

Guidelines for Construction

About this guidance

The construction industry has remained open in Rhode Island during the COVID-19 crisis. These guidelines summarize requirements and recommendations for construction companies and workers as they move toward economic recovery. In addition to the sector-specific guidance outlined here, all businesses should review the [Vital Workplace Resources](#) section of Reopening RI's website. Ensuring that anyone who is sick stays home and does not come to work is a top priority.

This guidance document is intended to cover issues that frequently arise when complying with the general requirements for all establishments regarding physical distancing, cleaning and disinfecting, masking, and other standards. The general requirements include those in Executive Orders and the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) regulations [Safe Activities By Covered Entities During the COVID-19 Emergency](#). In addition, businesses and organizations should also review the general workplace guidelines applicable to your business or organization.

These guidelines are designed to reduce the risk of clients, employees, and all Rhode Islanders from contracting COVID-19. Upon inspection, if a business is found in violation of applicable regulations, fines may be issued and/or the business may be closed by RIDOH officials. Keep in mind that the regulations and guidance documents will be in effect during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and may be updated from time to time.

The owner of a site, or the owner's designee, referred to as the Responsible Party, is responsible for making sure everyone on a site, including all contracted professionals, meet all health regulations issued surrounding the COVID-19 crisis. The Responsible Party should also familiarize themselves with the requirements outlined both here and in the general guidance document noted above. All local, state, and federal requirements relative to construction must also continue being adhered to.

Questions about this guidance can be directed to the Department of Business Regulation via its [online form](#) or by calling 401-889-5550.

Construction operations

Construction will continue to remain open with the following guidance in place to protect public health and safety.

Anyone who is sick or who has [COVID-19 symptoms](#) should stay home and not come to work. This is very important because it helps prevent others from getting sick. Use the COVID-19 Screening Tool, available in [English](#) and in [Spanish](#), before allowing anyone to come on site or enter the facility

Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 must be excluded from work and isolate at home.

- Close contacts to positive individuals (anyone within six feet for more than 15 minutes while the person had symptoms and two days prior) need to be excluded from work and quarantine for 14 days.
- Employees need to be told to call their supervisor and not report to work if they have COVID-19 symptoms.

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Physical Distancing Requirements

In addition to the physical distancing policies outlined in the general guidance document, where possible, those in the construction industry should also consider the following industry-specific guidance:

- Construction workers are required to maintain a six-foot distance from all other persons unless the specific activity (e.g. lifting) requires a shorter distance for safety purposes. In such a case, a cloth face covering (unless a higher grade of mask is required) must always be worn, as is required anywhere people cannot continuously, measurably, and easily maintain a six-foot distance from one another.
- The Responsible Party should monitor physical distancing on their worksite in accordance with the guidance herein.
- To the extent possible, while maintaining all safety protocols, the Responsible Party should use outdoor air circulation at indoor jobsites.
- It is recommended that markers denoting six feet of distance be used where workers tend to congregate (e.g. at a health or temperature screening area, if in use.)
- Implementing policies to limit group interactions is recommended, such as staggering shifts, meals, and breaks to ensure physical distancing.
- Minimizing the number of workers allowed in confined spaces (e.g. forklifts, elevators, vehicles) so that workers adhere to physical distancing protocols is recommended.
- Avoiding multiple crews/teams working in one area is encouraged. Assigned working areas for individuals is recommended in order to limit movement throughout the job site (i.e. separating the jobsite into sections and assigning each stable crew a specific section). Consider dividing sections via plastic partitions with separate entrances, when possible.

Job Site Configuration and Practices:

It is recommended that the Responsible Party:

- Maintain consistent work crews. The creation of teams that do not intersect or overlap is recommended, when possible.
- Hold remote/electronic meetings instead of in-person meetings when possible (e.g. conversations over blueprints between architects and builders), and train employees on how to conduct meetings they traditionally conduct on-site through remote/electronic mechanisms.
- Limit in-person gatherings when video/teleconferencing is not possible.
- Encourage employees to bring meals and snacks from home and close congregate eating areas and lunchrooms. It is required that during lunch and break periods, workers remain physically distanced.
- Encourage and support employees who can work from home including office-based personnel and allow them to do so. Office spaces must follow the [regulations for offices](#) available on Reopening RI's website
- Verbally screen all workers and visitors to the job site to check for COVID-19 symptoms. Employees need to be told to call their supervisor and not go to work if they have COVID-19 symptoms.
- As written in the general department of health regulations, clean portable toilets (porta-johns) and restroom facilities as follows:
 - Thorough cleaning and sanitizing once per day;

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- High-touch surfaces (e.g. door handles, sinks or hand sanitizer dispensers, and toilets) should be wiped down frequently; and
- Cleaning wipes and/or cleaning materials should be made available for individuals to clean surfaces before and after use.

Masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Use

- The use of masks is required on construction job sites (indoors and outdoors) in alignment with RIDOH regulations which indicate that masks must be worn unless six feet of physical distancing can be maintained easily, measurably, and continuously.
- Masks or cloth face coverings are not required when workers are in an environment where a face mask would create a safety hazard (e.g. near open flames; in the presence of extreme environmental conditions; when a mask or face covering would hinder communication of safety procedures or verbal/visual cues necessary for safe operations; when environmental conditions are exacerbated with a mask and wearing one would compromise the safety of an employee).
- The term cloth face covering should not be interpreted to mean an N-95 mask. Those are critical supplies that should be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, unless a worker already possesses one or her/his work requires a more protective respiratory mask.
- Workers who were previously required to wear a face mask or PPE should maintain the same practices as before (e.g. during paint stations, woodworking areas, chemical processing, or sanding operations).
- If workers wear disposable PPE, the Responsible Party should train workers on how to properly discard it.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- If a traditional sink for hand washing is not available, the Responsible Party should provide a portable hand washing station or a makeshift hand washing station (i.e. field sink), designed based on RIDOH and EPA guidance.
- Although businesses are allowed to provide hand sanitizer to employees as a substitute for running water and soap, construction workers. Hand sanitizer can only be used as a substitute for soap and water if hands are not visibly dirty. However, providing hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol for employees is still encouraged for use in situations where hands do not become visibly dirty.
- High-touch surfaces and shared objects must be cleaned in accordance with [General Business/Organization Guidelines](#) that are posted on Reopening RI's website. Providing hand-sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol for employees is strongly recommended.
- Limiting mutual contact on equipment is strongly recommended. It is recommended to thoroughly clean and disinfect shared equipment and tools between users, unless doing so would create a hazard due to the nature of the work. Procedures for utilizing shared equipment should be spelled out in the company's COVID-19 Control Plan.

Contact Tracing

It is recommended that companies collect contact information for those who are present on the construction site, including visitors, for 15 minutes or longer. The following information should be collected:

- Full name
- Phone number



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- Date(s) and time(s) on site

Travel

- It is recommended that workers do not carpool to and from work unless they live in the same household.
- When purchasing materials for a job site, it is recommended that only one worker is sent to buy supplies. If two people are required for a purchase, they should take two different vehicles, when possible.
- If carpooling is unavoidable, face coverings should be worn when inside the vehicle and individuals should keep as much distance between themselves as possible.

Procedures for symptomatic or confirmed COVID-19 individuals

Please review and follow the guidelines for individuals who show signs of illness or tests positive for COVID-19 available in the [General Business/Organization Guidelines](#) and the general [Department of Health Regulations](#). Both of these documents are available on Reopening RI's website.



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Illustrative Examples:

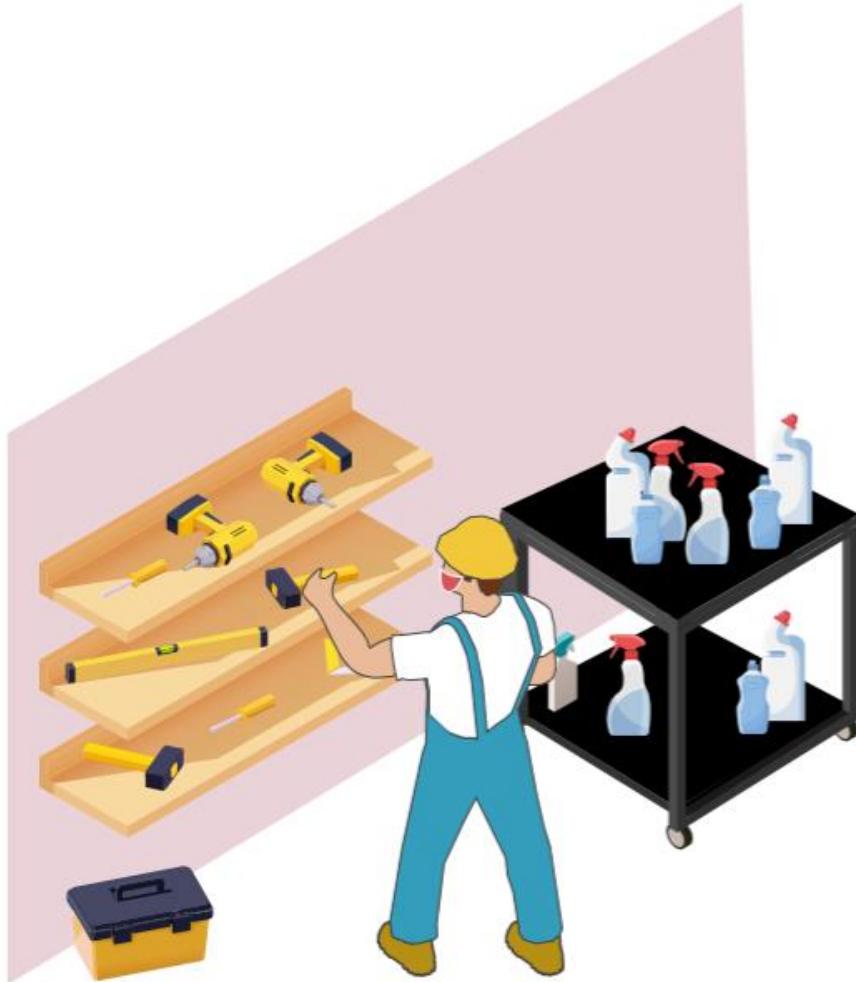
Example: Hand Cleaning and Disinfecting



If a traditional sink for hand washing is not available, the Responsible Party should provide a portable hand washing station or a makeshift hand washing station (i.e. field sink), designed based on RIDOH and EPA guidance.

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Example: Cleaning and Disinfecting Shared Tools



Limiting mutual contact on equipment is strongly recommended. It is recommended that shared equipment and tools be cleaned and disinfected between users, unless doing so would create a hazard due to the nature of the work. Procedures for using shared equipment should be spelled out in the company's COVID-19 Control Plan.