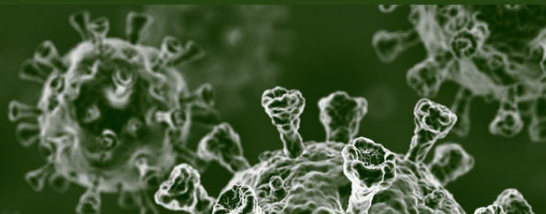


# COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan



May 11, 2023

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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 the [“Model Agency COVID-19 Safety Principles”](#) (updated September 15, 2022).

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the CDC has provided guidance to federal agencies on workplace operations to protect the health and safety of federal employees, onsite contractor employees, and individuals interacting with the federal workforce. EPA implemented telework flexibilities for employees and developed and communicated policies 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. All health and safety procedures and protocols apply to everyone onsite at EPA’s facilities, sites, and locations unless otherwise specified within the plan. This includes employees, contractor employees, grantees, visitors, and any other onsite personnel. The Plan is based on the most recent CDC COVID-19 guidance and Safer Federal Workforce Task Force guidance for the federal workplace and will be adjusted as guidelines are updated and new implementing federal guidance is received from the Task Force.

Additional details for bargaining unit employees can be found in the individual agreements between the Agency and the following unions: the [American Federation of Government Employees \(AFGE\)](#); the [Engineers and Scientists of California \(ESC\)](#); the [National Association of Government Employees, Local R1-240 and Local R5-55 \(NAGE\)](#); the [National Association of Independent Labor \(NAIL\)](#); and the [National Association of Government Employees \(NTEU\)](#).

Executive Order 13991 currently remains in effect, which directs Federal agencies to require compliance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance regarding COVID-19 and workplace safety protocols. It is important to note that the updated CDC guidance is intended to apply to community settings, including most workplace settings. Federal agencies must follow CDC guidance related to certain settings where different or additional layers of prevention are recommended by CDC. Guidance for healthcare settings, schools, and congregate settings at higher risk for transmission are covered in stand-alone guidance documents (e.g. [Infection Prevention and Control for healthcare settings](#) and [Guidance on Management of COVID-19 in Homeless Service Sites and in Correctional and Detention Facilities](#)). Where there is a conflict with more general Task Force or CDC guidance, agencies must follow the setting-specific CDC guidance.

The EPA’s COVID-19 Coordination Team continues to make timely adjustments to the Agency’s safety protocols as the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force outlines updates based on new CDC guidance. As a reminder, these protocols adjustments and FAQs are available at [SaferFederalWorkforce.gov](#).”

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

The Office of Mission Support (OMS) will continue to serve as lead for the Agency's COVID-19 planning, response, and management as it relates to the protection of the EPA workforce and those with whom the EPA workforce comes into contact.

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 related to COVID-19. The Team is responsible for ensuring that EPA leadership and workforce is apprised of the Plan contents and that policies and practices are in line with Safer Federal Workforce Task Force, 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 protecting the workforce from the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 disease.

Members of the Team include:

- Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for Mission Support, or designee
- Deputy Assistant Administrator for Administration and Resources Management, or designee
- Mission Support Division Director assigned Lead Region for OMS, 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

Any Team member may designate members of their staff to represent or assist them in performing the work of the Team. Where appropriate, the Team may consult with OMB, the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force, the General Services Administration (GSA), the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), EPA's Senior Agency Official for Privacy, and other appropriate authorities. 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 GSA, where appropriate, and the lessor's designated representative.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Safety Plan presented here is aligned with the latest COVID-19 guidance from the CDC for the general community. These principles will be reassessed over time, as conditions warrant and as CDC guidance—as well as relevant guidance from the Task Force and other federal agencies such as the Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)—is updated.

### **COVID-19 Hospital Admission Levels**

CDC has set recommendations related to [COVID-19 hospital admission levels](#), which inform the appropriate prevention strategies to utilize at a given time.

EPA's Office of Research and Development has developed the [EPA Facility COVID-19 Data Page](#) (accessible to EPA employees via the Intranet), which presents the COVID-19 hospital admission level for the county in which an EPA facility resides. This information is updated in real-time as the CDC updates its information, and the Agency reviews the data to determine any changes that should be made to workplace safety protocols for the upcoming week—typically implementing any changes starting the following Monday. This data page contains

information only for the county in which an EPA facility resides. For data on counties that are not listed on the Data Page, please see [CDC's COVID Data Tracker](#).

