SECTOR SPECIFIC WORKPLACE SAFETY STANDARDS
FOR LABORATORIES TO ADDRESS COVID-19
Updated as of June 8, 2020

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. Workers must 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 the State mandatory Safety Standards for Workplaces as applied to laboratory facilities in this document. These standards apply to all Laboratories in operation until rescinded or amended by the State.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)
    - Cafeterias must practice physical distancing and appropriate hygiene measures and may reopen for take-out food only; self-serve, unattended buffets, topping bars, drink stations and other communal serving areas must remain closed
    - Use physical partitions to separate workstations that cannot be spaced out, where feasible. Physical partitions must be at least 6 feet in height
- 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 Stagger work schedules
- Improve ventilation for enclosed spaces where possible (e.g., open doors and windows)

- Stagger lunch and break times, regulating maximum number of people in one place and ensuring 6 feet of physical distancing
- 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
- Workers must use face coverings or face masks except where doing so may introduce a safety hazard to workers or where an individual is unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition or disability

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 with adequate cleaning products (e.g., sanitizer, disinfecting wipes)
- 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
- Post visible signage throughout the site to remind workers of the hygiene and safety protocols

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
- Workers must continue to telework if feasible (e.g., office work, data analysis, notebook recording); meetings should be remote to reduce density in the laboratory
- 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
- 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
- Workers must stay home if feeling ill
- 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

IV. Cleaning and Disinfecting

- 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)

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