

Businesses and COVID-19

Dear Columbia Business Owner,

PHHS has a team dedicated to working directly with business owners and managers in Columbia as they navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the increased spread in COVID-19 in our community, it's important for businesses to understand the risk of exposure of their customers and employees, and how to mitigate that risk. We have received a significant increase in calls and emails from businesses with a positive case who are seeking guidance. As the number of cases increase, so does our response time. We wanted to provide this information to you in the event you have a positive case in your business. This document contains information on:

- Protocol for when an employee or customer tests positive for COVID-19.
- Masking in businesses (under Columbia ordinance).

For more industry-specific information, please refer to the business guidance document on the como.gov/coronavirus website. If there are questions specific to a particular business, please email the business guidance team at businessguidance@como.gov.

Columbia/Boone County Public Health and Human Services

When an employee or customer tests positive for COVID-19.

Will I be notified if an employee or customer tests positive for the virus?

Businesses should be prepared for the possibility of one of their staff members or customers learning they are positive with COVID-19 after visiting their establishment. Due to the way the virus is primarily spread, only close contacts are notified if they were exposed. A close contact is currently defined as a person who has spent 15 collective minutes within 6 feet of the person who has tested positive for the virus or a person who had direct physical contact with the person who has tested positive for the virus. Therefore, brief interactions such as with a cashier at a retail establishment, with a server at a restaurant, or an employee at the drive-thru, are not considered to be close contacts because the risk of exposure is low. Businesses will only be notified of a possible exposure if their employee has tested positive and PHHS needs to work with the employer to identify other close contacts. If the business and person who tested positive are unable to identify their close contacts when visiting the establishment, PHHS will issue a health alert. Businesses will be notified prior to PHHS releasing a health alert regarding their business. Business owners/managers will always be contacted before a public health alert is issued.

When and why are public health alerts issued?

PHHS will only notify the public if risk of exposure is high and contact tracing of close contacts is not possible. This is likely in situations where social distancing is not practiced and the positive case is unable to identify all the people they interacted closely with and therefore may have exposed. If a business has been following the social distancing guidelines outlined in the business guidance document it is unlikely that a health alert would be issued.

Will PHHS notify the public if an employee or customer at my business tests positive?

PHHS will only issue a public health alert if risk of exposure is high and contact tracing is not possible due to the lack of social distancing requirements in the establishment. Businesses are not required to notify the public if they have a customer or employee test positive for the virus.

Do I have to shut down my business if an employee tests positive?

Businesses are not required to shut down if a staff member becomes infected with COVID-19. In some cases, if the majority of the staff are identified as a close contact, there may not be enough staff to remain open during the 14-day quarantine period. When a business has an employee test positive for the virus, PHHS may contact the business to discuss and educate on appropriate cleaning and disinfection guidelines.

When should employees be tested if they are deemed to be a close contact?

Some businesses may encourage their employees to be tested for COVID-19 if there is an outbreak among their staff but it is recommended that only close contacts of the positive case be tested. Close contacts should be tested between 7-9 days after contact with the known case. Close contacts must quarantine for the entire 14-day quarantine period, even if their test result is negative, as they can become infectious at any time. Testing cost varies by site and insurance coverage. Please inquire about testing costs with the testing facility.

My employee says they tested positive for COVID-19 but I haven't heard from PHHS.

What do I do?

If the employee informs you in person that they are infected with COVID-19, send them home immediately. They will begin isolating at home from all individuals. Isolation will continue until **all of the following criteria are met:**

If the person has symptoms:

- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms began. AND
- At least 24 hours (1 full day) have passed since the last fever. AND
- Other symptoms have improved.

If the person does not have symptoms:

- At least 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test. If they develop symptoms, then follow the criteria above.

Once the positive case is isolated at home, the employer should determine who all close contacts to the positive case were. Close contacts are considered those who came within 6 ft. for a cumulative 15 minutes or anyone who had physical contact with a positive case while the positive case was infectious. The infectious period is considered to be 2 days prior to showing symptoms, or 2 days prior to testing positive without symptoms. In some instances, especially office settings where social distancing is easy to maintain, there may be no close contacts from the workplace. Known close contacts in the workplace should be sent home immediately to begin their 14-day quarantine. Close contacts and positive cases can request a letter from PHHS to share with their employer for documentation.

Once the positive case is isolated at home and close contacts are notified to begin quarantine, the employer should clean and disinfect all shared surfaces that the person may have touched while infectious. [Follow CDC guidance](#) for cleaning and disinfecting. [A list of EPA-approved disinfectants can be found online.](#)

My employee says they are a contact to a positive case but I haven't heard from PHHS. What do I do?

If the employee informs you in person that they are a contact of a positive COVID-19 case, send them home immediately. They will begin their quarantine at home for 14 days. Your employee cannot return to work until the entire 14-day quarantine is complete. This is because a person can become infectious at any time during the 14-day incubation period. Even if the person tests negative, they must not return to work until the quarantine is over. Close contacts can request a letter from PHHS to share with their employer for documentation.

Continue to regularly clean and disinfect common surface areas, as described in the business guidance. If your employee tests positive, [follow CDC guidance](#) for cleaning and disinfecting. [A list of EPA-approved disinfectants can be found online.](#)

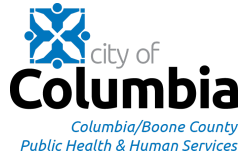
Masking in businesses

Who is responsible for buying a mask for employees?

The employer is responsible for providing enough face masks so that employees can wear a clean face mask at all times. The CDC recommends that cloth face masks be washed or disinfected daily.

What defines a mask?

A mask is defined as a covering made of cloth, fabric, or other soft or permeable material, without holes, that covers only the nose and mouth and surrounding areas of the lower face. Masks may be factory-made, or handmade and improvised from ordinary household materials. Household items such as bandanas, towels, t-shirts or any other cotton or linen fabric can be



used to make a mask. If choosing to wear a cloth mask, it is recommended that they be made with at least 2 layers of fabric.

Where can I get masks for my employees?

Employers can order facemasks through any supplier. One option is the Missouri PPE market place located on the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services website:

[PPE Resource Process and Requests | COVID-19 Outbreak | Health & Senior Services.](#)

How do I notify customers of this ordinance?

It is recommended that businesses place signs on entrances to notify customers/visitors of the mask requirement. [PHHS has created signs](#) that all businesses can print and place on their doors, or businesses can create their own signage.

How will this ordinance be enforced?

Education will be the first step in enforcement. We will work to educate any violators of the ordinance before pursuing further action. PHHS will work in conjunction with the Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS) to address any complaints reported. Failure to comply with this ordinance can result in a \$15 fee for individuals, or \$100 fee for business, government or non-profit entities. Each individual within or working for the entity is considered a separate violation.

If a customer refuses to wear a mask, will I be fined?

If you do your best to promote mask usage, you will not be fined. This includes posting signage, asking customers to wear masks upon entry, and requiring your employees to wear masks while in the facility.

What if a customer states they have a medical condition?

A businesses' responsibility is met once they have asked the customer to wear a face mask. If the customer states they have a medical condition, no other action is required by the business. No documentation from customers is required to prove a medical condition.

What if my employee states they have a medical condition?

Employers are able to ask their employees for proof of a medical exemption however this is not required.

If an employee tests positive but they were wearing a mask at work, do their close contacts still have to quarantine?

Yes, all close contacts of the positive case will have to quarantine regardless of if masks are worn. Masks reduce the chance of transmitting the virus to others, but it is not a guarantee. For that reason, all close contacts will have to quarantine during the 14-day incubation period so they do not unknowingly spread the virus to others after exposure.