

Houston Area Safety Council Webinar: Industry Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Q and A  
March 26, 2020

QUESTION	ANSWER
What steps should a company take if we have 4 crew members in a company truck? Should they all wear masks? Or have them drive individually to every project?	Try to adhere to the 6 feet recommendation as much as possible. Only deviate for critical infrastructure work. If the crew MUST be in a truck together, make sure the other recommendations are in effects, i.e. hand washing, screening for illness, etc. At this pint in time there is NOT a recommendation that healthy people wear masks, but that could change.
How long does the virus live on surfaces? Can you transmit the virus if your not running a temperature?	The virus can live on surfaces, and it varies depending on what surface it is. Fortunately it looks like there may not be enough of the virus that lives on the surfaces to be able to cause an infection, but there is still a lot we do not know.
Can you speak to efficacy of checking temperatures during a screening process to allow entry into a business?	It depends on what type of thermometer you are using. The least effective thermometers is a forehead or face. The most effective is an oral. However we do know that approx. 25% of people will the virus will not have any symptoms at all including a fever.
What are your recommendations for close contact tracing for an individual who becomes symptomatic in the workplace? All close contacts within 2 days prior to symptoms continuing through 14 days after symptom onset? Or some other criteria (to cover the possibility of transmission while asymptomatic)?	When we do contact tracing at UT, we try to first define the date of onset of symptoms, then we go 1-2 days back to start identifying contacts. We also limit our contacts to those persons who had close contact (<6 ft) with the patient, and prolonged exposure (defined by CDC as "more than just a few minutes"....whatever that is. We also take into account other factors, such as what was the nature of the exposure (i.e., what was being done to the patient at the time) and, especially important, whether either of the two (patient or exposed person) were wearing PPE at the time, especially respiratory PPE (i.e., a surgical mask or N95). We do this for all contacts beginning 1-2 days before the onset of symptoms and we continue until the day the patient was detected as positive (and presumably put in some type of isolation).
What are precautions employer's can take to protect personnel?	Adhere to the current recommendations by the CDC. Hand washing prior to entering the workplace and throughout the day, screen for ill employees daily, 6 feet distance, etc.
So we make it to May, then resume normal activity? If so, what's to stop a resurgence in cases?	Most likely there will be a reassurance of the virus, possibly in the spring. We still don't know what may come with this virus, but if it acts like other virus, there will be a resurgence. Hopefully those already infect or exposed will have some layer of antibodies built up, we may have a proven treatment, and we may have a new vaccine.
My clients are reporting difficulty getting doctor notes for FMLA. What could be an alternative to a written doctors note?	for FMLA, they do require a doctors written opinion/note, so there may not be around that.

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Can the Coronavirus be Workers' Compensation related?	yes, refer to your state's specific guidance, but Texas has said it can be if it is proven that is was contracted through another employee while it work.
what to do if you find a person a probability of having COVID-19	There should be a valid reason for suspecting someone to be at a high risk. If indeed there is a confirmed high risk such as a family member having tested positive, you should follow the CDC guidelines such as quarantining that exposed employee for at least 14 days before they come back to work.
If a person is quarantined in a home in their own room, can others in the home become infected via the virus being spread in the home from the hvac system?	does not appear to be contracted via the air through aerosol particles. The virus droplets are large and will drop to the ground before they reach an air return vent.
can you be a carrier and not have symptoms?	yes
Is anyone conducting population level surveillance to better characterize the true prevalence of COVID-19 in the Houston area?	If, by "true" population surveillance, you mean a random sample of the population, both symptomatic and asymptomatic, no, not at this time. In part due to the limited availability of test supplies.
What is the latest on asymptomatic pre-symptomatic transmission?	you are most contagious when you have symptoms. However we do know that up to 25% of people who are carrying the virus may be asymptomatic and can still be just as contagious.
How long after recovery (no fever) is a person still infectious? Data source?	limited data and it varies widely. The CDC recommends at least 7 days from when you symptoms started, but that should just be a starting point for determining when someone is fully healed and no longer infectious. The best way to confirm this would be to follow their guidance of seeing two negative tests 24 hours apart.
Any data on immunity after recovery from COVID-19 - days, weeks, months...?	limited data, but it appears that there is some level of antibodies. Studies are underway.