**EPA Safety Protocols Based on COVID-19 Hospital Admission Level**

In accordance with guidance from the Task Force, EPA has implemented workplace safety protocols that vary depending on the COVID-19 hospital admission level for the county in which each facility is located. Please note that where a locality imposes more protective safety protocols, those requirements should be followed in EPA workplaces within that locality. The following table summarizes those protocols.

COVID-19 Hospital Admission Level	Safety Protocols
When the COVID-19 hospital admission level is <b>LOW</b> in the county where the facility is located...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mask-wearing: Not required</li> <li>• Screening testing: No screening testing required</li> <li>• Physical distancing: Not required</li> </ul>
When the COVID-19 hospital admission level is <b>MEDIUM</b> in the county where the facility is located...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mask-wearing: Not required</li> <li>• Screening testing: No screening testing program is in place at EPA; if one is established, serial screening testing would be required for those enrolled</li> <li>• Physical distancing: Consider physical distancing from others and avoid crowding indoor common areas</li> </ul>
When the COVID-19 hospital admission level is <b>HIGH</b> in the county where the facility is located...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mask-wearing: Required, regardless of vaccine status</li> <li>• Screening testing: No screening testing program is in place at EPA; if one is established, serial screening testing would be required for those enrolled</li> <li>• Physical distancing: Consider physical distancing from others and avoid crowding indoor common areas</li> </ul>
<b><u>Regardless of COVID-19 Hospital Admission Level</u></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All individuals are required to <b>perform a symptom screening self-check</b> using the <a href="#">EPA COVID-19 Screener self-assessment checklist</a> prior to entry into an EPA facility.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All individuals known to be <b>exposed to COVID-19</b> must wear a <b>high-quality mask or respirator, take other post-exposure precautions, and watch for symptoms for 10 full days after day 0 of exposure</b>, consistent with CDC guidance—instead of at-home quarantine and regardless of vaccination status. Individuals must <b>be tested at least 5 full days (ideally, on or after day 6) after their last exposure</b>.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals with <b>probable or confirmed COVID-19</b> must follow <a href="#">agency isolation protocols</a> and take other precautions consistent with CDC <a href="#">guidance</a>.</li> </ul>	

**Vaccination**

COVID-19 Vaccinations are not required as a condition of employment at EPA; however, evidence shows that the most effective way to reduce the severity of symptoms and the likelihood of hospitalization and death from the COVID-19 virus is for people to be fully vaccinated, and the best protection is to stay up to date with recommended vaccines.

### ***Vaccination-Related Leave***

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

### ***Vaccination Documentation***

Consistent with CDC and Safer Federal Workforce Task Force guidance, EPA workplace safety protocols currently do not vary based on vaccination status or otherwise depend on vaccination information. Therefore, the Agency has discontinued its efforts to require, request, or collect vaccination status information from any individual—including employees, contractor employees, visitors to agency facilities, or in-person attendees at agency-hosted meetings, events, and conferences—for the purposes of implementing its COVID-19 workplace safety protocols.

The Agency continues to preserve the data and records previously collected in the secure [EPA Vaccination Attestation Portal](#). 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 regarding working condition changes related to COVID-19.

### ***Mask Wearing***

In EPA facilities located in counties where the COVID-19 hospital admission level is HIGH, all individuals must wear a high-quality mask or respirator in accordance with [Task Force guidance](#). EPA employees are required to wear, at a minimum, a surgical mask wherever masks are required. However, employees may elect to wear a respirator such as an N95 or KN95 on a voluntary basis. Any employee electing to wear an N95/KN95 must take OSHA required training. EPA's training is available at [U.S. EPA Voluntary Filtering Facepiece User Training](#). Required use of an N95/KN95 by EPA employees as part of their assigned duties requires enrollment in the Agency's Respiratory Protection Program (RPP), medical clearance, fit testing and proper training prior to use. See [Interim Guidance on the Employee Use of Respiratory Protection Equipment](#) for additional information. Regardless of vaccination status, a high-quality mask or respirator must be worn by all individuals (i.e., employees, contractor employees, grantees, and visitors who are 2 years or older) on EPA property and in all areas inside EPA facilities, including all common spaces, cubicle bays, laboratories, hallways, stairwells, restrooms, and elevators. 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. Masked individuals may be asked to lower their masks or respirators briefly for identification purposes in compliance with agency safety and security requirements. Individuals do not need to wear masks or respirators when outdoors.

