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Reopening: Guidance for **At-Home** **Service Providers**

Guidance Document

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Overview

At-home service providers, including residential services tradespeople, have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. While some have been deemed “essential” by state and federal governments and have continued to provide their services to residential customers, other at-home service providers were viewed as “non-essential” and have been out of work during the shelter-in-place and stay-at-home orders. Many businesses have been forced to lay off or furlough key employees, which may complicate a return to work as states start to relax shelter-in-place and stay-at-home restrictions. Common examples of at-home service providers include:

- Electricians
- Plumbers
- HVAC Technicians
- Carpenters
- Landscape workers
- Household cleaners/maid service
- Painters
- Pest Control Specialists
- Computer Repair Technicians
- Appliance Repair Technicians
- Telecommunications Technicians

At-home services is represented across a multitude of sectors, including home-health care. However, the guidance discussed in this document does not address home-health care (for more information on home healthcare visit the Centers for Disease Control [[CDC's website](#)]).

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is thought to be spread primarily through aerosolized respiratory droplets at close range. Airborne transmission from exposure to very small droplets over long distances is unlikely. However, there is evidence

that this mode of transmission is possible, particularly in crowded, indoor spaces. People may also become infected by touching contaminated surfaces. The virus has been shown to survive in aerosols for hours and on surfaces for days. Infection can occur through eyes, nose, and mouth exposures. There is also strong evidence that people can spread the virus while pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic.

With restrictions beginning to lift, at-home service providers are faced with difficult questions that need to be addressed before continuing or returning to work, such as:

- How can we protect our employees and customers?
- How do we assure our customers that we are doing all we can to prevent the spread of disease?
- What do we do if an employee has to enter the home of a customer who has tested positive or has a suspected case of COVID-19?
- How can we provide assurances to customers that we are taking the proper precautions to protect our employees, customers, and their families?

This document offers practical guidance for employers of and tradespeople conducting at-home services. It aims to address the key questions above, and to provide tips for employers and employees.

What should an Employer do to protect themselves and their customers?

Employers should continually monitor global (World Health Organization [WHO]), federal (Centers for Disease Control [CDC] and Occupational Safety and Health Administration [OSHA]), state, and local guidelines for changes in recommendations, disinfection strategies, worker protections, and other best management practices. Employers should consider forming a knowledgeable team to monitor, assess, and implement new strategies as they become available. In addition, employers should consider the fol-



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lowing strategies for reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmissions that include physical distancing, personal protective equipment, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices, and communication.

- Educate employees on common residential high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, faucet handles, light switches, etc.) and develop strategies for employees to minimize contact and wash hands/ utilize hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropyl alcohol before and after touching.
- Establish a payment system that discourages the use of cash or checks (e.g., use a pre-payment or app-based system where possible or have service provider take payment information over the phone).
- Implement procedures to avoid customer contact with service provider (e.g., if a signature is required from the resident, have them use their own pen).

Other Control Measures

- Provide employees with cloth or disposable face coverings, gloves, shoe covers and alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropyl alcohol. **(NOTE: Cloth or disposable face coverings primarily protect other people. A cloth or disposable face covering is not a substitute for physical distancing.)**
 - Ensure employees are trained on proper use and limitations of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

NOTE: If an employer chooses to provide or an employee supplies their own N95 respirator, please fully consider all the potential OSHA requirements.
- Conduct training for appropriate donning and doffing and disposal procedures of protective equipment (e.g., new gloves should be put on prior to entering the home and removed after exiting the

home).

- Employers should consider providing infographic sheets to employees as a visual reminder of appropriate donning and doffing techniques of PPE. [The CDC has recommended sequences for donning and doffing PPE.](#)
- Consider additional disposable barriers where appropriate (e.g., plastic sheeting for covering the resident's floor or table in work area).
- Employees should carry out all trash and waste using a plastic sealable bag.
- Ask any customer who intends to be in the same room as the at-home service provider to wear a cloth or disposable face covering.

Enhanced Cleaning Practices

- Select appropriate disinfectants – consider effectiveness and safety.
 - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed a [list of products](#) that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2.
 - Do not mix different EPA registered chemicals together. The combination could be toxic by inhalation. Be particularly careful when using any products containing ammonia, sodium hypochlorite (bleach), or hydrogen peroxide.
 - Review product labels and Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and follow manufacturer specifications for cleaning/disinfecting.
 - Consider consulting an Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety (OEHS) Science Professional or Industrial Hygiene expert if additional advice is needed. AIHA has a [consultants list](#) of such qualified professionals.
- Establish a disinfection routine.
 - Ensure disinfection protocols follow product instructions for application and contact time. All items should be allowed to dry thoroughly after



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cleaning.

