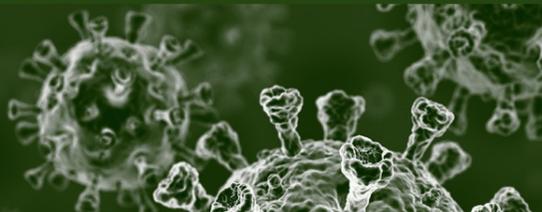


# COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan



December 15, 2021

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## INTRODUCTION

This COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan (“Plan”) lays out the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA or Agency) strategy for ensuring workplace safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pursuant to Executive Order 13991 on *Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask Wearing* (January 20, 2021), the Agency is committed to updating the Plan consistent with the best public health practices and guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and other health guidance or Administration guidelines, including [Guidance](#) and [FAQs](#) from the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force (“Task Force”), such as:

- OMB Memorandum [M-21-15](#), “*COVID-19 Safe Federal Workplace: Agency Model Safety Principles*” (January 24, 2021),
- CDC [Guidance for Fully Vaccinated People](#) (May 13, 2021 and amended May 28, 2021, July 27, 2021 and October 15, 2021),
- OMB Memorandum [M-21-25](#), “*Integrating Planning for a Safe Increased Return of Federal Employees and Contractors to Physical Workplaces with Post-Reentry Personnel Policies and Work Environment*” (June 10, 2021),
- Task Force’s [COVID-19 Workplace Safety: Agency Model Safety Principles](#) (last updated September 13, 2021, previously updated July 29, 2021),
- [Executive Order on Ensuring Adequate COVID Safety Protocols for Federal Contractors](#) (EO 14042 of September 9, 2021),
- [Executive Order on Requiring Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination for Federal Employees](#) (EO 14043 of September 9, 2021).

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, EPA has consistently followed federal guidance and incorporated information provided by the CDC and other agencies into workplace operations to protect the health and safety of federal employees, onsite contractors, and individuals interacting with the federal workforce. EPA implemented telework flexibilities for employees and developed and communicated policy and practices to protect the workforce while allowing the agency to accomplish its mission. Communication with management and employees has been a key component of the EPA’s COVID-19 response. In addition to a robust intranet site and frequent employee mailers, reference links are maintained to support employees across the United States.

### **Applicability**

The EPA’s COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan applies to all EPA facilities, sites, and locations unless otherwise specified within the plan. Mask requirements, contact tracing, symptom monitoring, workplace operations, and all health and safety procedures and protocols apply to everyone onsite at EPA’s facilities, sites, and locations. This includes employees, contractors, grantees, visitors, and any other onsite personnel. The Plan is based on the most recent CDC guidelines for the federal workplace and will be adjusted as guidelines are updated and new implementing federal guidance is received from the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force.

### **COVID-19 Coordination Team**

EPA has established a cross-agency COVID-19 Coordination Team (“Team”) responsible for the review of COVID-19 workplace safety plans and protocols as well as any human resources flexibilities available during the pandemic. The Team is responsible for ensuring that EPA leadership is apprised of the Plan contents and that policies and practices are in line with OMB, CDC, and other federal guidance. The Team meets regularly to review compliance with the agency’s COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan, consider potential revisions to the Plan and protocols pursuant to guidance from the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force and current CDC guidelines, and evaluate any other operational needs related to COVID-19 workplace safety.

Members of the Team include:

- Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, or designee
- Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for Mission Support, or designee
- Deputy Assistant Administrator for Administration and Resources Management, or designee
- US EPA Region 1 Mission Support Division Director, or designee
- Director of the Office of Human Resources, or designee
- National Chief Negotiator, Labor and Employee Relations, or designee
- Director of the Office of Administration, or designee
- Director of the Safety and Sustainability Division, or designee
- Deputy General Counsel, or designee
- Director of the Center for Public Health and Environmental Assessment, or designee
- Director of the Office of Acquisition Solutions, or designee
- Director of the Office of Resources and Business Operations, or designee

The Team also coordinates all decisions with Facility Security Committees, as appropriate. For privately owned facilities leased by the federal government, the team coordinates with the General Services Administration (GSA), where appropriate, and the lessor’s designated representative.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

In accordance with [Executive Order 14043](#), *Requiring Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination for Federal Employees*, EPA employees must be fully vaccinated by November 22, 2021, unless granted a reasonable accommodation exception, as authorized under the law. Accordingly, certain protocols in this Plan apply differently to individuals based on their vaccination status. Key safety protocols are highlighted below.