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The CDC had recommended against requiring doctor's notes for return to work. Has this changed?	no it has not changed. You can still however require whatever documentation you feel is necessary to protect your workers.
Is it helpful to use albuterol (if you have some) to fight the progression/severity of covid-19? How much will it help if so?	not unless you have active respiratory symptoms that your doctor feels would be helped by albuterol.
How helpful is taking guaifenesin for covid-19? If you take it at the first signs of congestion can it help lessen severity?	its possible, but no scientific data on it.
Plants are running out of hand sanitizer and wipes. Do you know of any sources where they can get some more?	they are limited everywhere. If you can find it and its not outrageously expensive, get it.
legality and practicality of taking daily temperature readings of employees	You have a duty to provide a safe environment per OSHA. Practically this may be difficult.
How should an employer handle drug testing?	Unless the drug testing agency has stopped or paused testing, you can still enforce the policy.
What if you were diagnosed with pneumonia before COVID came out is it possible that you had it	yes it is possible, especially if you had the pneumonia between January and April
Are we responsible for any employees that may come out sick?	potentially, if they contracted the virus while at work.

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Should any employee with any sort of respiratory symptoms be sent home, or should companies stick to only the main 3 symptoms?	at this time the guidance should be any sick symptoms should be looked into, and especially respiratory symptoms should be suspect. Recommend that employees with symptoms be seen by their doctor and evaluated.
if you are positive for virus and you've been told to take care of it at home, how can you prevent complications like Pneumonia	There are some things you can do, such as stay hydrated, etc. However it all depends on your own body's ability to fight it off.
will dish washing soap kill the virus?	yes, does not have to be antibacterial.
Suggestions for employers with employees who have OSHA and DOT regulatory requirements for medical surveillance or clearances.	If the governing agencies are still mandating the exams, then they should be followed. You can screen your chosen clinic and make sure they have implemented proper exposure reduction procedures.
How do you properly (officially) identify your self as an "Essential Services" employee?	a guideline is through homeland security
how soon after symptoms resolve are people no longer contagious? Does sunshine act as a disinfectant?	varies widely, at least 7 days from when symptoms started, and 3 days after a fever has stopped without medications. However, this varies and could several days and weeks after symptoms have stopped.
How long does this virus live outside the body? Anything other than bleach or Lysol that will kill it? Vinegar? Ammonia?	in the air, not long because the droplets fall quickly. On surfaces it varies. Bleach and Lysol, along with good old fashioned soap and water. No to vinegar and ammonia
should we allow cleaning lady to come to our home?	probably not advisable at this time

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Need comments on projections on the durations of this epidemic in USA.	There are several models, but here is one that the CDC is considering when looking at estimates. <a href="https://covid19.healthdata.org/projections">https://covid19.healthdata.org/projections</a>
WHAT are the long term effects of the disease?	still studies underway at this time. We may not know "long" term effects for a very long time.
What would you consider the tipping point to allow companies to go fully back to work?	Will probably be multifactorial. Based on the case counts, city and state mandates, CDC guidelines etc. When the curve starts to go down, then that's when we will start talking about opening sites back up in a limited and slow fashion
What would be best safety practices for service technicians/mechanics while working on vehicles at a remote jobsite?	adhering to the CDC guidelines for the general public is the best starting place. Keep hands washed!
Is there a list available of the testing sites?	no. You can call Harris County Health Dept. and they can give you local county health centers that are testing. 832-927-7575
What are the expectations if the quarantine is followed correctly?	The expectation is that if you stay quarantined for 14 days after being exposed then if you are going to show any signs or symptoms, you most likely show them during that 14 days.
Should we stop scheduling periodic surveillance medical exams during this time?	It is up to your comfort level and in compliance with any governing agencies that may dictate when someone is due for an exam.
Dr. Hysler, How long will the impact of COVID-19 directly effect HASC facilities. Will facilities escalate to any further measures?	please visit our website. We are open at this time with some restriction as to who we will see at this time. <a href="https://www.hasc.com/about-hasc/news/required-risk-screening/">https://www.hasc.com/about-hasc/news/required-risk-screening/</a>