- Use disposable wipes or rags when available. If not available, ensure rags are maintained, handled, and cleaned per product instructions.
- Consider developing a standard operating procedure, a checklist, or audit system to consistently train employees on enhanced cleaning/disinfecting practices or to track when and how cleaning and disinfecting is conducted. Note that this may be a requirement in some states or local jurisdictions.
- Deeper cleaning and disinfecting protocols should be developed and implemented in cases where confirmed cases of COVID-19 are discovered. Refer to AIHA's [Workplace Cleaning for COVID-19](#).
- Provide Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for cleaning and disinfection products and ensure employees are aware of the hazards of use. Incorporate new hazards into existing OSHA Hazard Communications Program.
- Employees should receive, at minimum, awareness training on cleaning and disinfection products used in the workplace following OSHA Hazard Communication Standards. For employees who will use cleaning and disinfecting products, training should also include proper use, PPE, disposal, and all precautionary measures.
- Require the employee to disinfect tools (including any electronic devices) following each service visit.
 - Consider consulting the manufacturer for the proper disinfection of electronic equipment.
- Eliminate sharing of tools or equipment where possible.
- Develop a disinfection protocol for equipment or tools that must be shared (e.g., work trucks/vans).
- Encourage employees to wash and dry work clothes and cloth face coverings daily on the highest setting allowable for the fabric.
- Ensure that employees use appropriate disinfectants

on the surfaces they touched within the customer's home (e.g., the device they repaired, the chair or table they used, the fixtures they touched, etc.).

- If allowed by customer, disinfect work area and surfaces interacted with prior to work starting.
- If vacuuming, use HEPA filter. Wear a cloth or disposable face covering or mask or respirator when emptying contents or changing filter.

Communication

- Implement and inform employees of supportive workplace policies as applicable:
 - Flexible sick leave policies consistent with public health guidance. Providing paid sick leave is an important way to encourage employees to stay home when sick.
 - Consider not requiring a COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness in order to qualify for sick leave. If you do require a doctor's note from your employees to verify that they are healthy and able to return to work, be aware that healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner. Get more information related to the [Americans with Disabilities Act during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).
 - Flexibility to stay home to care for a sick family member.
 - Human resources policies consistent with public health guidance, and state and federal workplace laws. For more information on employer responsibilities, visit the [Department of Labor's](#) and the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's](#) websites.
 - Employee assistance program and community resources to help employees manage stress and receive support.



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- Encourage employees at increased risk for severe illness to request special accommodations to allow them to perform their job duties safely while also protecting sensitive employee health information.
- Encourage those who are sick or at greater risk to stay home. This includes:
 - People with underlying medical conditions.
 - People who live with elderly people or those who are at risk.
 - People with upper respiratory or flu-like symptoms or who live with someone with these clinical symptoms.
 - People with COVID-19, people who live with someone with COVID-19, or who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Employers should educate employees to recognize the [symptoms of COVID-19](#) and provide instructions on what to do if they develop symptoms. At a minimum, any worker should immediately notify their supervisor, their health care provider, and the local health department, who will provide guidance on what actions need to be taken.
- Health checks and reporting requirements of individuals infected with COVID-19 should be explained to employees prior to reopening and again once operations have resumed.
- Communicate to employees the importance of being vigilant when monitoring symptoms and staying in touch with their employer or manager if or when they start to feel sick.
- Revisit your leave or sick program to allow for time off and follow all HR Policies and HIPAA/other regulatory requirements.
- Conduct employee temperature screening and wellness checks before each shift. **(NOTE: be sure to comply with OSHA's Access to Employee Exposure Medical Records standard for confidentiality.)**
- Temperature screening methods can include manual (use non-contact infrared thermometers) or thermal camera meeting [FDA recommendations](#). Additional screening information/guidance can be found on the [CDC website](#).
- Assign an employee to manage and conduct the temperature screenings while following CDC guidelines in the above link. If this is not possible, employees can self-check their own temperature.
- Screening should be done in a manner such that the privacy of employees is respected.
- Perform a visual inspection for other signs of illness (e.g., flushed cheeks, rapid or difficulty breathing without recent physical activity, fatigue, extreme fussiness, cough).
- Employees who have a fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or above, or other signs of illness should not be admitted to the facility.
- Employers can consider incorporating a wellness questionnaire with questions such as:
 - Have you, or a person you have been in close contact with, been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last 14 days? (close contact is 6 feet or less for more than 10 minutes.)
 - Have you experienced any cold or flu-like symptoms in the last 72 hours (to include fever, shortness of breath, cough, sore throat, difficulty breathing, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea)?
 - Have you traveled to an international or domestic “hot spot” in the last 14 days?
 - There are a number of examples available for wellness questionnaires (see Resources below).
- Require employees who have symptoms or signs (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) or who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 to notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Sick employees should follow the CDC-recommended steps. Employees should not return to



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work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments. Consider waiving requirements for medical documentation during the pandemic, as CDC has advised people with mild illness NOT to go to the doctor's office or emergency room.