POLICY ITEM	POLICY FOR FULLY VACCINATED INDIVIDUALS	POLICY FOR NOT FULLY VACCINATED INDIVIDUALS
<b>EPA Worksite Mask Policy</b>	Fully vaccinated individuals are required to wear masks indoors in areas of high or substantial community transmission.	Not fully vaccinated individuals are required to wear masks regardless of community transmission level.
<b>Symptom Monitoring</b>	Fully vaccinated individuals should conduct a <a href="#">self-assessment</a> at home each day prior to traveling to their worksite.	Not fully vaccinated individuals should conduct a <a href="#">self-assessment</a> at home each day prior to traveling to their worksite.
<b>In Case of Exposure or Illness</b> ( <a href="#">Contact Tracing Guidance</a> )	Fully vaccinated individuals who have been in contact with someone who is sick should get tested 5-7 days after exposure but do not need to quarantine; but they must isolate for 10 days if they are sick or have symptoms.	Not fully vaccinated individuals who are sick or have been in contact with someone who is sick must self-quarantine for 14 days (quarantine may be shortened subject to local health department guidance).
<b>Travel</b> (Currently applies to non-bargaining unit employees. See <a href="#">Travel</a> section for more detail.)	Fully vaccinated individuals are not restricted to mission-critical travel.	Not fully vaccinated individuals are limited to mission-critical travel.
<b>Physical Distancing in the Worksite</b>	Fully vaccinated individuals are not required to physically distance.	Not fully vaccinated individuals are required to physically distance at least 6 feet from others, when practicable.

The [EPA Self-Assessment](#) available to employees on EPA's Intranet complies with the most recent CDC guidelines and is posted in the entrances of EPA's facilities. The self-assessment is to be performed prior to departing for the workplace. Individuals with symptoms or answering "yes" to any question are not approved to access Agency facilities, as outlined in the self-assessment. If a locality imposes more protective pandemic-related safety requirements, EPA facilities will follow those local requirements.

### ***Vaccinations and Vaccination Status***

Evidence shows that the most effective way to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus, to reduce the severity of symptoms and the likelihood of hospitalization and death, is for as many people as possible to be vaccinated. To ensure the safety of the Federal workforce, Federal employees must be [fully vaccinated](#), unless granted a reasonable accommodation exception, as authorized under the law. The deadline for EPA employees to be fully vaccinated is November 22, 2021. New hires must also be fully vaccinated prior to entering on duty or by November 22, 2021, whichever is later, except in limited circumstances where an accommodation is legally required. However, should EPA have an urgent, mission-critical hiring need to onboard new staff prior to those new staff becoming fully vaccinated, the EPA may delay the vaccination requirement—in the case of such limited delays, EPA will require new hires to be fully vaccinated within 60 days of their start date and to follow safety protocols for not fully vaccinated individuals until they are fully vaccinated. EPA employees can see the [Vaccination Considerations](#) intranet page for more information.

For purposes of safety protocols, EPA employees, onsite contractors, and visitors are considered fully vaccinated for COVID-19 two weeks after they have received the requisite number of doses of a COVID-19 vaccine approved or authorized for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration or that has been listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization.

- For Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, or AstraZeneca/Oxford, that is 2 weeks after an employee has received the second dose in a 2-dose series.
- For Johnson and Johnson (J&J)/Janssen, that is 2 weeks after an employee has received a single dose.
- Clinical trial participants from a U.S. site who are documented to have received the full series of an "active" (not placebo) COVID-19 vaccine candidate, for which vaccine efficacy has been independently confirmed (e.g., by a data and safety monitoring board), can be considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks after they have completed the vaccine series.

See the Task Force's FAQs on [Safety Protocols Related to Vaccination](#) for more information.

Detailed guidance on leave considerations for employees is available on the EPA Intranet: [Leave Considerations](#). This guidance addresses administrative leave to accompany a family member being vaccinated; leave and testing positive for COVID-19; leave related to vaccination and adverse reactions; and obtaining boosters.

EPA employees must upload their vaccination documentation into the secure [EPA Vaccination Attestation Portal](#). Employees must upload an image of one of the following documents to establish proof of vaccination: an image of a record of immunization from a health care provider or pharmacy; an image of the COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card; an image of medical records documenting the vaccination; an image of immunization records from a public health or state immunization information system; or an image of any other official documentation with required data points (official documentation must contain the following required data points: type of vaccine administered (e.g., Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, etc.), date(s) of administration, and the name of the health care professional(s) or clinic site(s) administering the vaccine(s)). By submitting documentation in EPA's Vaccination Attestation Portal, employees are certifying under penalty of perjury that the documentation they are submitting is true and correct.

Additional information can be found on the EPA Intranet: [Reporting Vaccination Status](#).

EPA will comply with any applicable federal laws, including requirements under the Privacy Act and the Paperwork Reduction Act, and any applicable collective bargaining obligations.

