COVID-19 CONTROL MEASURES

Occupational safety and health professionals use a framework called the “hierarchy of controls” to select ways of controlling hazards. Typically, the best way to control a hazard is to systematically remove it, rather than relying on individuals to reduce their exposure.

During the COVID-19 outbreak (when it may not be possible to eliminate the hazard) the most effective protection measures are, in decreasing effectiveness order: engineering controls, administrative controls, safe work practices (a type of administrative control), and personal protective equipment (PPE). There are advantages and disadvantages to each type of control measure when considering the ease of implementation, effectiveness, and cost. In most cases, a combination of control measures will be necessary to protect workers from exposure to COVID-19.

Engineering Controls

- Installing physical barriers or partitions to separate employees from each other or the public, such as clear plastic sneeze guards, theater ropes, warning tape, etc.
- Hands-free trash receptacles, soap and towel dispensers, door openers, and other similar hands-free equipment.
- Routinely disinfecting facilities, shared equipment, work areas, and electronics.

Administrative Controls

Administrative controls require action by the worker or employer. Typically, administrative controls are changes in work policy or procedures to reduce or minimize exposure to a hazard.

Administrative controls for COVID-19 include:
- Minimizing interpersonal contact by replacing face-to-face meetings with virtual communications and implementing remote work options.
- Increasing space between workstations.
- Establishing modified interactions or screening procedures with customers, public, students, or employees, with the intent of minimizing exposure to anyone of those groups.
- Establishing alternating days or extra shifts that reduce the total number of individuals in a facility at a given time, allowing them to maintain distance from one another while maintaining a full onsite work week.
- Developing emergency communications plans, including a forum for answering concerns.
- Providing up-to-date education and training on COVID-19 risk factors and protective behaviors (e.g., cough etiquette and care of PPE).
- Adding signage to the workplace that communicates social distancing, cough and sneeze etiquette, proper hand hygiene and control, and other critical procedures.
- Providing training regarding the use of protecting clothing and equipment (including appropriate wear and correct donning and doffing procedures) in the context of workplace responsibilities.
Safe Work Practices

Safe work practices are types of administrative controls that include procedures for safe and proper work used to reduce the duration, frequency, or intensity of exposure to a hazard.

Safe work practices for COVID-19 include:
- Reinforcing social distancing requirements; state, local and university face covering requirements; cough and sneeze etiquette, and proper hand hygiene.
- Providing resources and a work environment that promotes personal hygiene. For example, provide tissues, no-touch trash cans, hand soap, alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol, disinfectants, and disposable towels for workers to clean their work surfaces.
- Requiring regular hand washing or using of alcohol-based sanitizers.
- Discouraging hand shaking.
- Restrict access to your workspace to essential employees only.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

While engineering and administrative controls are considered more effective in minimizing exposure to hazards (in this case COVID-19) personal protective equipment (PPE), may also be needed to prevent certain exposures. While correctly using PPE can help prevent some exposures, it should not take the place of other prevention strategies.

Examples of PPE include gloves, goggles, face shields, and respiratory protection, when appropriate. During an infectious disease outbreak, such as COVID-19, recommendations for PPE specific to occupations or job tasks may change depending on geographic location, updated risk assessments for workers, and information on PPE effectiveness in preventing the spread of COVID-19.