

**Safety Meetings are important!**

They: get your employees actively involved  
encourage safety awareness  
help identify problems before they become accidents  
motivate employees to follow proper safety procedures

**We are happy to provide you with a monthly topic for your agenda.**

**ROUTE TO:**

- General Manager
- Safety Coordinator
- Supervisor Dept. \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Date of Meeting \_\_\_\_\_

This month's article reviews Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 and the mandated [COVID-19 Safety Plan](#), required by some states. This plan, "COVID-19 Exposure Prevention, Preparation and Response Plan (Rev. 22May2020)", is [attached to this article](#) and posted on the member's only page of the GAWDA website. States that require a COVID-19 safety plan are listed on the [OSHA website, State Plans](#).

## Frequently Asked Questions – COVID-19

### 1. General Questions about COVID-19:

**What is the corona virus and how does it make someone sick?**

A coronavirus is a type of common virus that can infect your nose, sinuses, or upper throat. They can spread much like cold viruses. Almost everyone gets a coronavirus infection at least once in their life, most likely as a young child.

COVID-19 is the abbreviation for the Coronavirus disease 2019 which is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. It was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, Hubei, China, and has resulted in an ongoing pandemic.

It spreads the same way other coronaviruses do, mainly through person-to-person contact. The main form of transmission is respiratory admission; however, fomites (transmission through inanimate objects) is also possible.



## How long does COVID-19 live on solid surfaces?

Researchers found that those coronaviruses could remain infectious between two hours and nine days, which is in line with what the World Health Organization and CDC estimate for COVID-19.

### Surfaces:

Metal - 5 days

Examples: doorknobs, jewelry, silverware

Wood - 4 days

Examples: furniture, decking

Plastics - 2 to 3 days

Examples: milk containers and detergent bottles, subway and bus seats, backpacks, elevator buttons

Stainless steel - 2 to 3 days

Examples: refrigerators, pots and pans, sinks, some water bottles

Cardboard - 24 hours

Examples: shipping boxes

Copper - 4 hours

Examples: pennies, teakettles, cookware

Aluminum - 2 to 8 hours

Examples: soda cans, tinfoil, water bottles

Glass - Up to 5 days

Examples: drinking glasses, measuring cups, mirrors, windows

Ceramics - 5 days

Examples: dishes, pottery, mugs

Paper - up to 5 days

Examples: mail, newspaper, paper money

## 2. Cleaning and Disinfection Questions:

### What are the cleaning recommendations for COVID-19?

The CDC recommends individuals wash their hands frequently with soap and water (washing for 20 seconds) and the use of hand sanitizer. Cleaning the workplace should be on a regular schedule. Surfaces should be routinely cleaned using soap and water, followed with a disinfectant. Cleaning with soap and water reduces the number of germs, dirt and impurities on the surface. Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces.

### Can a disinfectant wipe be used more than once?

Disinfectant wipes are designed for single use. Repeated use of the wipe results in decreased efficacy of the disinfectant.



**How can we safely clean cylinders suspected to be contaminated with COVID-19?**

Gas distributors are not normally equipped to clean and disinfect cylinders that is why OSHA places the burden of cleaning and disinfecting cylinders and other equipment, like cylinder carts on the end user (29CFR 2910.1030(d)(2) (xiv)). With that said, concerns for the health of employees may be reason to take additional steps. GAWDA published a safety alert concerning cleaning procedures (13March2020) that follows CGA's SA-35, "Safety Alert: Cleaning of Cylinders Returned from Health Care Facilities During a Pandemic." CGA's Safety alert states, "During the COVID-19 crisis, consideration may be given to the use of soap/water solutions to clean, or a dilute bleach/water solution followed by a clean water rinse to disinfect returned containers that may not have been properly cleaned and decontaminated. Such consideration should carefully weigh immediate cleaning concerns against possible longer-term effects on the container and the valve.

When isopropyl alcohol (IPA) or other flammable disinfectants are used as a spray application to disinfect containers, great care must be taken to ensure that there is no residual left in the valve outlet prior to the cylinder being refilled. "

**Is Simple Green a good cleaning agent for cylinders?**

Simple Green is a very good detergent and quite effective at removing dirt/ debris but Simple Green is not a disinfectant. During the pandemic disinfection procedures should follow CGA SA-35 which states consideration should be given to the use of a dilute chlorine solution followed by a clean water rinse to disinfect cylinders. Caution should be taken to minimize the application of the solution around the cylinder valves because chlorine is corrosive. SA-35 states that the risks of disinfection should be carefully weighed against possible longer-term effects on the container and the valve.