In implementing [Executive Order 14042](#), *Ensuring Adequate COVID Safety Protocols for Federal Contractors*, EPA will comply with all relevant court orders, including by following relevant OMB and Safer Federal Workforce Task Force [guidance](#). Interim vaccination attestation guidance for the EPA contracting community can be found in the two Special Notices: [Interim Guidance on COVID-19 Vaccination Attestation and Testing Requirements for Entry into EPA Facilities for On-site Contractors and Visitors](#); and [Update – Implementation of Executive Order 14042 – “Ensuring Adequate COVID Safety Protocols for Federal Contractors.”](#) Vaccination guidance for employees of applicable Agency contract-like instruments—such as the Senior Environmental Employee (SEE) program—will be issued as appropriate. In the absence of separate guidance, individuals will be treated as visitors for the purposes of workplace safety protocols.

See the [Visitors](#) section below for more information on how EPA is addressing agency visitors, including members of the public entering EPA facilities to obtain a public service or benefit.

### ***Exceptions to the Vaccination Requirement***

There are limited circumstances where an employee may be granted a reasonable accommodation exception, as authorized under the law, to the vaccination requirement due to a medical condition or a sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance. EPA employees requesting an exception must access the secure EPA Vaccination Attestation portal and choose the option indicating that they have requested an exception. They should also request an exception by sending a request as follows:

- An employee who has a medical condition impacting the ability to become fully vaccinated against COVID-19 should email [disabilityaccommodations@epa.gov](mailto:disabilityaccommodations@epa.gov) to request a reasonable accommodation.
- An employee who has a sincerely held religious belief impacting the ability to become fully vaccinated against COVID-19 should email [religiousaccommodations@epa.gov](mailto:religiousaccommodations@epa.gov) to request a religious accommodation.

Initial email requests do not have to include complete information. An email stating that the employee wishes to make an accommodation request will suffice during the initial step. Vaccination and compliance timelines will be paused for all employees during the adjudication of their accommodation request. During the adjudication process, employees who have requested an exception and must report to the office must follow the protocols listed above for unvaccinated employees or request an exception to those protocols. Employees will receive further instructions from the Agency team on next steps regarding their specific accommodation request (which may include requests for additional information to support the employee’s request).

If an employee requests a disability or religious reasonable accommodation, they should inform their supervisor. Employees do not have to share the nature of the request with their supervisor (i.e., religious or medical), only that they have made a request for an exception. Employees should refrain from sending any documents supporting the exception request directly to their supervisor.

There is no “deadline” to submit an accommodation request. However, EPA will begin enforcing compliance through the counseling and disciplinary process on November 9, 2021. Employees who fail to initiate an accommodation request and/or fail to confirm vaccination status pursuant to Agency instructions may be subject to discipline, up to and including removal from federal service.

Decisions will be centralized for all EPA employees making accommodation requests. Decision makers will follow applicable federal guidance, to include OMB, the Office of Personnel Management, and CDC guidance.

If an employee's request is denied, following EPA's established process for consideration, EPA will require that employee to receive their first (or, if a one-dose series, only) dose within two weeks of the final determination to deny the accommodation. If receiving a two-dose series, the employee must receive the second dose within 6 weeks of receiving the first dose. If the employee received a first dose of a two-dose series prior to seeking an accommodation, the employee must receive their second dose within two weeks of the final denial determination or within a week of the earliest day by which they can receive their second dose, whichever is later. Agency decisions are final. Employees may file an appeal through the grievance or EEO process; however, filing an appeal will not pause the Agency's enforcement/compliance process. Employees who are denied an accommodation, and who do not comply with the vaccine requirement after receiving a denial, may be subject to discipline, up to and including removal from federal service.

EPA employees reported as being not fully vaccinated are required to follow the appropriate applicable safety measures in EPA facilities with respect to mask wearing, physical distancing, testing, travel, and quarantine.

### ***Vaccination Enforcement and Discipline***

EPA employees who fail to comply with a requirement to be fully vaccinated or provide proof of vaccination and have neither received an exception via the reasonable accommodation process nor have an exception request under consideration, are in violation of a lawful order. Employees who violate lawful orders are subject to discipline, up to and including removal from federal service. Consistent with the Administration's policy, the Agency will continue to encourage compliance with the order by providing educational information before initiating the enforcement process. The complete supervisory guidance to address the enforcement of this vaccination requirement will align with the Agency's [Conduct and Discipline Manual](#) and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

### ***Levels of Community Transmission***

EPA's Office of Research and Development has developed and maintains a [COVID-19 EPA Facility Dashboard](#) (accessible to EPA employees via the Intranet), which presents an easy to understand graphical depiction of the current COVID-19 environment surrounding EPA's facilities, updated weekly. Using data from the [CDC's COVID Data Tracker](#) and [Healthdata.gov](#), the Dashboard collects the county-level transmission data in the commuting areas around each EPA facility as well as the county in which the facility is located. The Dashboard is an informational tool presenting the following indicators:

- COVID-19 level of community transmission, which is defined by the CDC as the combination from the past 7-day incidence rate and percentage of positive tests.
- Historic weekly 7-day incidence rate, which shows long-term trends of COVID-19 for commuting areas.
- The percentage rate of people in the commuting area fully vaccinated.
- The percentage of ICU capacity available to care for patients and COVID hospital admissions rates within the commuting area.