- If employee is sick or receives positive COVID-19 test results, results should be reported to employer. In the case of a positive COVID-19 test result, the employee must stay home until cleared for physical return to the workplace by their medical provider, following the CDC's [Discontinuation of Isolation for Persons with COVID -19 Not in Healthcare Settings](#).
- If an employee tests positive:
 - Follow federal, state, and local recommendations for reporting and communicating cases, while remaining compliant with regulations and guidelines pertaining to protecting private health information such as confidentiality required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). See OSHA for guidance on reporting workplace exposures to COVID-19.
 - Engage HR immediately and enforce all applicable HR rules and regulations.
 - The employee shall be isolated to the area they are in currently and removed from the work site for a minimum of 14 days.
 - Any individuals having “close contact” (within approximately 6 feet) with the sick employee should also be isolated from the work site for 14 days; and all other employees should continue to follow physical distancing rules. Communicate and reinforce with employees, while maintaining PII and HIPAA requirements, that they may have been exposed and to closely monitor their health, temperature, and current symptoms as identified by the CDC. Contact tracing and sharing of employee information should be done under the guidance of Human Resources due to privacy requirements of HIPAA, ADA, and EEOC. See the CDC's [“Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) General Business Frequently Asked Questions”](#).
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting should be done immediately by trained personnel, who should wear face coverings and gloves, dispose of gloves after use, and wash hands and face when complete. Visibly dirty surfaces shall be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water PRIOR to disinfection.
- For disinfection, use only EPA-registered disinfectants on [List-N](#).
- Communicate to customers in advance of the at-home service provider's visit on what the service provider is doing to protect employees and the resident. Giving a considerable amount of time before the visit can help customers and employees prepare for additional precautions.
- Consider asking customers if they have special requests or concerns about the upcoming site visit.
- Employers should ensure that employees are comfortable when leaving a customer site when there is a concern of transmission of COVID-19.
- Perform as much of the pre-work consultation as possible before arriving on a customer site (e.g., have the customer send pictures or more detailed information than usual/customary).
- Encourage any additional on-site communication to occur outdoors when possible.
- Upon arrival and departure, request that the customer opens the door and steps back 6 feet from the door before the service provider enters/exits the residence.
- Ask that customers cancel or reschedule any non-emergency service if they are COVID-19 positive, have been in contact with someone who is COVID-19 positive, or are or living with someone exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.



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What should an **Employee do to protect themselves and the customer?**

- Employees should evaluate their health continuously; if they are sick, have a fever or symptoms, or someone at home is sick, then they should remain home. **NOTE: Employer HR Policies, HIPAA guidelines and other laws should be followed at all times.**
- Maintain cloth or disposable (or better if you have it) face covering, clean or replace frequently, and use at minimum when unable to maintain physical distancing of 6-feet.
- Depending on local requirements, in alignment with CDC recommendations, wear a cloth or disposable face covering whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained (indoors or outdoors). Ensure the face covering is properly maintained and cleaned. Additional information on cloth face coverings can be found on [CDC's website](#). **(NOTE: Cloth or disposable face coverings primarily protect other people. A cloth or disposable face covering is not a substitute for physical distancing.)**
- With the exception of children less than two, and individuals who have difficulty breathing, are unconscious, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance, CDC recommends all people wear a cloth or disposable face covering in public settings and when around people who don't live in their household, especially when other physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
- Non-medical cloth or disposable face coverings or cloth or disposable face coverings are NOT Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), but they do offer some protection to others and should be worn while near other people in common spaces or shared workspaces. They are not a substitute for physical distancing, engineering controls, cleaning and disinfecting, proper hygiene, or staying home while sick.
- Remove cloth or disposable face coverings correctly and wash hands after handling or touching a used face covering.
- Wash cloth face coverings after each use. Cloth face coverings can be included with regular laundry. Use regular laundry detergent and the warmest appropriate water setting for the cloth used to make the face covering. Use the highest heat setting and leave in the dryer until completely dry. If air drying, lay flat and allow to completely dry. If possible, place in direct sunlight.
- Let your employer know if you have concerns about PPE that may be provided to you and that you are properly instructed on how to use it. [The CDC has recommended sequences for donning and doffing PPE.](#)
- Maintain good hygiene practices (washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or a hand sanitizer with at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropyl alcohol). For more information, refer to [CDC's handwashing guidelines](#).
- If an employee tests positive for COVID-19:
 - Stay home and isolate until cleared for physical return to the workplace by your medical provider, following the CDC's [Discontinuation of Isolation for Persons with COVID -19 Not in Healthcare Settings](#).
 - Contact your supervisor and report your results as soon as possible.
 - Notify your supervisor about others in the workplace with whom you came into contact.
- At minimum, employees should wash their hands after they have been in a public place, after touching their face covering, after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing, after using the restroom (**NOTE: See Supplement guidance on use of air dryers**), after touching any common contact surfaces, and before eating. **Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.**



