



**SECTOR SPECIFIC WORKPLACE SAFETY STANDARDS
FOR LABORATORIES TO ADDRESS COVID-19
Updated as of March 22, 2021**

Purpose

These sector specific COVID-19 workplace safety standards for Laboratories are issued to provide owners and operators of laboratories and workers and contractors working in laboratories with instructions to help protect against the spread of COVID-19. Employers are encouraged to have workers continue to telework if feasible.

These standards set minimum requirements only and are not exclusive or exhaustive. The public health data and matrix for disease prevention change frequently and the responsible party of the Laboratory is accountable for staying abreast of any updates to these requirements.

Standards for Responsible Laboratories in Massachusetts:

No activity in Laboratories shall occur without meeting these sector specific COVID-19 workplace safety standards for Laboratories. These standards apply to all Laboratories in operation until rescinded or amended by the State. The operator of each laboratory shall be responsible for meeting these standards.

The following workplace specific safety standards are organized around four distinct categories covering Social Distancing, Hygiene Protocols, Staffing and Operations; and Cleaning and Disinfecting.

I. Social Distancing

- Ensure separation of 6 feet or more between individuals unless this distance is unsafe due to the nature of the work or configuration of the workspace
 - Close or reconfigure worker common and high density areas where workers are likely to congregate (e.g., break rooms, eating areas) to allow social distancing; redesign work stations to ensure physical distancing (e.g., separate tables, use distance markers to assure spacing)
 - Physical partitions must separate workstations that cannot be spaced out (partitions must be at least 6 feet in height)
 - Install visual social distancing markers to encourage workers to remain 6 feet apart (e.g., lines in the cafeteria)
 - Cafeterias must practice physical distancing and appropriate hygiene measures and may allow indoor and / or outdoor seating according to Restaurant guidance
 - Mark rooms and hallways to indicate 6 feet separation
- Stagger lunch and break times, regulating max number of people in one place and ensuring 6 feet of physical distancing

- Require face coverings for all workers, except where unsafe due to medical condition or disability
- Establish directional pathways to manage worker flow for foot traffic, to minimize contact (e.g., one-way entrance and exit to rooms, one-way pathways). Post clearly visible signage regarding these policies
- Designate assigned working areas (e.g., floor, building, factory zone) to individuals where possible to limit movement throughout the facility and limit contact between workers
- Minimize the use of confined spaces (e.g., elevators, control rooms, vehicles) by more than one individual at a time; all workers in such spaces at the same time are required to wear face coverings

II. Hygiene Protocols

- Ensure access to handwashing facilities on site, including soap and running water, allow sufficient break time for workers to wash hands frequently; alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol may be used as an alternative
- Supply workers at workplace location with adequate cleaning products (e.g., sanitizer, disinfecting wipes)
- Post visible signage throughout the site to remind workers of the hygiene and safety protocols
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol should be made available at entrances and throughout floor areas for workers
- Require frequent cleaning and sanitation of all high-touch areas such as desks, door handles, and restrooms
- Avoid sharing use of laboratory materials / equipment (e.g., goggles) or disinfect equipment between use

III. Staffing and Operations

- Provide training to workers on up-to-date safety information and precautions including hygiene and other measures aimed at reducing disease transmission, including:
 - Social distancing, hand-washing, proper use of face coverings
 - Self-screening at home, including temperature and symptom checks
 - Importance of not coming to work if ill
 - When to seek medical attention if symptoms become severe
 - Which underlying health conditions may make individuals more susceptible to contracting and suffering from a severe case of the virus
- Facilities must screen workers at each shift by ensuring the following:
 - Worker is not experiencing any symptoms such as fever (100.0 and above) or chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, headache, muscle/body aches, runny nose/congestion, new loss of taste or smell, or nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
 - Worker has not had “close contact” with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19. “Close contact” means living in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, caring for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, being within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more, or coming in direct contact with secretions (e.g., sharing utensils, being coughed on) from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, while that person was symptomatic

- Worker has not been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by their doctor or a local public health official
- Workers who fail to meet the above criteria must be sent home
- Adjust workplace hours and shifts (if working in-person, leverage working teams with different schedules or staggered arrival / departure) to minimize contact across workers and reduce congestion at entry points
- Maintain a log of workers and customers to support contact tracing (name, date, time, contact information) if needed
- Workers who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 according to the Centers for Disease Control (e.g., due to age or underlying conditions) are encouraged to stay home
- Encourage workers to self-identify symptoms or any close contact to a known or suspected COVID-19 case to the employer
- Encourage workers who test positive for COVID-19 to disclose to the workplace employer for purposes of cleaning / disinfecting and contact tracing. If the employer is notified of a positive case at the workplace, the employer shall notify the local Board of Health (LBOH) in the city or town where the workplace is located and assist the LBOH as reasonably requested to advise likely contacts to isolate and self-quarantine. Testing of other workers may be recommended consistent with guidance and / or at the request of the LBOH
- Post notice to workers and customers of important health information and relevant safety measures as outlined in the Commonwealth's [Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplace](#)
- Laboratories should maintain operating hours that allow for on-going off-hour sanitation and cleaning
- Limit visitors and service providers on site; shipping and deliveries should be completed in designated areas, outside the facility if possible
- Restrict access of office workers to lab or production facilities; segment office / support personnel to specific areas of the facility
- Employers are encouraged to have workers continue to telework if feasible (e.g., office work, data analysis, notebook recording); external meetings should be remote to reduce density in the laboratory
- Allow water fountains to be used as refill stations only, provided that social distancing can be maintained. Workers should bring their own water bottles
- Additional on-site amenities and services may only open and operate when those amenities or services would otherwise be authorized to operate under the Commonwealth's Phased Reopening Plan and then must adhere to all sector-specific safety protocols, available on the [Reopening Plan website](#), applicable to the amenity or service. Examples include:
 - Cafeterias: Must follow the latest restaurant guidance

IV. Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Clean commonly touched surfaces in restrooms (e.g., toilet seats, doorknobs, stall handles, sinks, paper towel dispensers, soap dispensers) frequently and in accordance with CDC guidelines
- Conduct daily cleaning and disinfection of site (at least daily and more frequently if feasible)
- Keep cleaning logs that include date, time, and scope of cleaning
- Conduct frequent disinfecting of heavy transit areas and high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, handrails, elevators, bathrooms)

- In event of a positive case, shut down site for a deep cleaning and disinfecting of the workplace in accordance with current guidance
- Clean shared spaces (e.g., conference rooms) between use and supply cleaning products (e.g., sanitizer, disinfecting wipes)
- Open windows and doors to increase airflow where possible

Additional worker safety guidelines and resources (with hyperlinks to web pages) are available below:

U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA):

[OSHA – COVID-19 Webpage](#)

[OSHA – Enforcement Guidelines Webpage](#)

[OSHA Fact Sheet – Protecting Workers During a Pandemic](#)

U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

[CDC – Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#)

[CDC – Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease](#) (Updated 3/21/20)

Additional Information:

Massachusetts State Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website
mass.gov/covid19

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>