EPA facilities in areas of substantial or high community transmission will require all occupants, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a mask when possible. EPA leadership will meet weekly to assess transmission levels and will not make changes to masking requirements unless a facility meets at least two consecutive weeks of community transmission in the low or moderate level. Depending on widespread community transmission and other public health factors, EPA may institute, in consultation with the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force, a maximum telework posture.

## **Telework and Remote Work**

Telework is an important, strategic workforce planning tool that provides flexibilities to agencies and employees. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, EPA encouraged employees to maximize telework to the extent possible and offered expanded work hours and work week flexibilities for those with dependent care issues (on Maxiflex or Flexitour schedules). EPA remains in a maximum telework posture until implementation of its Staggered Reentry Plan. Once EPA's current posture of maximum telework changes, employees currently working remotely on a regular basis will be given no less than 45 calendar days to begin transition to normal operations. It is expected that enhanced workplace flexibilities, that builds on the agency's pre-COVID policies, will be in place.

EPA employees interested in teleworking, after the Agency concludes its maximum telework posture, should confirm their current telework eligibility status with their supervisor and coordinate telework arrangements as appropriate. In addition to telework, EPA continues to make available other flexibilities for use by its federal employees, as appropriate. This will include the Agency's updated Work Schedule Policy and Remote Work Policy. Additional information about these revised personnel policies, collective bargaining agreement articles, and other resources, will be posted to the Intranet upon satisfying any collective bargaining obligations.

## **Face Masks**

Wearing a [mask](#), in conjunction with physical distancing, can slow the spread of COVID-19 and remains a critical step in protecting those around you. All individuals who are not fully vaccinated must wear a mask regardless of community transmission level. In areas of high or substantial transmission, fully vaccinated people must wear a mask in any workplace setting, including EPA's offices, laboratories, vehicles, vessels and warehouses, in accordance with [CDC guidance](#).

In areas of low or moderate transmission, persons who are [fully vaccinated](#) generally do not need to wear a mask or physically distance in federal buildings or on federal land, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, or regulations. Fully vaccinated individuals may choose to wear a mask regardless of the level of transmission for a variety of reasons. Nothing in CDC guidance precludes an employee from wearing a mask if the employee so chooses.

See the CDC [guidance](#) on types of masks individuals can use to protect themselves and others from getting and spreading COVID-19.

All EPA locations have signage at all entrances and throughout facilities with reminders of the mask requirement, as applicable. EPA's COVID-19 [intranet site](#), used for all COVID-19 communications to employees, also contains information on mask-wearing and the Facilities Dashboard, which provides up-to-date information that reflect the presence of COVID-19 in the commuting areas surrounding our facilities.

A mask must be worn by unvaccinated persons (employees, contractors, grantees, and visitors) on EPA property and in all areas inside EPA facilities, including all common spaces, cubicle bays, laboratories, hallways, stairwells, restrooms, and elevators. Visitors, onsite contractors, and grantees will complete the [Certification of Vaccination form](#) and keep on their person, in doing so, provide information about their vaccination status and attest to the truthfulness of that information prior to entering past security desks. Individuals who do not complete the form will be treated as not fully vaccinated for purposes of agency safety protocols. Additional information can be found on the EPA's [COVID-19 Safe Federal Workplace](#) page.

While in EPA facilities, masks may be removed when working alone in a private office (i.e., office not used for meetings), laboratory, warehouse, or field space with floor to ceiling walls and a closed door, or for short periods of time when eating or drinking. Face masks are required for unvaccinated persons in spaces with floor

to ceiling walls when in the presence of others and/or when there is an expectation that the space could be shared with others.

All EPA locations have non-medical disposable masks available to any person who is entering an EPA facility, including visitors. Contractors are responsible for ensuring that their onsite contract employees comply with all of EPA's health and safety requirements, including the mask requirement for unvaccinated individuals, while working at EPA facilities and sites.

Individuals may be asked to lower their masks briefly for identification purposes.

