



Guidance for Employers Regarding COVID-19

May 8, 2020

In light of the ongoing public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and the New Mexico Department of Health have issued several Public Health Orders (PHO). To review the latest PHO click [here](#).

On March 23, the New Mexico Department of Health issued an emergency PHO that suspends the operations of all non-essential businesses and non-profits in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19. For a list of essential businesses under the PHO please click [here](#).

The New Mexico Environment Department Occupational Health and Safety Bureau is issuing the guidance below to employers in the state to assist essential businesses in keeping their workers safe and reducing the spread of COVID-19. For a thorough examination of how to prepare your workplace to prevent COVID-19 exposure please click [here](#).

New Mexico law states that every employer must provide a place of employment that is free from recognized hazards that are likely to cause death or physical harm to their employees.

Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, including a fever, cough, runny nose and difficulty breathing should call **(855)600-3453** for direction from the New Mexico Department of Health.

The New Mexico Environment Department Occupational Health and Safety Bureau directs the following precautions for the workplace:

1. All essential businesses shall adhere to social distancing protocol and maintain at least six feet of distance from other individuals.
2. The maximum number of customers allowed in the retail space of an essential business shall be equal to 20% of the maximum occupancy of the retail space.
3. Provide workers, customers and worksite visitors with a place to wash their hands. If soap and running water are not immediately available, provide a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
4. Employers must conduct a hazard assessment for the selection and use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Workers may need to wear some combination of gloves, a gown, a face mask, and/or a face shield or goggles. PPE ensembles for workers will vary by work task, the results of the employer's hazard assessment and the types of exposures workers have on the job. Wearing a cloth face mask is considered a 'best practice tool' for all individuals. *
5. Instruct employees on:
 - Handwashing hygiene.
 - Cough and sneeze etiquette.
 - Avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Avoiding sharing personal items with co-workers (i.e., dishes, cups, utensils, towels).

1. Minimize contact among workers, clients and customers by:
 - Maintaining a minimum of six feet of social distance between Individuals at all times
 - Replacing face-to-face meetings with virtual communications.
 - Implementing telework.
 - Establishing alternating days or extra shifts to reduce the total number of employees working in a facility at a given time.
2. Do not allow workers to use another worker's equipment, including phones, desks, offices and other work tools.
3. Maintain regular housekeeping practices, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, equipment and other elements of the work environment. When choosing cleaning chemicals, consult information on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved disinfectant labels:
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>.
4. Discontinue nonessential travel to locations with ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks. Regularly check Centers for Disease Control travel warning levels at: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers.

Contact us:

New Mexico OSHA
NMENV-OSHA@state.nm.us

Additional resources:

Centers for Disease Control
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Federal OSHA
<https://www.osha.gov/>

The Environment Department also recommends the following precautions for the workplace:

1. Develop an emergency communication plan and provide a forum for answering workers' questions and addressing concerns. If a plan is in place, review and update the plan as needed.
2. Actively encourage workers to stay home or go home if they are sick and send workers with acute respiratory illness symptoms home immediately.
3. Discontinue nonessential travel to locations with ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks. Regularly check Centers for Disease Control travel warning levels at: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers.
4. OSHA and the CDC have interim guidance on protecting healthcare workers that have potential occupational exposure to COVID-19. It is recommended that employers use a combination of standard precautions, contact precautions, airborne precautions, and eye protection to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Engineering controls including installation of physical barriers, such as plastic sneeze guards, can reduce the exposure of workers to COVID-19.

*The State of New Mexico is encouraging all essential workers and members of the public to wear face coverings when out in public, including the use of cloth masks. Beginning on May 11, 2020 all essential businesses operating a retail space shall require all employees to wear face coverings or medical grade masks. Cloth mask type face coverings will not protect the wearer from COVID-19 exposure. The use of cloth masks assumes the wearer is the one infected with COVID-19 and may help reduce the spread of the virus.