

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

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Safety and Health

1. Where can I obtain general information about coronavirus and what is being done?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) [website](#) has general information about the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the virus that causes COVID-19.

The [Safer Federal Workforce Task Force webpage](#) offers a comprehensive understanding of the Task Force focus areas, resources, and news.

The [DOE Webpage](#) has information about what DOE laboratories and sites are doing to support the COVID response efforts. If you still have a question, you may contact the DOE COVID-19 Hotline at COVID-19Inquiries@hq.doe.gov or by calling 202-586-2683.

2. If I am required to come into a DOE facility, am I required to wear a face mask?

Yes, in accordance with Executive Order 13991 “[Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing](#),” DOE issued a policy on January 21, 2021, requiring all employees, contractors, and visitors to wear a face mask when in any DOE building or leased space. More information, including exceptions to this requirement can be found in the [DOE COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#).

To be effective, masks should be worn correctly. Follow [CDC guidance for appropriate use and wearing of face masks](#).

3. Do I need to wear two masks?

While not required, double masking is one way to improve the efficiency of a mask. There are two ways to make sure that your mask works the best it can: make sure your mask fits snugly against your face and pick a mask with layers to keep your respiratory droplets in and others’ out. Using a cloth mask over a disposable mask is one way to add layers of material to a mask. It is important to make sure that you can see and breath easily. It is not recommended to wear two disposable masks or combine an N95 or KN95 respirator with any mask. Check out more ways to improve your mask’s efficiency at the CDC website, [Improve How Your Mask Protects You](#).

4. What should I do if I have COVID-19-like symptoms or have been in close contact with someone who has or may have COVID-19?

Please notify your supervisor and contact your site or the DOE COVID-19 Hotline at COVID-19Inquiries@hq.doe.gov or by calling 202-586-2683. Personnel should also refer to the latest CDC guidance at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus for additional information.

5. What should I do to protect my family?

The Department strongly encourages everyone to follow the guidance provided by the CDC for [protecting yourself and your family](#).

COVID-19 Response

1. What will happen if someone who has been in the building is confirmed to have COVID-19?

Personnel with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 are asked to report their condition to their supervisor and their site or DOE COVID-19 Hotline. The site or DOE COVID-19 response team will work with the person and/or their supervisor to identify any work-related close contacts and will help identify which areas need to be cleaned and sanitized. Any individual who has been in close contact with the sick or confirmed individual will be asked to self-quarantine, in accordance with the CDC guidelines. Depending on when the sick or confirmed individual was last in the building, the workstation of the individual will be sanitized. Additional cleaning will be done on a case-by-case basis.

2. How are sites screening the workforce as they come to work?

If Federal employees, contractors, or visitors are not feeling well, they are not to enter the Federal workplace. DOE sites and facilities have implemented screening processes requiring Federal and contractor employees working on site to complete screening for signs and symptoms and other exposure history factors. Visitors will also be asked to complete symptom screening and exposure history before entering a DOE facility. More information can be found in the [DOE COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#).

3. If an individual has recovered from a confirmed COVID-19 case, when can they come back to work in a DOE workspace?

Individuals should contact their immediate supervisor to determine when they may return.

4. Will contact tracing continue?

Please refer to “Contact Tracing” in the [DOE COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#).

Travel

1. What travel guidelines should be followed?

Federal and contractor employees should adhere strictly to CDC, state, and local guidelines before, during, and after travel, regardless of whether the travel is personal or for official business. More information on this topic may be found in the [DOE COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#).

2. Can I receive temporary duty (TDY) allowance if I self-quarantine at home after official travel?

No, except in limited emergency circumstances involving employees who serve in a law enforcement, investigative, or similar capacity. In those cases, the head of the agency may approve appropriate subsistence payments for the employee or members of the employee's family (or both) while occupying temporary living accommodations at or away from the employee's designated post of duty. Such situations will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Vaccines

1. Do I need to quarantine if I've been vaccinated?

According to the [CDC](#), fully vaccinated individuals who meet all of the following criteria will no longer be required to quarantine following an exposure to someone with COVID-19:

- Are fully vaccinated (i.e., it has been more than 2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a two-dose series, or more than 2 weeks following receipt of one dose in a single-dose series); and
- It has been less than 3 months since the last dose in the series; and
- Have remained asymptomatic (no symptoms) since the exposure.