Masks do not provide the same level of protection as respirators and should not replace personal protective equipment (PPE) required or recommended for specific job functions. It is important to note that masks are different than PPE (such as surgical or N95 respirator masks) as defined by OSHA. If such PPE is needed by an EPA employee to perform their duties, it will be provided by the agency just as it would be in a non-pandemic environment in compliance with applicable OSHA regulatory standards. It is also important to note that the use of masks is not a substitute for physical distancing practices. EPA will enforce mask policies in all EPA-controlled spaces whether owned or leased. Signs or notices will be posted prominently at the entrances to EPA controlled spaces to inform employees and visitors of the policy.

Some individuals may require accommodations under applicable law relating to masking requirements, and such accommodations shall be in accordance with existing Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidance. See the [Reasonable Accommodation](#) section of this Plan for additional information.

Employees are expected to adhere to this policy, and failure to follow (absent an approved accommodation) may result in disciplinary action.

### ***Physical Distancing***

EPA will follow CDC guidance on physical distancing, such as [Guidance for Fully Vaccinated People](#), which indicates that physical distancing is not required for those who are fully vaccinated. As a means of ensuring physical distancing between unvaccinated individuals, EPA will continue to implement workplace practices that facilitate physical distancing where appropriate until physical distancing requirements are removed by the CDC for all individuals.

Signage is posted at entrances and in high traffic areas throughout buildings to facilitate physical distancing in common areas throughout the buildings. Markings on the floor have been added to high-traffic areas such as entrance lobbies and elevator lobbies in EPA-owned facilities. Courtyards are open, but physical distancing for unvaccinated employees must be maintained. EPA facilities with a fitness center should post signage that requires gym users to follow the following practices:

- Wear a cloth face covering or mask.
- Clean equipment (e.g., free weights, exercise equipment, cardio machines) before and after use.
- Avoid touching their mouth, nose, or eyes, especially when handling frequently touched items.
- Wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after contact with or cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.
- Bring their own personal water bottle with their name on it. Avoid sharing any personal items with coworkers or patrons.

Signage and floor markings will be continuously evaluated and augmented as needed. Where appropriate, plexiglass partitions have been placed at guard desks and screening entry points. Plexiglass partitions have also been installed at workstations with low partitions, such as administrative workstations, where appropriate.

## **Testing**

EPA's screening testing protocols will remain consistent with the [testing guidance](#) issued by the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force. Testing shall not be used in place of other administrative controls nor replace any safety requirements with which federal workplaces must comply.

The Agency has established procedures for employees who require testing for diagnostic purposes after workplace exposure, as detailed on EPA's Intranet: [Contact Tracing and Notification Guidance](#). Per EPA's contact tracing guidance, diagnostic testing for individuals and close contacts is performed when a person has signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or when a person has recent known or suspected exposure to COVID-19.

Onsite contractor employees who are not fully vaccinated and are not part of an agency testing program must be able to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test from no earlier than the previous 3 days when entering an EPA facility. In line with [EPA guidance](#), visitors who are not [fully vaccinated](#) or who decline to provide information about their vaccination status must provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test from no earlier than the previous 3 days prior to entry to a Federal building. The requirement for testing for visitors does not apply to those accessing a public benefit or service.

Under OSHA's recordkeeping requirements, if an employee tests positive for SARS-CoV-2 infection, the case must be recorded on the OSHA Illness and Injury Log if each of the following conditions are met: (1) the case is a confirmed case of COVID-19; (2) the case is work-related (as defined by 29 CFR 1904.5); and (3) the case involves one or more relevant recording criteria (set forth in 29 CFR 1904.7) (e.g., medical treatment beyond first aid, days away from work).

## **Contact Tracing**

The Agency established its [Contact Tracing and Notification Guidance](#) procedures (available on the EPA Intranet) to provide information and a template for communication and reporting in response to COVID-19 exposure in EPA facilities. EPA conducts contact tracing in EPA's fixed facilities. EPA's guidance has been made available on the Agency's intranet site, so that all employees can understand the notification process for cases of COVID-19 exposure in the workplace. The guidance is based on the [latest information](#) available from the CDC and is updated as necessary when new information is available.

The contact tracing guidance requires all regions and headquarters program offices to identify a Contact Tracing Point of Contact and a minimum of one back-up. These individuals serve as EPA's team of contact tracers. They have been trained in the use of EPA's contact tracing application, a secure, limited-access application that allows agency-wide reporting and tracking of COVID-19 cases affecting EPA workspaces. EPA's contact tracing guidance extends to contractors and grantee recipients (i.e., Senior Environmental Employment enrollees, post-doctoral fellows, and other grantees, etc.) working on EPA premises.