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- Employees should wash hands with clean, running water, apply soap, lather and scrub for at least 20 seconds, then rinse. Dry hands using a clean paper towel or air dry. When soap and water can't be used, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropyl alcohol. Any use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers should follow local and State guidelines.
 - Let your employer know if you have concerns about the PPE that may be provided to you and that you are properly instructed on how to use it.
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw used tissues in the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands. Immediately wash your hands after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. Learn more about [coughing and sneezing](#) etiquette.
 - Employees should attempt to plan bathroom breaks before and after site visits to limit the use of a customer's bathroom.
 - Employees should keep adequate drinking water with them and should be discouraged from accepting drinks from customers
- during the service.
 - Wear a cloth or disposable face covering during the service visit.
 - At minimum, employees should wash their hands prior to your service appointment, after touching your face covering, after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, after using the restroom (**NOTE: See Supplement guidance on use of air dryers**), and after touching any common contact surfaces. **Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.**
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw used tissues in the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands. Immediately wash your hands after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. Learn more about [coughing and sneezing](#) etiquette.
 - Customers are encouraged to minimize interactions between at-home service personnel and other occupants to the greatest extent possible.
 - Customers should isolate pets prior to at-home service personnel arrive and during work.

Worker Rights

AIHA believes that basic protections are worker rights, as well as an essential ingredient of occupational health and safety systems, and that employers must provide a safe and healthful work environment.

What can a Customer do to minimize the transmission of COVID-19?

- If you and/or someone in your home are sick, or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19, re-schedule your service appointment.
 - Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from the service provider at all times. If your presence is not necessary, do not remain in the immediate area
- [International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials](#)
 - [National Association of Landscape Professionals](#)
 - EPA has developed a [list of disinfectants](#) for use against SARS-CoV-2
 - ASHRAE has a list of [COVID-19 resources](#) for addressing HVAC challenges in workplaces during the pandemic
 - Centers for Disease Control [COVID-19 Guidance If You Have Animals](#)
 - CDC Health Screening ["Should we be screening employees for COVID-19 symptoms?" section of General Business Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Resources



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- CDC's [At Home Healthcare](#)
- Center for Disease Control [Proper PPE Sequence](#)
- AIHA's Indoor Environmental Quality Committee developed these guidance documents about reopening and cleaning buildings after closures due to COVID-19: [Recovering from COVID-19 Building Closures](#) and [Workplace Cleaning for COVID-19](#).
- AIHA's [Considerations on the Safe Use of UVC Radiation](#)
- AIHA's [Focus on Construction Health: COVID-19](#)
- AIHA's [Effective and Safe Practices: Guidance for Custodians, Cleaning and Maintenance Staff](#)
- AIHA's [Employers Guide to COVID-19 Cleaning & Disinfection in Non-Healthcare Workplaces](#)
- AIHA's [Reducing Risk of COVID-19 Using Engineering Controls](#)
- AIHA's [PPE for SARS-CoV-2](#)
- AIHA's [Use of Real Time Detection Systems](#)
- AIHA's [Proper Use of Respirators for Healthcare Workers & First Responders](#)
- AIHA's [Workers Rights White Paper](#)

AIHA®

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About Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety Professionals

Occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS) professionals (also known as industrial hygienists) practice the science of anticipating, recognizing, evaluating, controlling and confirming workplace conditions that may cause workers' injury or illness. Through a continuous improvement cycle of planning, doing, checking and acting, OEHS professionals make sure workplaces are healthy and safe.

- Get additional resources at AIHA's [Coronavirus Outbreak Resource Center](#).
- Find a qualified industrial hygiene and OEHS professionals near you in our [Consultants Listing](#).



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These guidance documents were primarily developed for those smaller business that don't have readily available occupational health and safety resources, and designed to help business owners, employers, employees and consumers implement science-backed procedures for limiting the spread of the coronavirus. They are subject to any local, state, or federal directives, laws, or orders about operating a business and should only be used if they do not conflict with any such orders.

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