



NWREC Response if WSU Employee is Exposed to or Positive for Covid-19

Employee Resource Information Pages:

WSU Covid-19 Work Plan: <https://ehs.wsu.edu/public-health/distancing-and-disinfection-plan-2/>

WSU HR Covid-19 Leave Options: <https://hrs.wsu.edu/employees/disability-services/covid-19-leave-and-work-options/>

Covid-19 Contact Tracing Information: <https://ehs.wsu.edu/public-health/contact-tracing/>

Skagit County Covid-19 information:

<https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/HealthDiseases/coronavirus.htm>

Washington State Department of Health Covid-19 Protocols:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/COVIDcasepositive.pdf>

If someone experiences Covid-19 symptoms at WSU NWREC or is notified while at work that they have been exposed to someone who has Covid-19, these are the procedures to follow.

The affected individual:

- Leaves WSU immediately wearing a mask and using physical distancing
- Notifies their supervisor remotely, ideally by phone, of symptoms or reason for leaving
- Identifies any on-site/WSU close contacts, that is within 6 feet for duration of 15 consecutive minutes (DOH close contact definition), not just passing
- Identifies on-site locations they occupied in the previous 24 hours

The affected individual's supervisor:

- Asks whether the individual grants permission to share their identity. If no maintain confidentiality, if yes, share sparingly as necessary to communicate to close work contacts if identified
- Notifies the Center Director and Facilities Manager – Carol Miles 360-610-0942, Dan Gorton 360-770-9613 – of any on-site/WSU close contacts and on-site locations the affected individual occupied in the previous 24 hours
- Ensures the employee is separated from other employees and directed to self-isolate at home/location away from work site.
- Refers the employee to HRS Disability Services (hrs.disabilityservices@wsu.edu). HRS Disability Services will provide the employee with information on leave options.

The REC Director or Facilities Manager:

- Notifies WSU EH&S – Shawn Ringo 509-335-5251 – and HRS, identifying locations the affected individual occupied or equipment/vehicles that should be rendered inaccessible to prevent access and/or disinfected
- Notifies Dean Powers - w.powers-schilling@wsu.edu

REC Personnel:

- Lock or demarcate individual offices or rooms that were occupied by the affected individual to prevent access. After 3 days, unoccupied areas no longer require disinfection.
- If the area requiring disinfection is inside and served by general building ventilation or no ventilation wait at least several hours before disinfecting. If this is not possible, wear respiratory protection N95 or higher HEPA filtration e.g. P100 cartridges. See Job Hazard Assessments, disinfectant specific hazard assessments for general cleaning <https://ehs.wsu.edu/workplace-safety/personal-protective-equipment/> and, CDC 24 hour reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>.
- If the area requiring disinfection is a laboratory with operating fume hoods i.e. may not be shut down by user, assuming 6 outdoor air changes per hour and applying a safety factor, wait 2 hours, then disinfect. Respiratory protection is not required referencing CDC guidance <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/environmental/appendix/air.html#tableb1>
- Coordination between Facilities Manager and PI to proceed with disinfection. PI should implement their protocol for sanitizing equipment between shared use; Facilities personnel will not sanitize lab equipment due to sensitivity of this equipment.

WSU will:

- Inform the local County HD for contact tracing
- Provide the document *What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19* <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/COVIDexposed.pdf> to the affected employee(s)

Key considerations:

1. Contain an incident by preventing others from entering potentially contaminated areas
2. Determine how to quickly close down the area that needs to be disinfected, this is particularly important for areas where people from different programs may be working or passing through
3. Be overly cautious, keep people out of an area until we know the status of the situation
4. Have a facility map readily available and mark the map where the affected person has been, snap a picture, and send to PI, Director and Facilities Manager
5. Program-managed room / equipment calendars are helpful: enables the PI, Director, and Facility Manager to quickly shut off access and notify other lab members not to use specific rooms / equipment; and it facilitates quick identification of personnel in close contact. If a paper reservation calendar is located in a room that is contaminated, a digital copy is needed
6. Assign personnel to clean and disinfect, have Shawn Ringo (509-335-5251) from EH&S (509-335-3041) consult directly with them to be certain they are comfortable and confident to enter and disinfect
7. Arrange with EH&S in advance to train personnel how to sanitize a potentially infected area

There are some limitations to the testing and notification system at the county level:

1. It may take up to 2 weeks to receive the results from a Covid-19 test. The employee should remain in self-isolation until the test results are available.
2. The local Health District is supposed to initiate the contact tracing, but they may not begin for 3-5 days, which is too late to manage potential contamination in the workplace.

