



Protecting Worker Health

Reopening: Guidance for **At-Home** **Service Providers**

Guidance Document

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At-home service providers, including residential tradespeople, have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some have been deemed “essential” by state and federal governments and have continued to provide their services to residential customers. Other at-home service providers were viewed as “non-essential” and have been out of work during the shelter-in-place and stay-at-home orders. Many businesses have been forced to lay off or furlough key staff members, which may complicate a return to work as states start to relax shelter-in-place and stay-at-home restrictions. At-home services is represented across a multitude of sectors, including home-health care. However, the guidance discussed in this document does not address home-health care (for more information on home healthcare visit [CDC's website](#)). Common examples of non-healthcare at-home service providers include:

- Electricians
- Plumbers
- HVAC Technicians
- Carpenters
- Landscape workers
- Household cleaners/maid service
- Painters
- Pest Control Specialists
- Computer Repair Technicians
- Appliance Repair Technicians
- Telecommunications Technicians

With restrictions beginning to lift, at-home service providers are faced with difficult questions that need to be addressed before continuing or returning to work, such as:

- How can we protect our employees and customers?
- How do we assure our customers that we are doing all we can to prevent the spread of disease?

- What do we do if an employee has to enter the home of a customer who has tested positive or has a suspected case of COVID-19?
- How can we provide assurances to customers that we are taking the proper precautions to protect our employees, customers, and their families?

This document offers practical guidance for employers of and tradespeople conducting at-home services. It aims to address the key questions above, and to provide tips for employers and employees.

What should an Employer do to protect themselves and their customers?

Employers and tradespeople that provide at-home services should continually monitor international (World Health Organization), national (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), state, and local guidelines for changes in recommendations, cleaning strategies, and other best management practices. Employers should also consider developing a team of professionals to monitor, assess, and implement new COVID-19 transmission risk mitigation strategies as they become available. In addition, employers should consider the following strategies for reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmissions that include physical distancing, personal protective equipment, enhanced cleaning practices, and communication

- Educate employees on common residential high-touch surfaces (e.g. doorknobs, faucet handles, light switches, etc.) and develop strategies to minimize contact and wash hands/utilize hand sanitizer before and after touching.
- Establish a payment system that discourages the use of cash or checks (e.g. use a pre-payment or app-based system where possible or have service provider take payment information over the phone).



- Implement procedures to avoid customer contact with service provider (e.g. if a signature is required from the resident, have them use their own pen).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Provide employees with face coverings, gloves, shoe covers and hand sanitizer.
 - Ensure employees are trained on proper use and limitations of PPE.
- Provide a cloth or towel for the employee to cough or sneeze into should the need arise. If a towel is not available, employees should use the inside of their elbow.
- Consider additional disposable barriers where appropriate (e.g. plastic sheeting for covering the resident's floor or table in work area).
- Employees should carry out all trash and waste using a plastic sealable bag.
- Conduct training for appropriate donning and doffing, and disposal procedures of protective equipment (e.g. new gloves should be put on prior to entering the home and removed after exiting the home).
 - Employers should consider providing infographic sheets to employees as a visual reminder of appropriate donning and doffing techniques of PPE.
- Ask any customer that intends to be in the same room as the at-home service provider to wear a face covering.

Enhanced Cleaning Practices

- Select appropriate disinfectants – consider effectiveness and safety.
 - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed a [list of products](#) that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2.
 - Review product labels and Safety Data Sheets and follow manufacturer specifications.
 - Consider consulting industrial hygiene experts if additional advice is needed.

- Establish a disinfection routine.
 - Ensure disinfection protocols follow product instructions for application and contact time.
 - Provide hand sanitizer in work van/trucks and ask employees to apply prior to touching interior surfaces.
 - Use disposable products when possible.
 - If reusable products are used, ensure that these products are maintained, handled, and cleaned as instructed in product instructions.
 - Consider using a checklist or audit system to track when and how cleaning is conducted
 - Provide employees with infographics depicting new procedures.
- Require the employee to disinfect tools (including any electronic devices) following each service visit.
 - Consider consulting the manufacturer for the proper disinfection of electronic equipment.
- Eliminate sharing of tools or equipment where possible.
- Develop a disinfection protocol for equipment or tools that must be shared (e.g. work trucks/vans).
- Encourage employees to wash and dry clothes and face coverings daily on the highest setting allowable for the fabric.
- Ensure that employees use appropriate disinfectants on the surfaces they touched within the customer's home (e.g. the device they repaired, the chair or table they used or cleaned, the fixtures they touched, etc.).
 - If allowed by customer, disinfect work area and surfaces interacted with prior to work starting.
 - If vacuuming, use HEPA filter. Wear a face covering or mask or respirator when emptying contents or changing filter.



