possible, you should stay in a specific “sick room” and away from other people in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available.
- **Limit contact with pets & animals:** You should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just like you would around other people.
 - Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people with the virus limit contact with animals until more information is known.
 - When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick with COVID-19. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with them. See COVID-19 and Animals for more information.



Call ahead before visiting your doctor

- **Call ahead:** If you have a medical appointment, call your doctor’s office or emergency department, and tell them you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the office protect themselves and other patients.



Wear a facemask if you are sick

- **If you are sick:** You should wear a facemask when you are around other people and before you enter a healthcare provider’s office.
- **If you are caring for others:** If the person who is sick is not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live in the home should stay in a different room. When caregivers enter the room of the sick person, they should wear a facemask. Visitors, other than caregivers, are not recommended.



Cover your coughs and sneezes

- **Cover:** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- **Dispose:** Throw used tissues in a lined trash can.
- **Wash hands:** Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



Clean your hands often

- **Wash hands:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- **Hand sanitizer:** If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- **Soap and water:** Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty.
- **Avoid touching:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid sharing personal household items

- **Do not share:** Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home.



- **Wash thoroughly after use:** After using these items, wash them thoroughly with soap and water or put in the dishwasher.

Clean all “high-touch” surfaces everyday

Clean high-touch surfaces in your isolation area (“sick room” and bathroom) every day; let a caregiver clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces in other areas of the home.



- **Clean and disinfect:** Routinely clean high-touch surfaces in your “sick room” and bathroom. Let someone else clean and disinfect surfaces in common areas, but not your bedroom and bathroom.
 - If a caregiver or other person needs to clean and disinfect a sick person’s bedroom or bathroom, they should do so on an as-needed basis. The caregiver/other person should wear a mask and wait as long as possible after the sick person has used the bathroom.
- High-touch surfaces include phones, remote controls, counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables.
- **Clean and disinfect areas that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them.**
- **Household cleaners and disinfectants:** Clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty. Then, use a household disinfectant.
 - Be sure to follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product. Many products recommend keeping the surface wet for several minutes to ensure germs are killed. Many also recommend precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.
 - Most EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A full list of disinfectants can be found [here](#).

Monitor your symptoms

- **Seek medical attention, but call first:** Seek medical care right away if your illness is worsening (for example, if you have difficulty breathing).
 - **Call your doctor before going in:** Before going to the doctor’s office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them your symptoms. They will tell you what to do.
- **Wear a facemask:** If possible, put on a facemask before you enter the building. If you can’t put on a facemask, try to keep a safe distance from other people (at least 6 feet away). This will help protect the people in the office or waiting room.
- **Follow care instructions from your healthcare provider and local health department:** Your local health authorities will give instructions on checking your symptoms and reporting information.



If you develop **emergency warning signs** for COVID-19 get **medical attention immediately**.

Emergency warning signs include*:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability to arouse
- Bluish lips or face

*This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.

Call 911 if you have a medical emergency: If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the operator that you have or think you might have, COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before medical help arrives.

How to discontinue home isolation

- People with **COVID-19 who have stayed home (home isolated)** can stop home isolation under the following conditions:
 - **If you will not have a test** to determine if you are still contagious, you can leave home after these three things have happened:
 - You have had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use medicine that reduces fevers) AND
 - other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved) AND
 - at least 7 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared
 - **If you will be tested** to determine if you are still contagious, you can leave home after these three things have happened:
 - You no longer have a fever (without the use medicine that reduces fevers) AND
 - other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved) AND
 - you received two negative tests in a row, 24 hours apart. Your doctor will follow CDC guidelines.



In all cases, follow the guidance of your healthcare provider and local health department. The decision to stop home isolation should be made in consultation with your healthcare provider and state and local health departments. Local decisions depend on local circumstances.

More information is available [here](#).

Additional information for healthcare providers: [Interim Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Persons Under Investigation for 2019 Novel Coronavirus](#).



COVID-19: Health Actions to Protect You and Your Family

This chart helps people determine actions to take based on their health status and symptoms. People with mild illness do not necessarily need to be tested for COVID-19. Contact your health care provider for more information based on your personal health history.

| My Health Status | Actions to Take |
|---|---|
| I am not sick and have no symptoms of fever, cough or difficulty breathing | Monitor your health. Wash hands often, practice social distancing, and avoid sick people. |
| I am not sick and have no symptoms of fever, cough or difficulty breathing, but I have underlying health issues OR I am not sick but am an older adult (ages 60-65 and older) | Monitor your health. Look for symptoms of fever, cough or difficulty breathing. Wash hands often, practice social distancing, and avoid sick people and crowds. |
| I am not sick and have no symptoms of fever, cough or difficulty breathing, but I was a casual contact* of a confirmed COVID-19 case | Monitor your health. Look for symptoms of fever, cough or difficulty breathing. If symptoms are mild, you can most likely recover at home. Wash hands often, practice social distancing, and avoid sick people. |
| I am not sick and have no symptoms of fever, cough or difficulty breathing, but I am a household/close contact* of a confirmed COVID-19 case | Monitor your health. Stay home for 14 days after last exposure to the confirmed case. Look for symptoms of fever, cough or shortness of breath. If symptoms are mild, you can most likely recover at home. If symptoms begin to worsen and you need a medical evaluation, call a health care provider. Wash hands often and do not go to work/school/public places. |
| I am mildly** sick with symptoms of fever, cough, or difficulty breathing OR I am an older adult and/or have underlying health conditions and am mildly sick with symptoms | Monitor your health. Stay home until you are fever-free for 72 hours (or 3 full days of no fever without the use of fever reducing medicine) AND your other symptoms, such as cough and shortness of breath, have improved AND at least 7 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared. More than likely, you can recover at home. If symptoms worsen/do not improve and you feel that you need a medical evaluation, call a health care provider. Wash hands often and do not go to work/school/public places. |
| I am moderately** sick with symptoms of fever, cough, or difficulty breathing (i.e., my symptoms are getting worse/are not improving) | Monitor your health. Stay home until you are fever-free for 72 hours (or 3 full days of no fever without the use of fever reducing medicine) AND your other symptoms, such as cough and shortness of breath, have improved AND at least 7 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared. Call a health care provider and let them know your symptoms are not improving and you need a medical evaluation. The provider may recommend COVID-19 testing. Stay home unless need to go to a medical facility. If you go to a medical facility, wear a face mask. Wash hands often and do not go to work/school/public places. |
| <p>*Casual contacts are defined as being in the same indoor environment (e.g., classroom or waiting room) with a symptomatic confirmed COVID-19 case. Household contacts are individuals who live in the same house as the confirmed COVID-19 case. Close contacts are individuals who were within 6 feet of a confirmed COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time (approximately 10 minutes or more) or had direct contact with the infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., were coughed on). Walking past a confirmed COVID-19 case or just being in the same building does NOT qualify as being a close contact.</p> <p>** Mild illness = not feeling well but can stay home. Moderate illness = may need medical evaluation.</p> | |