In EPA facilities located in counties where the COVID-19 hospital admission level is LOW or MEDIUM, individuals generally do not need to wear a mask in EPA facilities, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, or regulations. All individuals may choose to wear a mask or respirator when the COVID-19 hospital admission level is LOW or MEDIUM. If a locality imposes more protective safety requirements related to COVID-19, including mask-wearing requirements, EPA facilities will follow those local requirements.

Regardless of COVID-19 hospital admission levels, pursuant to Executive Order 13991 and consistent with CDC guidance for the indoor transportation corridor and public transportation conveyances, high-quality masks or respirators (such as wearing an N95 on a voluntary basis) are recommended when in EPA-operated aircraft, boats and other maritime transportation conveyances, and buses with multiple occupants. Mask-wearing is not required for outdoor areas of these conveyances; and in these conveyances, occupants can remove their masks or respirators for safety reasons or for brief periods of time while eating, drinking, or taking medication. In EPA-

operated vehicles (GOV)—including but not limited to vans, cars, trucks, and other motor pool passenger vehicles—with multiple occupants, high-quality masks or respirators are recommended.

All EPA locations will have signage at all entrances and throughout facilities with reminders of mask-wearing requirements when 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 regarding COVID-19 hospital admission levels in the counties where our facilities are located.

All EPA locations will have high-quality disposable masks available to any person who is entering an EPA facility, including visitors. Contractors are responsible for ensuring that their onsite contractor employees comply with all of EPA’s health and safety requirements, including mask-wearing requirements, while working at EPA facilities and sites. EPA employees hosting visitors are also responsible for communicating the health and safety requirements to their visitors before coming onsite.

See the CDC [guidance](#) on types of masks individuals can use to protect themselves and others from getting and spreading COVID-19. For the purposes of the mask requirement in areas of HIGH COVID-19 hospital admission level, high-quality masks or respirators include “procedure” or “surgical”-style masks; masks that meet a standard (e.g., ASTM); or respirators that meet U.S. or international standards (e.g., N95, KN95, KF94). Masks should be well-fitting and worn consistently and correctly (over mouth and nose). It is important to note that if personal protective equipment (PPE) is needed by an employee to perform their duties, it will be provided by the Agency in compliance with applicable OSHA regulatory standards. For EPA

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.

EPA will enforce mask policies in all EPA-controlled spaces whether owned or leased. Employees are expected to adhere to this policy, and failure to follow (absent an approved accommodation) may result in disciplinary action.

### **Testing**

In alignment with the latest COVID-19 guidance from CDC and the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force, EPA has ceased its COVID-19 screening testing program protocol for employees who are not fully vaccinated. Any established agency testing protocols (including diagnostic testing) will remain consistent with the [testing guidance](#) issued by the Task Force. EPA’s current testing guidance can be found at [EPA COVID-19 Testing Program](#). If a serial screening testing program is established, screening testing shall not be used in place of other administrative controls nor replace any safety requirements with which federal workplaces must comply.

EPA testing guidelines apply to all EPA employees regardless of vaccination status. Employee COVID-19 testing may be required in certain workplace scenarios, generally falling into the following major categories described elsewhere in this plan:

1. Diagnostic testing for employees identified as having had a known exposure to persons with COVID-19.
2. Testing during official duties if required by a federal, state, or local jurisdiction.
3. Serial or point-in-time screening testing based on site-specific conditions. When potential high-risk settings are identified within EPA facilities, the Task Force shall be consulted to confirm that those settings are high-risk and that establishing a serial screening testing program and/or requiring point-in-time screening testing in those facilities would be consistent with CDC and Task Force guidance.

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).

### **Official Travel**

EPA federal employees must adhere strictly to guidance from the CDC for [domestic](#) and [international](#) travel before, during, and after official travel. There are no government-wide restrictions on travel for EPA employees regardless of vaccination status (the Agency [travel policies and guidance](#) still apply).