Following the pandemic CGA P-83 (2019 ed.) "Guidelines for Cleaning Externally Contaminated Medical Gas Containers." Section 5.3 covers Disinfection

"After the contamination has been removed, the medical gas container shall be disinfected by using, for example, isopropyl alcohol (IPA) or equivalent disinfectant wipes. Disinfection agents shall be approved by the gas supplier and used in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

The application of alcohol-based disinfectants shall be limited to prevent excessive amounts on the valve and/or cylinder that could cause a potential fire risk.

Ensure that all residual disinfection agents are removed from the medical gas container."



**Can we use other disinfectants?**

Only two methods are recommended by the CGA because we have to be considerate that we reuse our cylinders for decades and many chemicals will have negative effects on the cylinders and may also damage the valve assembly.

**Can you, the consultants, approve/recommend other disinfectants?**

There are many chemicals listed and approved as disinfectants on the CDC website, but we can only recommend the practice listed in CGA SA-35.

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**Is it OK to have cylinders sit at customers for 4+ days if Covid-19 suspected at the customer site?**

Yes, if the cylinders can be stored where they will not be further contaminated. Or you could have a quarantine/waiting period at your site.



### 3. Employee Health:

#### **What can we do to protect our employees from contracting COVID-19?**

1. Limit exposure between employees and customers
2. Consider equipping the driver with work gloves and a box of disposable gloves. The driver would don a pair of disposable gloves prior to using the work gloves. The double set of gloves would be used for moving cylinders and other equipment. Once the delivery / return of cylinders or equipment was completed, the driver would place the work gloves into a container, either secured in the cab or the bed of the truck, then continue to operate the vehicle with the disposable gloves or dispose of them. Keep disinfectant wipes and hand gel in the truck.
3. Practice touchless delivery: pick-up boxes, no signature for deliveries
4. Wear face masks when working with others
5. Social distance (>6 feet) and/or install barriers
6. Limit common contact items (time clocks, common computers)
7. Increase cleaning and sanitation of the work area

#### **What does exposed to COVID-19 mean?**

The CDC defines an individual as being exposed to COVID-19 as “an individual who has had close contact (< 6 feet) for ≥15 minutes.”

#### **What if an employee has been exposed to COVID-19?**

The CDC states that Critical Infrastructure workers who have been exposed to COVID-19 but remain asymptomatic should adhere to the following practices prior to and during their work shift:

1. Pre-Screen: Employers should measure the employee’s temperature and assess symptoms prior to them starting work. Ideally, temperature checks should happen before the individual enters the facility.
2. Regular Monitoring: As long as the employee doesn’t have a temperature or symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer’s occupational health program.
3. Disinfect and Clean workspaces: Clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment routinely.
4. Wear a Mask: The employee should wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure. Employers can issue facemasks or can approve employees’ supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.



5. The employee should practice social distancing for 14 days after the last exposure.
6. Information on persons who had contact with the ill employee during the time the employee had symptoms and 2 days prior to symptoms should be compiled.
7. Others at the facility with close contact within 6 feet of the employee during this time would be considered exposed, should be treated as an “Exposed Employee” and should follow these guidelines for 14 days after the last exposure.

**If the employee becomes sick during the day, they should be sent home immediately.**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html>

### **When can an employee that tested positive return to work?**

The CDC on July 20, 2020 reported that employees with COVID-19 who have stayed home (home isolated) can stop home isolation under the following conditions:

1. 24 hours must have passed since the last fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
2. There should be a marked improvement in symptoms (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved).
3. For persons who never develop symptoms, isolation and other precautions can be discontinued 10 days *after the date of their first positive RT-PCR test for SARS-CoV-2 RNA*.

On August 15, 2020, the CDC reported, “Data to date show that a person who has had and recovered from COVID-19 may have low levels of virus in their bodies for up to 3 months after diagnosis. This means that if the person who has recovered from COVID-19 is retested within 3 months of initial infection, they may continue to have a positive test result, even though they are not spreading COVID-19.”

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>

### **Can an employee return to work if they have been sick but NOT diagnosed with COVID-19?**

If they have tested negative for COVID-19 otherwise they should be treated as if they did have COVID-19 and follow the re-entry guidelines.