In accordance with the guidance, every effort is made to quickly notify employees in the affected facility when a case is identified, consistent with EEOC and Privacy guidance, and to encourage COVID-19 affected individuals to report their status to local public health departments during their period of transmission. The Contact Tracing application automatically sends an email message to Facility Managers so that they can quickly respond by closing and cleaning affected spaces. The contact tracing guidance also identifies the senior leader at each EPA location who is responsible for notifying personnel at their location when there is a reported COVID-19 case.

## **Travel**

EPA federal employees should adhere to CDC [guidelines](#) before, during, and after travel. Under the updated guidance for non-bargaining unit employees, there are no government-wide restrictions on travel for EPA employees who are fully vaccinated (the Agency [travel policies and guidance](#) still apply). For non-bargaining unit employees who are not fully vaccinated as well as all bargaining unit employees, official travel should be limited

to only necessary mission-critical trips, unless contrary to a reasonable accommodation to which an employee is legally entitled. Updated agency-specific, travel-related guidance that aligns with the requirements of OMB memo M-21-15 will be provided to Agency employees upon satisfying any collective bargaining obligations. Additional details will be provided upon final release of the updated EPA Travel Guidance.

### **Meetings, Events, and Conferences**

EPA hosted events should permit physical distancing and include a virtual participation option, if possible. If an EPA organization intends to host an in-person meeting, conference, or event that will be attended by more than 50 participants—regardless of whether participants include members of the public—the agency must first seek the approval of the EPA Deputy Administrator, in consultation with the agency’s COVID-19 Coordination Team.

In-person attendees at any EPA-hosted event, regardless of size, must be asked to provide information about vaccination status. In-person attendees who are not fully vaccinated or decline to provide information about their vaccination status must provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test completed no later than within the previous 3 days and comply with masking and physical distancing requirements for individuals who are not fully vaccinated consistent with the requirements for visitors in the Face Masks section above. In-person attendees in areas of high or substantial transmission must wear a mask in public indoor settings regardless of vaccination status and as required by local requirements.

For purposes of this guidance, “hosting” is defined as any participation in the funding, planning, scheduling, marketing, or otherwise assisting in an event or meeting attended by any of the following: federal employees, affiliated and non-affiliated persons, or external customers and partners. Additionally, this definition applies to events/meetings where an EPA logo or branding may be present and may include events that are co-hosted, sponsored, or co-sponsored.

Details of these procedures may be found on the EPA Intranet: [Guidance for Hosting an Event In-Person](#).

### **Symptom Monitoring**

Our goal is to protect the health and safety of all employees, onsite contractors, and visitors entering the EPA workplace. The [EPA Self-Assessment](#) complies with the most recent CDC guidelines and is posted in the entrances of EPA’s facilities. If CDC guidelines are updated with the latest symptom information, changes will be made to the checklist and the COVID-19 intranet site will be updated.

The self-assessment is to be performed prior to entering the workplace. Individuals with symptoms or answering “yes” to any question are advised to not enter any Agency workplace setting as outlined in the self-assessment. Self-assessment forms are not collected to ensure privacy/confidentiality rights are maintained.

Any individual, regardless of vaccination status, who develops [any symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#) during the workday must immediately isolate, wear a mask (if the individual is not already doing so and one is available), notify their supervisor, and promptly leave the workplace.

### **Quarantine and Isolation**

The Agency’s procedures to ensure that any individual in an EPA facility with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 will be advised to isolate, pursuant to CDC guidelines, are available on the EPA Intranet: [Contact Tracing and Notification Guidance](#). EPA employees and others working at EPA facilities who have been identified as being in close contact with a COVID-19 affected person must notify their supervisor, Contracting Officer Representative, or monitor, and [self-quarantine in line with EPA Contact Tracing and Notification Guidance](#).

EPA employees and onsite contractor employees who have been fully vaccinated and have had close contact with someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are advised to get tested 5-7 days after exposure, even if they

do not have symptoms. These individuals are also advised to wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until their test result is negative. If their test result is positive, they should isolate for 10 days.

If local guidance for the facility where the confirmed case occurred is more stringent than CDC guidance on quarantine and isolation, then EPA shall follow the more stringent local order.

### ***Confidentiality and Privacy***

All information collected from personnel in accordance with the Plan—including vaccination information, test results, and any other personally identifiable information obtained as a result of contact tracing, testing, and symptom monitoring—will be treated confidentially in accordance with applicable law and EPA policy. Such information will be accessible only by those with a need to know in order to protect the health and safety of personnel. The COVID-19 Coordination Team will serve as the point of contact for all questions related to personally identifiable information.

### ***Reasonable Accommodation***

Employees needing a reasonable accommodation on a topic covered in this COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan, other than exceptions to the vaccination requirement, should request the accommodation through the normal [reasonable accommodation process](#), which could include a verbal or written request to their supervisor, human resources, or national or local reasonable accommodation coordinators. Employees may also request an accommodation using EPA's "[Confirmation of Request for Reasonable Accommodation Form](#)." Reasonable accommodation can be modifications or adjustments to a job, employment practice, or work environment that makes it possible for an employee with a disability to perform essential job duties; adhere to uniformly applied conduct rules; and enjoy equal benefits/privileges of employment.