Individuals traveling for EPA official business:

- Are advised that CDC recommends that individuals make sure they are up to date with COVID-19 vaccines before travel;
- Should consider being tested for current infection with a viral test as close to the time of departure as possible (no more than 3 days) before travel, and the costs for the test should be included on the official Travel Authorization;
- Should check their destination's COVID-19 hospital admission level before traveling, and must wear a high-quality mask or respirator (such as an N95) while on-duty and around others indoors at their destination, if the COVID-19 hospital admission level in the county where their destination is located is HIGH;
- Should understand and follow all travel restrictions put in place by State, Tribal, local, and territorial governments; and
- Should prepare to be flexible, as restrictions, policies, and circumstances may change during their travel.

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

For EPA-hosted meetings, events, and conferences, there are no restrictions, and organizations do not need to first seek approval to host an event, regardless of the expected number of in-person participants or local COVID-19 hospital admission levels. All in-person attendees at any meetings, conferences, or events hosted by EPA must comply with agency safety protocols, including as it relates to any mask-wearing when COVID-19 hospital admission levels are HIGH, pursuant to Executive Order 13991 and consistent with CDC guidance or when required by State, Tribal, territorial, or local laws, rules, regulations, or collective bargaining agreements.

### **Symptom Monitoring**

Our goal is to protect the health and safety of all employees, onsite contractor employees, and visitors entering the EPA workplace. If a federal employee, contractor employee, or visitor has fever or chills, or if they have other new or unexplained symptoms consistent with COVID-19 such as new or unexplained onset of cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing, new or unexplained loss of taste or smell, or new or unexplained muscle aches, they should not enter an EPA facility. If an individual suspects that they have COVID-19, such as because they have new or unexplained COVID-19 symptoms, but they do not yet have test results, they should not enter an EPA facility and should get tested if they have not already done so.

The [EPA COVID-19 Screener self-assessment checklist](#) available to employees and visitors complies with the most recent CDC guidelines. The self-assessment is to be performed by employees, contractor employees, and visitors prior to entering an EPA facility and prior to employees interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities. Self-assessment forms are not collected and do not need to be verified by agency personnel to ensure privacy/confidentiality rights are maintained. EPA employees hosting visitors are responsible for communicating the health and safety requirements to their visitors before coming onsite, including sharing a link to the self-assessment.

Any individual, regardless of vaccination status, who develops fever, chills, or other new or unexplained symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or who tests positive for COVID-19, while onsite during the workday

immediately wear a high-quality mask or respirator (such as an N95), promptly leave the workplace and notify their supervisor.

### ***Post-Exposure and Isolation Precautions***

The Agency will continue to follow CDC guidance for post-exposure and isolation procedures. If state or local guidance is more stringent than CDC guidance on post-exposure and isolation, then EPA will follow the more stringent state or local restrictions for those facilities.

### ***Post-Exposure Precautions***

If an asymptomatic individual has a [known exposure to someone with COVID-19](#), CDC does not recommend quarantine at home. Therefore, EPA employees are not prevented from entering agency facilities or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities due to quarantine protocols.

Consistent with CDC guidance on [post-exposure precautions](#), individuals who are known to have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, regardless of their vaccination status, must:

1. Wear a high-quality mask or respirator while indoors at an EPA workplace or interacting indoors with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities as soon as possible after notification of exposure and continue to do so for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed;
2. Take extra precautions, such as avoiding crowding and physically distancing from others, when they know they are around people who are [more likely to get very sick from COVID-19](#) while onsite at an EPA workplace or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities, for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed; and
3. Watch for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed.

For purposes of calculating the 10 full days, day 0 is the day of their last known exposure to someone with COVID-19, and day 1 is the first full day after their last known exposure.

EPA employees and contractor employees who are known to have been exposed to COVID-19—and are onsite at an agency workplace or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities—must be tested for current infection with a viral test at least 5 full days after their last known exposure (ideally, on or after day 6). The test can be both self-administered and self-read by the employee if the employee certifies as to when they took the test and that they received a negative result. The process for employees to verify their results are provided in EPA's testing plan.

