

Protecting Essential Employees

The following sections outline the applicable safety measures in place and available to protect essential employees during the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic. The information provided on the University's COVID-19 FAQ website is applicable to all essential employees, especially the guidelines on self-monitoring and personal hygiene.

I. Classification of Worker Exposure

- A. Employee risk of occupational exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 during an outbreak may vary from very high to high, medium or lower (caution) risk. The level of risk depends in part on the industry type, need for contact within 6 feet of people known to be, or suspected of being infected with COVID-19, or a requirement for repeated or extended contact with persons known to be, or suspected of being infected, with COVID-19.
- B. Most Northwestern employees are considered low risk for exposure, with the exception of Northwestern Office for Research and Feinberg School of Medicine faculty and staff that are working directly with known or suspected COVID-19 patients, or those handling specimens from known or suspected COVID-19 patients.

II. Control Measures

- A. Exposure to Infected Persons: Northwestern essential employees will not be assigned to work in areas where there is a known exposure of infection until the areas are cleaned and sanitized.
- B. Cleaning:
 - i. Aramark has increased cleaning services in normal building areas and in high touch-high traffic areas. These increased services include additional disinfection of shop surfaces and work spaces.
 - ii. Contact Facilities Customer Service to request additional cleaning of your area.
- C. Hand Soap and Disinfection Supply
 - i. Facilities has an ample supply of hand soap, which is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommended hand cleaning method, which is much more effective than alcohol-based sanitizers.
 - ii. Office for Research Safety and the Chemistry department have made hand sanitizer, which is to be provided until the national supply chain for hand sanitizer is replenished.

III. Protective Equipment

- A. Gloves: Facilities has secured disposable nitrile and/or latex gloves have been secured for designated staff in Residential Services, Facilities, and Mail Services – these designated staff are encouraged to take as many gloves as needed to perform their work. Please notify your supervisor if supplies are low.
- B. Respirators and Facemasks
 - i. Designated Employees: Northwestern faculty and staff working with COVID-19 patients or specimens, animal care workers, and trades, such as painters, have been identified as required respirator users per Northwestern’s Respiratory Protection Program to protect against hazardous airborne contaminants, such as biological agents or organic vapors.
 - ii. Respirators for general public use – Essential Northwestern faculty and staff working in jobs considered lower exposure risk to SARS-CoV-2, additional PPE (such as N-95 respirators) is not recommended – faculty and staff should continue to use the PPE, if any, that they would ordinarily use. Furthermore, OSHA and CDC do not recommend that the general public wear N-95s or surgical masks to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, such as COVID-19.
 - iii. Facemasks/cloth face coverings – In an effort to reduce transmission of COVID-19, Northwestern essential staff will follow CDC cloth face covering guidance in circumstances where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. It is important to note that this is a voluntary measure on this rapidly changing topic.

IV. Personal Measures

- A. Social Distancing
 - i. Departments with essential employees have implemented staggered work schedules and downsized operations and conference/web-based meetings to minimize close contact with staff.
 - ii. Residential hall food service employees are handling food items to avoid close contact with students and limiting handling of food serving utensils.
 - iii. It is critical to note, however, there may be some tasks or jobs that warrant working together to prevent injuries or accidents. In the event these activities cannot be avoided for the duration this pandemic. While this close interaction does increase the risk of person-to-person transmission of a cold or flu, other measures in place and detailed in this guideline are appropriate protections if adhered to.
- B. Personal Hygiene
 - i. Frequent and thorough hand washing will reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Facilities has secured an ample supply of hand soap.

- ii. Respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or in your arm and staying home if ill, will prevent the transmission of colds, influenza, and COVID-19.
- iii. Monitoring your health status, such as taking your temperature, and staying home when ill will prevent transmission of colds, influenza, and COVID-19.

V. Contractors

- A. Contractors will be notified of any COVID-19 related cases that directly affect their work.
- B. Contractors are expected to have a written COVID-19 response plan and procedures to protect their staff.
- C. Contractors are expected to report any employee-related positive COVID-19 diagnoses that affect any member of the Northwestern University community.