EPA employees can see the [Reasonable Accommodation](#) intranet page for general information about the reasonable accommodation process.

## **WORKPLACE OPERATIONS**

### ***Occupancy***

The agencywide occupancy limits set forth in the February 2021 version of EPA's workplace safety plan are lifted upon the date of implementation of this revised Plan, per the guidance presented in OMB memo [M-21-25](#). This includes rescinding the requirement to complete an occupancy exception template for review and approval by the EPA COVID-19 Coordination Team. EPA will continue to monitor the incidence and change in incidence within the commuting areas of all its facility locations through the Dashboard and may update its workplace occupancy guidance, as appropriate.

### ***Visitors***

Visitors (including non-EPA federal employees) to EPA facilities, sites and locations will be asked to provide information about vaccination status via the [Certification of Vaccination form](#) ("Form"). The Form should be shared with the visitor and completed before they enter the facility. The paper Form must be presented upon entry to the facility; electronic versions of the Form will not be accepted at GSA federal buildings. Visitors should retain the Form and have it available while in EPA facilities.

Signage is posted at entry points notifying visitors of the proper documentation (self-assessment, Certification of Vaccination Form, and proof of negative COVID-19 test, if applicable) needed to enter an EPA facility. Local security personnel will affirm the visitor has read the posted signage and has the proper documentation needed to enter before allowing them to proceed through security screening. Documentation will be verified by the office escorting the visitor. EPA staff receiving and/or escorting visitors should confirm the visitor has completed the Form.

If the visitor has not been vaccinated or declines to answer on the Form, they will be required to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken within the prior 3 calendar days of entry into the facility. Visitors may be asked to show (not submit) their required documentation to the federal employee with whom they are visiting.

All visitors must follow relevant CDC guidance, including the requirement to wear a mask and maintain physical distancing regardless of community transmission level if they are unvaccinated. If the visitor does not present the proper documentation, they will be refused entry unless they are obtaining a public service or benefit.

Visitor requirements about vaccination and proof of a recent negative COVID-19 test do not apply to members of the public entering an EPA facility to obtain a public service or benefit. Examples of public services or benefits offered by the EPA include the following:

- [EPA Docket Center and Reading Room](#);
- [Use of Library Facilities](#);
- Enrollment in USAccess, in order to onboard with the Agency; and
- Use of Credit Union or Childcare facilities contained within EPA space and not accessible outside of the EPA facility.

Individuals who do not complete the Form will be treated as not fully vaccinated for purposes of agency safety protocols. (Additional information can be found on the EPA's [COVID-19 Safe Federal Workplace](#) page.)

Vaccination guidance for employees of applicable Agency contract-like instruments and agreements—such as the Senior Environmental Employee (SEE) program—will be issued as appropriate. In the absence of separate guidance, individuals will be treated as visitors for the purposes of workplace safety protocols.

Interim guidance for the EPA contracting community can be found in the two Special Notices: [Interim Guidance on COVID-19 Vaccination Attestation and Testing Requirements for Entry into EPA Facilities for On-site Contractors and Visitors](#); and [Update – Implementation of Executive Order 14042 – “Ensuring Adequate COVID Safety Protocols for Federal Contractors.”](#)

### ***Environmental Cleaning***

Custodial contracts for GSA-managed facilities include daily cleaning of all common areas such as restrooms, pantries, and stairwells. High touchpoint areas such as elevator buttons, door handles and handrails are cleaned regularly. All products used for cleaning/disinfecting comply with CDC and EPA cleaning requirements. Cleaning supplies, including gloves, are available for on-site staff to disinfect their office space.

In the event of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in the workplace, enhanced environmental cleaning of the spaces that the individual occupied or accessed will take place in accordance with CDC and, where applicable, GSA guidance, which provides as follows:

- If less than 24 hours have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, clean and disinfect the space.
- If more than 24 hours have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, cleaning is enough. Facility managers may choose to also disinfect depending on certain conditions or everyday practices.
- If more than 3 days have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, no additional cleaning (beyond regular cleaning practices) is needed.

If enhanced cleaning is required, custodial services will wait as long as possible (at least several hours) before cleaning and disinfecting to increase the opportunity for viral deactivation to occur naturally, while also allowing time for aerosols to settle, prior to surface disinfection. Workplace closures and cleaning will be determined by the location(s) and timing of the exposure. Each location's facility manager will determine the appropriate scope of workplace closures needed—in some cases, it may be a suite or individual offices or part of a floor, in other cases, it may include an entire building.