Communication

- Communicate to customers in advance of the at-home service provider's visit on what the service provider is doing to protect the resident and its employees. Giving a considerable amount of time beforehand can help customers and employees prepare for additional precautions.
- Consider asking customers if they have special requests or concerns about the upcoming site visit.
- Employers should ensure that employees are comfortable when leaving a customer site when there is a concern of transmission of COVID-19.
- Perform as much of the pre-work consultation as possible before arriving on a customer site (e.g. have the customer send pictures or more detailed information than usual/customary).
- Encourage any additional on-site communication to occur outdoors when possible.
- Request, upon arrival and departure, that the customer opens the door and steps back 6 ft from the door before the service provider enters/exits the residence.
- Ask that customers cancel or reschedule any non-emergency service if they are COVID-19 positive, have been in contact with someone who is COVID-19 positive, or are or living with someone exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.

What should an Employee do to protect themselves and the customer?

- Evaluate your health constantly; if you are sick stay home. If you have a temperature stay home. If someone at home is sick, stay home. If you have allergies and are sneezing, stay home.
- Wear a mask when out in public and maintain physical distancing.
- At minimum, wash your hands when you arrive at work, after touching your mask, and when you leave work.
- Wear mask at all times (homemade, surgical, N95 when available).
 - If you own an N95 mask that was unable to be donated, it would provide the most protection for you and those around you.
- Let your employer know if you have concerns about the PPE that is being provided.
- Carry a towel, if you get the urge to sneeze or cough, cover your nose, mouth, and mask. Towels should never be placed on a surface within a customer's home and should be kept in a sealable bag. Clean towels and contaminated towels should be kept separate.
- Employees should attempt to plan bathroom breaks before and after site visits to limit the use of a customer's bathroom.
- Employees should keep adequate drinking water with them and should be discouraged from accepting drinks from customers

What can a Customer do to minimize the transmission of COVID-19?

- If you or someone in your home are sick, or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19, re-schedule your service appointment.
- Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from the service provider at all times. If your presence is not necessary, do not remain in the immediate area during the service.
- Wear mask at work at all times (homemade, surgical, N95 when available).
 - If you own an N95 mask that was unable to be donated, it would provide the most protection for you and those around you.



- At minimum, wash your hands prior to your service appointment, after touching your mask, and after the service provider has left.
- If you get the urge to sneeze or cough, put on your mask, cover your nose, mouth, and mask with a napkin or handkerchief, attempt to delay the urge to sneeze or cough, immediately leave the room, wash your hands and face thoroughly before returning.
- Customers are encouraged to minimize interactions between at-home service personnel and other occupants to the greatest extent possible.
- Customers should isolate pets prior to at-home service personnel arrive and during work.

Resources

- International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials - https://www.iapmo.org/media/23453/coronavirus_guidance_for_plumbers.pdf
- National Association of Landscape Professionals - https://www.landscapeprofessionals.org/Coronavirus/State_by_State_COVID_Guidance.aspx
- EPA has developed a list of disinfectants for use against SARS-CoV-2: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
- ASHRAE has a list of COVID-19 resources for addressing HVAC challenges in workplaces during the pandemic: <https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/resources>
- Centers for Disease Control COVID-19 Guidance If You Have Animals - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html>
- Center for Disease Control At Home Healthcare <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html>
- Center for Disease Control Proper PPE Sequence <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/pdfs/PPE-Sequence-508.pdf>
- AIHA's Indoor Environmental Quality Committee developed these guidance documents about reopening and cleaning buildings after closures due to COVID-19: https://aiha-assets.sfo2.digitaloceanspaces.com/AIHA/resources/Public-Resources/Recovering-FromCOVID-19BuildingClosures_GuidanceDocument.FINAL.pdf and https://aiha-assets.sfo2.digitaloceanspaces.com/AIHA/resources/Guidance-Documents/Workplace-Cleaning-for-COVID-19-Guidance-Documents_FINAL.pdf



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About Occupational Health and Safety Professionals

Occupational health and safety (OHS) professionals (also known as industrial hygienists) practice the science of anticipating, recognizing, evaluating,

and controlling workplace conditions that may cause workers' injury or illness. Through a continuous improvement cycle of planning, doing, checking and acting, OHS professionals make sure workplaces are healthy and safe.

Get additional resources at AIHA's Coronavirus Outbreak Resource Center.

https://www.aiha.org/public-resources/consumer-resources/coronavirus_outbreak_resources

Find a qualified industrial hygiene and OEHS professionals near you in our Consultants Listing. <https://www.aiha.org/consultants-directory>.



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