



# COVID-19 WORKPLACE SAFETY PLAN

MAY 2023



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## INTRODUCTION

The health, safety, and well-being of our employees during the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is and continues to be a top priority of the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). The RRB's COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan has been developed to protect the RRB's workforce, contractors, visitors (to include the railroad public) and other building occupants, and to ensure effective safety measures are in place to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

This Workplace Safety Plan (WSP) incorporates the latest guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) [on protecting workers](#). This WSP complies with the following: Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-21-15, [COVID-19 Safe Federal Workplace: Agency Model Safety Principles; the updated Model Agency COVID-19 Safety Principles \(last updated September 15, 2022\)](#); OMB Memorandum M-21-25, [Integrating Planning for A Safe Increased Return of Federal Employees and Work Environment](#); and the President's Executive Order (EO) 13991, [Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing](#).

In accordance with OMB [M-21-15](#) and OMB [M-21-25](#) guidance, the RRB established a COVID-19 Coordination Team that consists of the senior procurement executive, other senior executives, and health and safety experts. The Team meets regularly and involves subject matter experts from human resources, program operations, and facilities as necessary to review compliance with agency COVID-19 workplace safety plans and protocols, consider potential revisions to agency COVID-19 workplace safety plans and protocols pursuant to guidance from the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force and the most up-to-date CDC guidelines, and evaluate any other operational needs related to COVID-19 workplace safety. The Team consults regularly with and considers input from Facility Security Committees. We will continue to consult with experts in other agencies, including the CDC and General Services Administration (GSA).

This plan is a living document, which we will update to align with the most current CDC and OMB updates, as well as mission needs. Additionally, we will continue to communicate to our employees via email communications from the Board or the COVID-19 Coordination Team (aka Workplace Safety Committee). This update is being implemented upon satisfaction of applicable labor obligations with the Council of AFGE Locals in the Board (AFGE). We respect the important role of AFGE and are committed to communicating regularly with employee representatives on workplace safety matters.

For additional details on our COVID-19 pandemic policies, employees and managers may contact the COVID-19 Coordination Team via [COVID-19CoordinationTeam@rrb.gov](mailto:COVID-19CoordinationTeam@rrb.gov) with inquiries.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

### COVID-19 HOSPITAL ADMISSION LEVELS

On May 11, 2023, the CDC updated its guidance to reflect updated recommendations for this stage in our response to COVID-19 and updated its existing COVID-19 data tracker. CDC shifted its reporting of COVID-19 Community Levels (CCLs) to **COVID-19 hospital admission levels**, which will continue to be reported by county and with green, yellow, and orange to note low, medium, and high status. RRB shall review the COVID-19 hospital admission levels for each of its facilities on a weekly basis to determine any changes that should be made to agency COVID-19 workplace safety protocols for the upcoming week. When determining the hospital admission levels of COVID-19 in the county in which an RRB facility is located, RRB will reference the [CDC COVID-19 by County tool](#). RRB will assess COVID-19 hospital admission levels for each RRB facility each Thursday evening or Friday and will make any changes to agency COVID-19 workplace safety protocols no later than the next workday.

### MASK-WEARING

RRB will notify individuals of the following safety measures through signage in RRB facilities and on the RRB webpage.

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#### LOW OR MEDIUM COVID-19 HOSPITAL ADMISSION LEVELS

In RRB facilities in areas of low or medium COVID-19 hospital admission levels employees, contractor employees, visitors, and individuals seeking a public service or benefit, do not need to wear a mask, except where required by Federal, State, local, Tribal, or territorial laws, rules, or regulations. Individuals might choose to wear a mask regardless of the level of transmission for a variety of reasons. Nothing in CDC guidance precludes employees, contractor employees, visitors, or individuals seeking a public service or benefit from wearing a mask, if the individual so chooses.

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#### HIGH COVID-19 HOSPITAL ADMISSION LEVELS

In RRB facilities in areas of high COVID-19 hospital admission levels, all employees, contractor employees, visitors, and individuals seeking a public benefit or service must wear a mask, consistent with the guidelines below. Individuals will also be encouraged to consider physically distancing themselves from others and avoiding crowding in indoor common areas.

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## MASK GUIDELINES

For individuals who are required to wear a mask due to high COVID-19 hospital admission levels or due to a known exposure to COVID, symptoms of COVID, or a positive COVID test result, the following mask guidelines must be followed:

- ❖ High-quality [masks or respirators](#) will be worn consistently and correctly (over mouth and nose), in accordance with [CDC recommendations](#). [High-quality masks or respirators include respirators that meet U.S. or international standards \(e.g., N-95, KN95, KF94\), masks that meet a standard \(e.g., ASTM\), or “procedure” or “surgical”-style masks, not a cloth mask.](#)
- ❖ Appropriate masks should be worn in any common areas or shared workspaces (including open floorplan office space, cubicle embankments, and conference rooms).
- ❖ In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors.
- ❖ RRB will provide exceptions consistent with CDC guidelines, including, but not limited to, when an individual is alone in an office with floor to ceiling walls and a closed door, or for a limited time when eating or drinking and maintaining distancing in accordance with CDC guidelines.