If an individual tests negative, then they must continue to follow the above precautions for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed. If they test positive, or if they at any time develop COVID-19 symptoms, they must follow agency protocols on [isolation](#).

If an individual that has been exposed to COVID-19 is not working onsite at an EPA workplace or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities within 10 days of the known exposure, then they are not required to be tested.

If an individual that has been exposed to COVID-19 had tested positive for COVID-19 with a viral test within the previous 30 days and subsequently recovered and remains without COVID-19 symptoms, then they do not need to get tested after a known exposure. If the individual that had been exposed to COVID-19 had tested positive for COVID-19 with a viral test within the previous 31-90 days and subsequently recovered and remains without COVID-19 symptoms, then they should be tested using a viral antigen test. (See [CDC guidance on specific testing recommendations for those that have had COVID-19 within the past 90 days](#).)



### ***Isolation and Post-Isolation Precautions***

Any individual with probable or confirmed COVID-19, regardless of their vaccination status, must not enter an EPA facility or interact with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities, consistent with [CDC guidance on isolation](#) and the EPA workplace safety protocols, and must monitor their symptoms. This includes people who have an initial positive diagnostic [viral test](#) for COVID-19, regardless of whether or not they have symptoms, and people with symptoms of COVID-19, including people who are awaiting test results or have not been tested. The process for employees to access tests and/or submit the cost of tests for reimbursement will be provided in EPA's forthcoming revised testing plan.

Consistent with Task Force guidance, individuals who test positive for COVID-19 and never develop symptoms may return to working onsite or interacting with members of the public as part of their official responsibilities after 5 full days following their positive COVID-19 test (day 0 being the day the individual was tested).

Also consistent with Task Force guidance, individuals who test positive for COVID-19 and had symptoms (but not moderate or severe illness, as defined below) may return to working onsite at an agency workplace or interacting with members of the public as part of their official responsibilities after 5 full days from the onset of symptoms (day 0 being the day of symptom onset), once they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and their other symptoms are improving. This does not apply to individuals with weakened immune systems. (See the following paragraph for additional guidance.) Note that loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation.

If an individual had moderate illness (if they experienced shortness of breath or had difficulty breathing) or severe illness (they were hospitalized) due to COVID-19, or they have a weakened immune system, then they are advised to delay returning to working onsite or interacting with members of the public as part of their official responsibilities for a full 10 days. If an individual had severe illness or has a weakened immune system, they should consult their healthcare provider before ending isolation. If an individual is unsure if their symptoms are moderate or severe or if they have a weakened immune system, they should talk to a healthcare provider for further guidance.

Once an individual returns to working onsite or interacting with members of the public as part of their official responsibilities after having tested positive for COVID-19 and isolated consistent with [CDC guidance on isolation](#), they must continue to take precautions consistent with CDC guidance for at least 10 full days after their first day of symptoms, or after the date of a positive viral test for asymptomatic individuals. This includes wearing a high-quality mask or respirator when around others, avoiding eating and drinking around others, avoiding environments such as dining facilities, gyms, or other places where they may need to be unmasked around others, and avoiding being around people who they know are at [high risk for severe disease from COVID-19](#).

As it relates to mask-wearing after returning from isolation, individuals can opt to take two viral antigen tests authorized by the FDA to detect current COVID-19 infection, starting on day 6. With two sequential negative tests 48 hours apart, the individual may remove their mask sooner than day 10. If either of their antigen test results are positive, the individual should continue to isolate and continue taking antigen tests at least 48 hours apart until they have two sequential negative results. This may mean that the individual would continue wearing a mask and testing beyond day 10.

If at any point an individual's COVID-19 symptoms recur or worsen, they must not enter an EPA facility or interact with members of the public as part of their official responsibilities, restarting at day 0.

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

All medical information collected from personnel in accordance with the Plan—including vaccination information, test results, and any other personally identifiable information obtained—will be treated in accordance with applicable law (including the Rehabilitation Act and the Privacy Act) and EPA policy. The COVID-19 Coordination Team will serve as the point of contact for all questions related to personally identifiable information. EPA will consult with the Senior Agency Official for Privacy on matters related to the collection and handling of personally identifiable information and identify a point of contact for all questions relating to personal medical information.