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### **As we get ready to reopen our showroom, how do we handle the employees that have a concern about coming to work?**

This is when you have to coach your employees; reassure them that you are taking as many precautions as humanly possible. Some possible talking points:

1. Providing PPE: face coverings, gloves and counter shields
2. Limiting customer access to the facility, creating a pick-up area and marking 6’ segregation from the counter
3. Cleaning is on an accelerated schedule and disinfectant is placed on the counter, bathrooms and breakroom
4. Personnel are encouraged to practice social distancing and the number of employees stationed at the counter was decreased to create 6’ of distance/or shields placed between workspaces. Shifts or break times may have been staggered
5. Install Signage and conduct training

#### **4. PPE:**

##### **What type of PPE will help protect our employees?**

Gloves, face coverings and physical barriers are the recommended PPE for COVID-19.

##### **A. Gloves**

One of the best practices we can reinforce during COVID-19 is the use of gloves while handling materials. If the gloves are suspected to be contaminated, the employee should shake them off into a garbage can and obtain a new pair from his/her supervisor before resuming work duties. Employees should be reminded to NOT touch their face with their hands or gloves.

Drivers may adopt the practice of using a second pair of gloves under their work gloves to put another barrier between their hands and possible contamination.

Pumpers should practice good odor check form (wave the gas toward their face rather than placing their face in front of the valve). Pumpers may consider the use of disposable gloves when performing pre-fill inspections



## B. Face Covering

In light of new data about how COVID-19 spreads, along with evidence of widespread COVID-19 illness in communities across the country, the CDC recommends that people wear a cloth face covering to cover their nose and mouth when in the community setting. This is to protect people around you, especially if you are infected but do not have symptoms.

If you are issuing N-95 face masks or other face covering, you need to train employees on when and how to use them and document the training.

### **When do you need to wear a cloth face covering?**

A cloth face covering should be worn whenever people are in a community setting, especially in situations where you may be within 6 feet of people. These settings include stores, gas stations and customer sites.

### **Can you clean or sterilize an N95 mask?**

Yes, short answer.

There are four documented methods to decontaminate masks: time, heat, hydrogen peroxide, UV.

[CDC - Implementing Filtering Facepiece Respirator \(FFR\) Reuse, Including Reuse after Decontamination, When There Are Known Shortages of N95 Respirators](#)

This document also points out that the COVID-19 virus can survive on plastic, stainless steel, and cardboard surfaces for up to 72-hours and suggested that a rotation allowing at least 5 days between use of each respirator, with storage of the unused masks in individual paper bags.

## C. Physical separation

Physical barriers use methods to physically separate employees in all areas of the building, including work areas and other areas such as meeting rooms, break rooms, parking lots, entrance and exit areas, and locker rooms.

- Shields between workstations or sales counters
- Signs, tape marks, or other visual cues such as decals or colored tape on the floor, placed 6 feet apart, to show where to stand when physical barriers are not possible.
- Physically removing high-touch communal items (e.g. coffee pots and bulk snacks) with alternatives such as pre-packaged, single-serving items. Encourage employees to bring their own water to minimize use and touching of water fountains or consider installing no-touch activation methods for water fountains.





## 5. Legal Action

### **Can I be sued for an employee who dies from COVID-19?**

Rick Schweitzer agrees that wrongful death lawsuits from COVID-19 should generally not occur. A work-related death would be processed through a worker's compensation claim and therefore not a civil suit.

### **When is a COVID-19 illness considered recordable?**

COVID-19 can be a recordable illness if a worker is infected as a result of performing their work-related duties. However, employers are only responsible for recording cases of COVID-19 if all of the following are met:

1. [The case is a confirmed case of COVID-19 \(see CDC information on persons under investigation and presumptive positive and laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19\).](#)
2. [The case is work-related, as defined by 29 CFR 1904.5.](#)
3. [The case involves one or more of the general recording criteria set forth in 29 CFR 1904.7 \(e.g., medical treatment beyond first-aid, days away from work\).](#)

Some states have more strict guidance for determining work-relatedness of COVID-19, please refer to your state requirements.

This document lists the questions submitted during the pandemic and the answers posted are current as of August 26, 2020. Information changes rapidly during this plague, please verify information at the date of inquiry.

Please contact me if you would like to discuss this plan or any other DHS, EPA or OSHA issue.

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