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<p>What's your option on using Rapid Diagnostic Testing to diagnose COVID-19, exclude COVID-19, and screen asymptomatic contacts? Is there any healthcare facility in Houston performing Point of Care COVID-19 testing?</p>	<p>The rapid- in clinic testing kits are not readily available at this point. If their accuracy is high, it would be an alternative to the tests that we currently have which are taking several days to get back. At this time there is no recommendation to screen asymptomatic people, but that could change.</p>
<p>What's the sensitivity of COVID-19 PCR test?</p>	<p>Not clearly established, but felt to be "very good". LabCorp, a large commercial lab in the US, does offer some more details on their own testing. See <a href="https://www.fda.gov/media/136151/download">https://www.fda.gov/media/136151/download</a></p>
<p>We are all in preventive mode, avoid contact. How did the first person get the virus? Wouldn't we still be subject to get the virus other than contact?</p>	<p>It is believed the first person in Wuhan China contracted the virus through an animal. The virus "jumped" from the animal to the hum and it spread from there. There appears to be only two ways to contract the virus; through another sick person directly, or through surface contact.</p>
<p>How do you address the issue that some people feel apprehensive about coming to the HASC as it's still a big room with a lot of people? I'm hearing some of the provisions (mandatory hand sanitizing stations, 6' rule in training room) are not being followed.</p>	<p>HASC has implemented several procedures. We have had both an industrial hygienist, as well as a health department rep come out and were both amazed at the level of security and cleanliness. Please visit <a href="https://www.hasc.com/covid-19/">https://www.hasc.com/covid-19/</a></p>
<p>Once a confirmed positive case is known, is there a timeframe that I need to go back, when identifying people who have been in close contact with that employee?</p>	<p>14 days</p>
<p>Life span of C-virus and ways to kill it on common use lab tools/PPE. Microwave tools? "Cook" expensive hot gloves at 175F?</p>	<p>appears to be able to live on surfaces up to 3 days, but in minimal amount. Washing in soap and water is effective in cleaning and killing the virus.</p>
<p>Can you talk about the risk of MSW handling? Thanks</p>	<p>no additional measures are recommended. Wear gloves and wash hands.</p>
<p>How should organizations best communicate these concerns with employees where English is not their primary language?</p>	<p>if needed, have all communication is as many additional languages as your jobsite needs. The more communication, the better.</p>

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Mask - If you can't find the N95 mask is the Surgical Masks just as good?	In most circumstances involving direct exposure to a positive COVID-19 patient, a surgical mask offers sufficient protection. The exception is when the patient is undergoing an aerosol-generating procedure, such as intubation, extubation, nebulized medications, bronchoscopies. In these cases, the N95 mask is more appropriate to use than a surgical mask.
How are other companies sharing the critical safety messaging to their multicultural workforce?	not easily, no. HASC is happy to disperse relevant information.
Have you seen any studies that show infectiousness prior to developing symptoms	The studies so far are anecdotal, largely based on data from China, and also based on some modeling studies. We know that asymptomatic transmission occurs, it is probably less contagious than when exposed to a person with symptoms, but we don't know when that period of contagiousness occurs, although most cases take between 2 and 14 days after exposure to develop symptoms.
How can we tell the difference between allergy related symptoms and virus symptoms.	since the symptoms of COVID vary from no symptoms to severe symptoms, it may not always be easy. However allergies usually have watery eyes, nasal drip and congestion. COVID does not appear to have these symptoms as a common factor.
Good Morning? Can the Coronavirus be transmitted through letter writing? If so, How long does the virus linger?	It does appear that virus on paper would be enough to transfer, however there are studies ongoing and the recommendation is to still wash you hands after you handle any surface that may post a risk.
what are best practices for Employers on How to handle employee panic and worry about the COVID-19 at work?	Filtering the correct info to them is important. They are all watching the news and getting second hand information from social media. Use a trusted source and disseminate the info to your employees frequently.
it is okay to spray and wipe disinfectant or just spray and let it evaporated?	the action of wiping is best
Why isn't the public being kept informed of total recoveries? We seem to get just total cases and that's the scary number without the other.	Recoveries are hard to identify. A true recovery would be someone who has tested positive, then heals, and then gets a second or third test to show they are negative. Since testing is so limited right now, it is difficult to quantify.

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Is it safe to go to a family members house if we have not traveled or been around other people? This is based on no one being sick	Not advised during this time. It would be difficult to know 100% that no one in the family is not carrying the virus but just not showing symptoms.
His thoughts on the likelihood of there being a lot variability in how the Coronavirus impacts different parts of the US	There are many factors in this. How close a population is in location. The demographics of that population. Transportation in that area. Just to name a few.
how does the ideal projection you described that was on the front page of the Houston Chronicle compare with what is happening in NYC area?	I am not aware of any comparable studies or estimates coming out of NYC. Emphasis is on the word "comparable", i.e., using the same methods as the UT School of Public Health in Houston used.
How are companies managing Coronavirus for employees who cannot work remotely.	If they have to go into work then companies should do as much as they can to help reduce the risk. Hand washing requirements, risk screening of all employees, and some are checking temperatures of each employee at every shift.
If an employee with COVID-19 infects other employees at our facilities with COVID-19, will this be a recordable case?	possibly. If it can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt that it was passed at work to that individual.
What to do if an employee shows or had symptoms similar to the strain, but their PCP did not see the need to test?	this is a common scenario. The CDC has guidelines in place which includes an isolation of at least 7 days from when the symptoms started, and then all symptoms should be greatly improved or subsided, and no fever for at least 3 days without taking any medications
Most of our work is travel related across the US. What is the best practice for us?	I would first rely on the travel guidelines by the CDC and the states. Your employees may be restricted.
What if an employee was cleared by their PCP without a Negative COVID19 test, but had the same symptoms. Should we let them stay at home for 14 days to be safe?	That is one way you can go about it