### ***Reasonable Accommodation***

Employees needing a reasonable accommodation on a topic covered in this COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan, should email [DisabilityAccommodations@epa.gov](mailto:DisabilityAccommodations@epa.gov) for disability accommodation requests and/or [ReligiousAccommodations@epa.gov](mailto:ReligiousAccommodations@epa.gov) for religious accommodation requests. Reasonable accommodations 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**

### ***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. EPA and GSA buildings are expected to meet the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) recommended standards and are inspected regularly to ensure compliance and repaired when problems are identified.

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

In consultation with occupational safety and facilities experts, EPA will consider making use of portable air cleaners with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters in indoor common areas and meeting rooms where ventilation or air filtration is otherwise challenging to improve, where crowding cannot be avoided, or in high-risk settings, as appropriate.

EPA building managers nationwide have received and are expected to follow the indoor air guidance developed by the Office of Air and Radiation and the Office of Mission Support. Additional detail is provided on the [Ventilation and Air Filtration](#) intranet page.

### ***Physical Distancing***

EPA follows CDC and Safer Federal Workforce Task Force guidance on physical distancing. EPA posts updated signage each week at building entrances outlining the agency safety protocols based on COVID-19 hospital

admission level. The signs reinforce the requirement for individuals, regardless of vaccination status, to wear masks in HIGH COVID-19 hospital admission level and will encourage individuals to consider avoiding crowding and to physically distance themselves from others in indoor common areas, meeting rooms, and high-risk settings in EPA facilities whenever COVID-19 hospital admission levels are MEDIUM or HIGH.

Any previous agency-wide occupancy limits are lifted. However, to facilitate physical distancing, individual facility managers may consider establishing occupancy limits for indoor common areas and meeting rooms in EPA facilities, and in high-risk settings within EPA facilities, where necessary, including where ventilation and air filtration is challenging to improve or when crowding cannot otherwise be avoided.

If a locality imposes more protective COVID-19-related safety requirements related to COVID-19, including physical distancing and occupancy requirements, EPA facilities will follow those local requirements.

## **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING OBLIGATIONS**

Consistent with President Biden's policy to support collective bargaining, the EPA satisfies 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 May 15, 2023***

- Reflects discontinuing requirements of Executive Orders 14042 & 14043, vaccination mandate for federal employees and contractors. This is in line with "[Executive Order on Moving Beyond COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements.](#)"
- Update references to CDC's safety guideline basis from "community level" to "hospital admission level"
- Remove reference to OCFO's travel guidance – rescinded
- Remove remaining references to contact tracing

### ***Updates as of December 9, 2022***

- Reflects compliance with nationwide preliminary injunction of the vaccination requirement for federal employees pursuant to EO 14043 and compliance with applicable court orders related to EO 14042.
- Includes links to union agreements with the agency.
- Updates to workplace safety protocols to align with CDC's COVID-19 Community Level framework.
- Updated to show that the Facility Status Dashboard is now the Facility COVID Data Page.
- Provides a link to the COVID-19 Travel Policy for All EPA Employees.
- Consistent with CDC guidance, no longer varies workplace safety protocols based on vaccination status or otherwise depends on vaccination information.
- Ends the EPA COVID-19 Screening Testing Program Protocol for Employees Who Are Not Fully Vaccinated, effective August 22, 2022, and indicates that EPA's revised testing plan is forthcoming.
- Removes the requirement to seek approval to host an event attended by more than 50 in-person participants in areas with HIGH COVID-19 community level, effective August 22, 2022.
- Removes the requirement of employees, onsite contractors, visitors, or in-person attendees to provide information about their vaccination status (including ending the use of the Certification of Vaccination form for visitors, contractors, and grantees), effective August 22, 2022.
- Updates throughout to align with revised CDC and Task Force guidance on masking, physical distancing, quarantine and/or post-exposure precautions, isolation, and other safety protocols.
- Removed the Telework and Remote Works section of the Safety Plan as telework decisions are not made for reasons related to COVID-19 under the current [governmentwide guidance](#). Telework and Remote Work policy documents can be found on EPA's Telework intranet site (<https://work.epa.gov/telework>).

### ***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.