Notification procedure

If a WSU employee tests positive for Covid-19, *by law* the University *cannot disclose* the confidential medical information of the employee. The state's contact tracing efforts *are* the official process by which individuals believed to have been in contact with a positive case are notified. The county health department (HD) is the responsible party that will conduct the contact tracing, and ***they will contact*** individuals that may be considered "close contacts" of an individual who tested positive for COVID-19 at our facility. The HD will not share that personal medical information with WSU.

In essence, "no news is good news". That is, if you are not contacted by the HD as part of the contact tracing process, then it is not likely you were directly exposed to the virus. Additional information regarding contact tracing is found on the [Washington State Department of Health](#), (DOH) and [local county](#) health officials sites. It is important that we do our best to respect employee medical privacy if such an event were to happen at our REC. As virus transmissions increase around us, we must remain vigilant so as to prevent this situation.

Affected individuals or employees with concerns or questions regarding returning to work can:

- Contact Human Resource Services' COVID-19 Leave and Work Information <https://hrs.wsu.edu/covid-19/>.
- Complete the COVID-19 Return to Work Concerns form <https://hrs.wsu.edu/covid-19/covid-19-return-to-work-concerns/>.
- Direct questions regarding employee and supervisor COVID-19 reporting to HRS Disability Services at hrs.disabilityservices@wsu.edu or 509-335-4521.

FAQ

- *How long does a person need to quarantine after they first have Covid symptoms?*
Per the Washington State Department of Health, if you tested positive for COVID-19 and have symptoms, you can stop your home isolation when:
 - You've been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication AND
 - Your symptoms have gotten better AND
 - At least 10 days have gone by since your symptoms first appeared.If you tested positive for COVID-19, but have not had any symptoms, you can stop your home isolation when:
 - At least 10 days have gone by since the date of your first positive COVID-19 test AND
 - You have not developed symptoms.You should isolate regardless of your vaccination status.
- *Does a person who has Covid symptoms, and a person in their household tested positive for Covid, need to show proof of a negative COVID19 test to return to work?*
After staying home for the requisite amount of time and taking the proper precautions, there is no need to retest to return in the event that you or a family member has previously tested positive for Covid.
- *Should a Covid test be taken after a person has Covid symptoms? If yes, after how many days?*
If you exhibit Covid symptoms, you should get tested after you call a healthcare provider and disclose your symptoms. If fully vaccinated, get tested 3 to 5 days after exposure. If unvaccinated, quarantine at home and away from others for 14 days. Whether vaccinated or not, should symptoms present, stay home and isolate, contact

your healthcare provider by phone and Jason Sampson at 509-335-9564 or Shawn Ringo at 509-335-5251.

- *If a person stays home when they have Covid and does not work, should they take sick leave or is there another leave they should take?*

There are a number of different leave options available to employees with Covid, including sick leave. To explore options relating to your situation, refer to the table found at https://hrs.wsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Covid-Leave-Options_10-21.pdf, on the HRS website: <https://hrs.wsu.edu/covid-19/leave-and-work-options/> or contact Human Resource Services Disability Services for more details at HRS.disabilityservices@wsu.edu
- *If a person works remotely when they have Covid, do they need to take sick leave?*
 - *No, leave would not be taken as the employee is completing their work remotely.*
 - *A telework agreement is NOT required when:*
 - *Telework arrangement is for a short-term or intermittent period in anticipation the employee will return full-time to their WSU work location as part of a return to work plan.*
 - *Incidental occurrences as defined in [BPPM 60.34, Telework Agreement](#).*

Covid-19 Response Plan Program Contacts

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