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What treatment is given since there is no real vaccine available. Do we take regular meds for cold & flu?	yes you can try over the counters. Treatment studies are underway
Does the modeling for the Houston Region mirror that of other areas of the country, or do we have any unique differences that are taken into account in the modeling?	I wasn't involved in the Houston modeling, although I work at the same institution, but they took into account many different factors, some (but not all) of which have been used in other models. Likewise, it is probable that the Houston models didn't incorporate some factors that other researchers used in other models. Sorry I can't be more specific!
What methods and practices can a job site deploy to work safely in confide spaces	Adhere to the current recommendations by the CDC. Hand washing prior to entering the workplace and throughout the day, screen for ill employees daily, 6 feet distance, etc. If they are wearing a particulate cartridge in the space, then they should be protected from any virus droplets.
What temp is considered to be a fever?	100.4 or greater
In general could influenza be included as a OSHA recordable?	influenza and the common cold are specifically excluded by OSHA as being work related illnesses
When appropriate, what is risk of document handling on jobsites? i.e., sign in sheets, permits, JSA's etc. items that are passed from employee to employee for signature and handling.	It appears the transmission on surface is small, but they should still adhere to the CDC guidelines of keeping surfaces clean, washing hands after touching things, etc.
Is a PFT required to use a N-95 respirator and what about the risk of exposure during the test?	no it is not required, and right now OSHA has recommended that you NOT fit test for an N95 due to the limited quantity of the masks right now
Who needs to wear a mask? When is an N95 mask helpful or called for?	masks at this pint in time are only recommended for sick individuals to wear, not healthy people. This guidance could change.

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Is it possible to perform testing for coronavirus, even if symptoms are not present and, if so, where can it be performed	yes it is possible, however at this pint in time the testing guidelines are only for people who are showing active symptoms due to the limited number of tests
1. What is the major infection route, air or contact? 2. When you think we will have our normal life back?	respiratory droplets from coughing. See above answers.
Is a contractor required to take many of these site specific training events, can we consider a longer shelf life, extending the expiration date of training by 30 to 60 days.	The safety council time limits on training are set by owner sites, the individual contractor combines, or agencies such as OSHA, etc.
So CDC only specifies those that are diagnosed. But many people are sick and testing is being postponed until further symptoms arise. What should companies do in regards to those types of employees?	the screening questions/methods are what is currently advised. I.e. do you have a fever, is anyone in your house sick, has anyone tested positive in your house, recent travel, etc.
Have you heard anything about using UV lights to kill Covid 19?	studies are being done on UV
We have heard of some people taking 2 weeks to get results on COVID testing. Why is that?	It is dependent on the backlog of the labs as to when results are coming back
Masks from out of the country KN 95 are they helpful? Will they work? Should we purchase? I know that they are not NIOSH approved. What do you think?	not recommended unless you confirm their quality control
How many cases (both infections and deaths) being reported in the news are actually lab confirmed and not based on symptoms?	all lab confined, not based on symptoms

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how are positive tests confirmed? With a retest?	if the test has been run through a lab, then it is confirmed. To confirm that someone who has tested positive is no longer contagious or carrying the virus, then you would retest them.
I live near Legacy Stadium in Katy, TX and they have been setting up tents and barricades for the past 2 weeks. Is this is a planned testing site?	it may be, you would need to call that county's health district to confirm
There have been news stories that have suggested the possibility of testing all people to identify those who have already had COVID-19 and allow those people to return to work. Do you anticipate this method will be implemented in the future?	not at this time. Possibly when and if there is an abundance of test kits available, but typically we do not test healthy people to see if they have a disease.
will be there be any new scheduling requirements for back to work clearances for workers who have been diagnosed with covid19?	not at the HASC/GH health centers. However employees must be symptom free in order to be seen, and if they were sick they must meet the current CDC requirements as listed above in another question.
What is the possibility of someone catching the virus who shows no symptoms?	it appears around 25% of people with the virus may show no symptoms
Stress management/Stress relief training or videos anything that can help with Stress	<a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html</a>
What percentage of patients who have Covid-19 lack a fever? Is the WHO criteria for Covid-19 screening obsolete?	it appears fever is present in around 90% of people with the virus. I would reference the CDC guidelines since they are specific to the USA
HEPA filtration in large buildings & gathering locations	no needed since this virus is not an aerosol and it should fall to the ground before it would even get to e filter in a room.