### ***Hygiene***

Hand sanitizers are positioned in each entrance lobby. Hand sanitizer (with at least 60% ethanol) and disinfecting spray or disinfecting wipes are provided in office common areas and staff are encouraged to wipe down surfaces before and after any in-person meetings. Hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray or wipes, and disposable gloves will be provided in office areas and staff is encouraged to disinfect all contact work surfaces in their cubicles and offices daily. EPA facilities also include signage encouraging frequent handwashing.

### ***Ventilation and Air Filtration***

An important approach to lowering the concentrations of indoor air pollutants or contaminants, including any viruses that may be in the air, is to increase ventilation – the amount of outdoor air coming indoors. Using a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system to ensure proper ventilation with outside air can help reduce the concentration of airborne contaminants, including viruses, indoors. The degree to which outdoor air can be brought into any building varies depending on the age and capacity of its HVAC systems. Air handling units should be outfitted with the highest efficiency level of filtration that does not significantly diminish air flow using the existing filter rack, fan, and other limiting factors of the air handling units. The filters should be well sealed so that all air passes only through the filter without bypassing them. GSA is responsible for operating and maintaining HVAC systems in federally owned buildings and works with lessors to ensure appropriate operations and maintenance in federally leased buildings. At EPA-owned facilities, HVAC systems are operated and maintained according to CDC guidelines.

At EPA owned facilities, outdoor air is brought in at 100% or the highest level possible, depending on the system and outside temperature conditions. The highest rated air filters are used based on the specific building system.

EPA building managers nationwide have received and are expected to follow the Indoor Air FAQs developed by the Office of Air and Radiation and the Office of Mission Support.

### ***Elevators***

Until physical distancing requirements are removed for all individuals by the CDC, EPA or regional facility managers have assessed the appropriate safety protocols for elevators in EPA facilities. Signage is posted to explain current procedures. Elevator floors are marked to identify the location to stand to support physical distancing within the elevator cab. In all locations, elevator lobby area floors are marked to identify where individuals waiting for an elevator should stand to maintain physical distancing, where appropriate.

### ***Shared Spaces***

EPA has implemented protocols to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection through shared spaces and equipment. Hand sanitizer, disinfecting spray or wipes and disposable gloves are provided in common areas of office bays. Individuals are encouraged to wipe down surfaces before and after in-person meetings and to disinfect work surfaces in their cubicles/offices and shared equipment daily (including copiers, printers, fax machines, etc.). Doors without automatic door openers are propped open to limit touching doorknobs and/or handles, except when impracticable. Signage may be posted to promote physical distancing, when appropriate, within common areas, including but not limited to entry and exit doorways, hallways, lobbies and foyers, elevators, stairwells, corridors, restrooms, pantries/kitchens, breakrooms, photocopy and printer areas, and

*Many of the links to web content contained in this document are only viewable to EPA employees with access to the EPA intranet.*

restrooms. There are also multiple health and safety signs within restrooms encouraging handwashing and to support physical distancing.

## **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING OBLIGATIONS**

Consistent with President Biden's policy to support collective bargaining, the EPA shall satisfy applicable collective bargaining obligations under 5 U.S.C. Chapter 71 when implementing its workplace safety plan.

## **CONTACT**

EPA federal employees and contract employees with questions about the COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan can contact [EPA\\_COVID-19\\_Coordination\\_Team@epa.gov](mailto:EPA_COVID-19_Coordination_Team@epa.gov). Visitors to EPA facilities should contact the EPA office or point of contact for their visit.

## SUMMARY OF CHANGES

### *Updates as of December 15, 2021*

- Updates throughout to align with OMB Memo [M-21-25](#) (June 10, 2021).
- Updates throughout to align with the Task Force's [COVID-19 Workplace Safety: Agency Model Safety Principles](#) (last updated September 13, 2021, previously updated July 29, 2021) and FAQs in accordance with Executive Orders 14042 and 14043.
- Updates throughout to reflect that fully vaccinated individuals are required to wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas of substantial or high transmission, in accordance with CDC's [Guidance for Fully Vaccinated People](#).
- Outlined the members of the EPA COVID-19 Coordination Team.
- Eliminated the stated two-week transition period for a return to the physical workplace and updated to reflect the 45-day notice to employees.
- Updates to reflect the modification of EPA's [COVID-19 EPA Facility Dashboard](#) and use of data from the [CDC's COVID Data Tracker](#) to collect community transmission data.
- Updates to remove specific guidance for Testing, Travel, and Contact Tracing – will link to supplemental Agency guidance, once available.
- Updates throughout to lift occupancy limitations.
- Updates to operations to align with GSA cleaning guidance for facilities.