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## EXCEPTIONS TO THE MASK-WEARING POLICY

When scheduling an appointment, if an individual seeking a public benefit or service is required to wear a face mask pursuant to agency protocols but reports being unable to wear a face mask, management will offer alternative services during the scheduling (e.g., phone appointment, or contactless drop off).

Masked individuals may be asked to lower their masks briefly for identification purposes in compliance with safety and security requirements.

Employees who express that they cannot wear a mask due to a medical or religious reason, must submit an accommodation request in accordance with agency policy.

## VACCINATION

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### EMPLOYEE LEAVE FOR NON-REQUIRED COVID-19 VACCINATION

Employees may request up to 4 hours of administrative leave to obtain any non-required dose of FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine. The administrative leave will cover the time it takes to travel to the vaccination site, receive the vaccination dose, and return to work. Employees should obtain advance approval from their supervisor before using administrative leave for purposes of obtaining any non-required dose of FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine.

The agency grants up to 2 workdays of administrative leave if an employee has an adverse reaction to any non-required dose of FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine that prevents the

employee from working (i.e., no more than 2 workdays for reactions associated with a single dose). The employee may take other appropriate leave (e.g., sick leave) to cover any additional absence.

The agency grants leave-eligible employees up to 4 hours of administrative leave per dose to accompany a family member (as defined in OPM's leave regulations, see 5 CFR 630.201) who is receiving any COVID-19 vaccination dose.

- The agency grants leave-eligible employees up to four hours of administrative leave per dose—for example, up to a total of twelve hours of leave for a family member receiving three doses—for each family member the employee accompanies.
  - If an employee needs to spend less time accompanying a family member who is receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, the agency grants only the needed amount of administrative leave.
  - Employees should obtain advance approval from their supervisor before being permitted to use administrative leave for COVID-19 vaccination purposes.
  - Employees are not credited with administrative leave or overtime work for time spent outside their tour of duty helping a family member get vaccinated.
- This policy applies to covered vaccinations received after July 29, 2021.

## SYMPTOM SCREENING

If RRB employees, contractor employees, visitors, or individuals seeking a public service or benefit have [symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#), they should not enter an RRB facility.

For all RRB locations, employees, contractor employees, visitors, and individuals seeking a public service or benefit are required to complete symptom screening prior to entering an RRB facility, or for employees, prior to interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities. Symptom screening can be self-conducted and does not need to be verified by agency personnel. Employees and contractor employees should review the [screening tool](#) developed by the CDC to determine if they should enter an RRB facility.

The RRB has posted signage at all facilities informing individuals entering Federal facilities of COVID-19 signs and symptoms. Individuals who answer “yes” to any of the questions on the signage should not enter the RRB facility.

Any individual who develops any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 during the workday must immediately isolate, wear a mask (if the individual is not already doing so and one is available), notify a supervisor, and promptly leave the workplace. Supervisors may contact their respective Manager, Executive Committee member, or COVID-19 Coordination Team Member for advice, as necessary.

## CONTACT TRACING

The RRB's COVID-19 Coordination Team receives reports of possible in-office exposures and directs management about next steps including enhanced cleaning and notifications, when applicable. The Team will continue collaborating with and supporting the contact tracing programs of local public health departments and will work with management to issue notifications, when appropriate. With any notification, we protect the confidentiality of personal medical information consistent with Federal, State, and local privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations.

## TESTING

After a workplace exposure, RRB will either provide the employees with FDA-approved viral tests or refer employees to [Community-based Testing Sites for COVID-19](#) for testing. Employees will be tested on duty time at no cost to the employee.

## TRAVEL

RRB employees will adhere strictly to [CDC guidelines before, during, and after travel](#).

There are no Government-wide restrictions on official travel for Federal employees (although RRB's travel policies within Administrative Circular [OA25](#), *Temporary Duty Travel* still apply). Any individual who undertakes official travel should:

- Be informed that CDC recommends that individuals make sure they are up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccines before travel;
- Consider being tested, or be tested, consistent with CDC guidance at the time of travel, for current infection with a viral test as close to the time of departure as possible (no more than 3 days) before travel;
- Adhere strictly to CDC guidance for [domestic](#) and [international](#) travel ( as noted in the above link) before, during, and after official travel;
- Check their destination's COVID-19 hospital admission level before traveling, and wear a high-quality mask or respirator (such as an N95) while on-duty and around others indoors at their destination, if the COVID-19 hospital admission level in the county where their destination is located is high;
- Ensure that they understand and follow all travel restrictions put in place by State, Tribal, local, and territorial governments; and
- Prepare to be flexible during their travel, as restrictions, policies, and circumstances may change during their travel.

The cost of testing required for official travel can be claimed in a travel voucher as a Miscellaneous Expense under agency travel policies.