Anyone who does not meet all three criteria should continue to follow the current quarantine guidance after an exposure.

2. If I've been vaccinated, do I need to continue to wear a mask, practice social distancing, and follow the COVID-19 safe practices?

Yes, individuals will still need to practice other precautions like wearing a mask, social distancing, handwashing, and other hygiene measures until public health officials say otherwise. Both this disease and the vaccine are new. We don't know how long protection lasts for those who get infected or those who are vaccinated. What we do know is that COVID-19 has caused very serious illness and death for a lot of people. If you get COVID-19, you also

risk transmitting the infection to those with whom you live, work, or have social contact. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine helps reduce the risk of your getting COVID-19, having severe symptoms if you do get COVID-19, and of you transmitting COVID-19 to others.

3. Should I get a vaccine for COVID-19 if one is offered?

Yes, you are strongly encouraged to get an FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccine once it is available. Even if you have had COVID-19 in the past, [the CDC still recommends getting the vaccine](#).

4. If I have an adverse reaction to a vaccine, where should I report it?

Most people do not have serious problems after being vaccinated. Your arm may be sore, red, or warm to the touch at the injection site. These symptoms usually go away on their own within a week. Some people report getting a headache or fever when getting a vaccine. These side effects are a sign that your immune system is doing exactly what it is supposed to do. It is working and building up protection to the disease. FDA and CDC are continuing to monitor the safety of the vaccine and ask you to report any side effects. If you do have an adverse reaction, you should contact your health care provider and then report the side effects using the [V-safe application](#) which can be downloaded to your phone. You will need a smartphone and information about the COVID-19 vaccine you received. If you do not have a cell phone, you can register any effects in the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#). This information will also be provided on the CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Record Card which you will receive at the time you receive your first dose.

5. Are employees granted administrative leave for the COVID-19 vaccine?

Federal employees are allowed up to 4 hours of administrative leave for each dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This leave is not allowable for illness due to the COVID-19 vaccine; employees are expected to take their sick leave.

DOE has also encouraged all contractors to grant a similar 4 hours of administrative leave for employees who work onsite at DOE facilities.

Returning to the Workplace

1. I want to return to my physical workplace as soon as I can. When can I expect to do so?

Until further notice, DOE will continue maximum telework and only those individuals whose key duties or work activities are required to be performed on-site will be allowed physical access to DOE sites and facilities. Individuals currently teleworking or not regularly on-site (e.g., if on an

expanded remote work schedule, such as “maximum telework”, or Weather and Safety Leave) should continue to do so until further notice.

Where feasible, a minimum of two weeks advance notice and additional guidance will be provided before returning to the physical workplace. Personnel are encouraged to consult with their supervisor for information related to their specific workplaces.

2. Is DOE still using a phased approach for returning to the workplace (i.e., Phase 1, 2, 3)?

The Department now follows the [Department of Energy COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#), which supersedes DOE’s COVID-19 Return to the Federal Workplace Framework, which was issued on May 18, 2020. Although sites can still use phase terminology as needed in describing their postures, the COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan requires cognizant Departmental Elements and sites to review the mission critical work being performed in-person or on-site, refine their plans, and minimize, where necessary, on-site work. This plan continues to maximize telework to protect the health and safety of the workforce.

3. Who can I contact if I am suffering from stress, anxiety, or grief?

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides counseling and other resources to help manage stress, anxiety, and grief. Please contact your site’s EAP program. All DOE Federal employees may contact Esp̄yr at (877) 801-5752 to speak to a counselor. Headquarters Federal employees may also contact the Headquarters EAP Specialist at (202) 586-4995 during business hours. For additional resources, Federal employees may visit the [Esp̄yr](#) website. DOE’s password to the site and additional resources can be found on the [internal EAP page](#) to work.