

**Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19**

**Source:** U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

Thank you for hosting a Hood College student intern in the coming semester. Hood College is encouraging employers to offer remote work options for students whenever possible. However, for those positions that require on-site work, the college is requiring employers to follow safety measures as detailed by the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). For the safety of employers, students, and customers, Hood College is requiring employers to put in place and verify proper protective measures for those interns who will come in contact with other workers and clients.

As per the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration, employers are obligated to provide their workers with personal protective equipment (PPE) needed to keep them safe while performing their jobs. The types of PPE required during the COVID-19 outbreak should be based on the risk of exposure while working and performing job tasks.

**Basic Infection Prevention Measures**

For most employers, protecting workers will require emphasizing basic infection prevention measures. As appropriate, all employers should implement good hygiene and infection control practices, including:

■ Promote frequent and thorough hand washing, including by providing workers, customers, and worksite visitors with a place to wash their hands. If soap and running water are not immediately available, provide alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol.

■ Encourage workers to stay home if they are sick.

■ Encourage respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes. Provide customers and the public with tissues and trash receptacles.

■ Employers should explore whether they can establish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others if state and local health authorities recommend the use of social distancing strategies.

■ Discourage workers from using other workers’ phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible.

■ Maintain regular housekeeping practices, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, equipment, and other elements of the work environment.

**Classify Worker Exposure**

Worker risk of occupational exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, may vary dependent upon the industry type, need for contact within 6 feet of people known to be, or suspected of being, infected with SARS-CoV-2, or requirement for repeated or extended contact with persons known to be, or suspected of being, infected with SARS-CoV-2.

To help employers determine appropriate precautions, OSHA has divided job tasks into four risk exposure levels: very high, high, medium, and lower risk. Most American workers will likely fall in the medium to lower exposure risk levels. Complete descriptions can be found at, <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

**Jobs Classified at Medium Exposure Risk: What to Do to Protect Workers**

Medium exposure risk jobs include those that require frequent and/or close contact with (i.e., within 6 feet of) people who may be infected with SARS-CoV-2, but who are not known or suspected COVID-19 patients. In workplaces where workers have medium exposure risk, employers should implement the following:

**Engineering Controls**

■ Install physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards, where feasible.

**Administrative Controls**

■ Consider offering face masks to ill employees and customers to contain respiratory secretions until they are able leave the workplace (i.e., for medical evaluation/care or to return home). In the event of a shortage of masks, a reusable face shield that can be decontaminated may be an acceptable method of protecting against droplet transmission. See CDC/ NIOSH guidance for optimizing respirator supplies, which discusses the use of surgical masks, at: [www.cdc.gov/ coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Clittlefield%5CDownloads%5Cwww.cdc.gov%5C%20coronavirus%5C2019-ncov%5Chcp%5C)respirators-strategy.

■ Keep customers informed about symptoms of COVID-19 and ask sick customers to minimize contact with workers until healthy again, such as by posting signs about COVID-19 in stores where sick customers may visit (e.g., pharmacies) or including COVID-19 information in automated messages sent when prescriptions are ready for pick up.

■ Where appropriate, limit customers’ and the public’s access to the worksite, or restrict access to only certain workplace areas.

■ Consider strategies to minimize face-to-face contact (e.g., drive through windows, phone-based communication, telework).

■ Communicate the availability of medical screening or other worker health resources (e.g., on-site nurse; telemedicine services).

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

When selecting PPE, consider factors such as function, fit, decontamination ability, disposal, and cost. Sometimes, when PPE will have to be used repeatedly for a long period of time, a more expensive and durable type of PPE may be less expensive overall than disposable PPE.

Each employer should select the combination of PPE that protects workers specific to their workplace. Workers with medium exposure risk may need to wear some combination of gloves, a gown, a face mask, and/or a face shield or goggles. PPE ensembles for workers in the medium exposure risk category will vary by work task, the results of the employer’s hazard assessment, and the types of exposures workers have on the job.