For travel guidance related to asymptomatic individuals who have had a known [exposure](#) to someone with COVID-19 within the past 10 days, individuals who develop COVID-19 symptoms or have a positive viral test 10 full days or less prior to their intended departure date, or if an employee has probable or confirmed COVID-19 while on official travel, the RRB official who approves the travel for the particular employee should refer to these [FAQs](#) on the Safer Federal Workforce website, and contact the RRB's COVID-19 Coordination Team at [COVID-19CoordinationTeam@rrb.gov](mailto:COVID-19CoordinationTeam@rrb.gov) if they have further questions.

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## MEETINGS, EVENTS, AND CONFERENCES

In-person attendees at RRB-sponsored meetings, events, and conferences must comply with masking requirements consistent with the requirements set forth in the Mask-Wearing section above and the Post-Exposure Precautions and Isolation section below. Individuals who fail to comply with these requirements will not be permitted to attend.

## POST-EXPOSURE PRECAUTIONS AND ISOLATION

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### POST-EXPOSURE PRECAUTIONS

If an asymptomatic individual has a [known exposure to someone with COVID-19](#), CDC does not recommend quarantine at home. The person will not be prevented from entering RRB facilities or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities.

However, the person must 1) wear a high-quality [mask or respirator](#) (such as an N95) while indoors at the RRB workplace or interacting indoors with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities as soon as possible after notification of exposure and continue to do so for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed; 2) physically distance from others while onsite at an agency workplace or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities, for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed; and 3) watch for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed. For purposes of calculating the 10 full days, day 0 is the day of their last known exposure to someone with COVID-19, and day 1 is the first full day after their last known exposure.

Such employees and contractor employees who will be onsite at an agency workplace or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities must be tested at least 5 full days after their last known exposure (ideally, on or after day 6). The test can be both self-administered and self-read by the employee/contractor employee, but the employee must certify to the supervisor as to when they took the test and that they received a negative result. This testing requirement does not apply to an individual who had tested positive for COVID-19 with a [viral test](#) within the previous 30 days and subsequently recovered and remains without COVID-19 symptoms.



If the individual tests negative, the individual must continue to follow the above precautions for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed. If they test positive, or if they at any time develop COVID-19 symptoms, they must follow [isolation](#) protocols.

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## ISOLATION AND POST-ISOLATION PRECAUTIONS

RRB advises any individual with a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 to isolate, pursuant to [CDC isolation guidelines](#), and in compliance with state and local guidance.

This includes individuals who have an initial positive diagnostic [viral test](#) for COVID-19, regardless of whether or not they have symptoms, and individuals with symptoms of COVID-19, including individuals who are awaiting test results or have not been tested. If an employee is subject to isolation due to being infected with COVID-19 and is unable to telework, the employee may request personal leave (e.g., sick leave, annual leave, credit hours).

## TELEWORK AND REMOTE WORK

RRB will utilize telework and remote work consistent with its Telework Policy and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

All medical information collected from individuals, including vaccination information, test results, and any other information obtained as a result of testing and symptom monitoring, will be accessible only to those with a need to know and will be treated in accordance with applicable laws and policies on confidentiality, privacy, and the security of Information Technology. Questions about legal authority to share medical information internally or externally may be directed to the Office of the General Counsel (OGC).

## WORKPLACE OPERATIONS

### OCCUPANCY

When [COVID-19 hospital admission levels](#) are MEDIUM or HIGH, the RRB may establish occupancy limits for indoor common areas and meeting rooms and on posted signage will encourage individuals to consider avoiding crowding and physically distancing themselves from others in indoor common areas and meeting rooms.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING

In the event of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in the workplace, RRB will implement cleaning and disinfection procedures for spaces that the individual occupied or accessed in accordance with [CDC](#) and GSA guidance.

The COVID-19 Coordination Team in coordination with the Executive Committee, will determine the appropriate scope of workplace closures needed—in some cases, it may be a suite or individual offices or part of a floor, in other cases, it may include an entire RRB facility.

## HYGIENE

RRB will procure and provide hand sanitizer for use within its facilities. Additionally, the RRB will also make available wipes and other EPA-approved disinfectants, as necessary, for individuals to wipe down their workstations and related personal property within their occupied areas. RRB will continue to encourage all agency employees and on-site contractors to periodically disinfect their personal workspace. Signage currently posted near restrooms and other building locations encourages frequent hand washing with soap and water, or use of hand sanitizer.

## VENTILATION AND AIR FILTRATION

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the RRB installed HEPA (High-Efficiency Particulate Absorbing) filters in the William O. Lipinski Federal Building's HVAC system. The RRB will continue to consider and work with GSA as appropriate to implement modifications to ventilation systems in accordance with CDC guidance, especially as building population density increases. To the maximum extent feasible, indoor ventilation will be optimized to increase the proportion of outdoor ventilation, improve filtration, and reduce or eliminate recirculation. RRB has deployed portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) purifiers in higher-risk meeting spaces.