

Workplace COVID-19 Risk Level and Selection of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

During an outbreak, the risk of occupational exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, may vary from very high to relatively lower risk. The level of risk depends in part on the work environment, type of work performed, and the potential for close contact for a repeated or extended period of time. To help University units determine appropriate precautions, EH&S has adopted the [OSHA Occupational Risk](#) levels and the [Washington Department of Labor and Industries](#) criteria to characterize work at the different risk exposure levels, consisting of very high, high, medium, and lower.

While engineering and administrative controls are considered more effective in minimizing exposure to SARS-CoV-2, PPE may also be needed to prevent certain exposures. While correctly using PPE can help prevent some exposures, it should not take the place of other prevention strategies, such as practicing good hygiene, maintaining social/physical distance of 6 feet and staying home when you are sick. Visit the EH&S website for more information about [COVID-19 prevention](#).

All types of PPE must be:

- Selected based upon the potential exposure hazard to the worker.
- Properly fitted and periodically refitted, as applicable (e.g., respirators).
- Consistently and properly worn when required.
- Regularly inspected, maintained, and replaced, as necessary.
- Properly removed, cleaned, and stored or disposed of, as applicable, to avoid contamination of self, others, or the environment.

Additional information about the Novel Coronavirus and COVID-19 for the UW community is on the [Novel coronavirus & COVID-19: facts and resources](#) webpage.

All departments and responsible parties should document their PPE plans and requirements, including approvals for any exceptions.

COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Risk Level Summary

Risk Level	Risk Description	Job Role / Activity	PPE***
Very High	Jobs with a high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19 during specific medical, post-mortem or laboratory procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthcare workers performing aerosol generating activities**** Morgue workers COVID-19 research personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respirator (N95, PAPR, or tight-fitting cartridge-style respirator) Face shield, chemical goggles, or safety glasses Disposable gown Disposable gloves
High	Jobs with a high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19. No aerosol generating procedures performed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthcare or laboratory personnel collecting/handling specimens from known or suspected COVID-19 positive patients**** Clinical Care (e.g., medical, dental, veterinary) and Support Medical Transport (ambulance/airlift operators) Mortuary Workers UW Police / Campus Safety and Security (close contact with known or suspected COVID-19 positive individuals) Maintenance in COVID-19 suspected Student Housing Custodial enhanced disinfection for a known or suspected COVID-19 location Working or traveling with multiple people in a small room, confined space, vehicle, or other small space for more than 10 minutes in a one-hour period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respirator (N95, PAPR, or tight-fitting cartridge-style respirator) Face shield, chemical goggles, or safety glasses Disposable gown Disposable gloves
Medium	Jobs that require frequent/close contact* with people who may be infected, but who are not known to be infected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health care personnel working with patients who are not suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 Food Service Medical Facility Screeners and Admit Housing Hall Desks Cashiers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical/procedure mask Face shield or splash barrier Disposable gloves
	In areas where there is ongoing community transmission, workers in this category may have contact with the general public (e.g., schools, high-population-density work environments, some high-volume retail settings).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation Shuttle Drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical/procedure mask or N95 (voluntary use) Face shield or chemical goggles (splash potential) Safety glasses with face shield Disposable gown (optional) Disposable gloves

Continued on next page.

<p>Lower Risk (Caution)</p>	<p>Jobs that do not require contact with people known to be or suspected to be infected.</p> <p>Workers in this category have minimal occupational contact with the public and other coworkers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Custodians • Maintenance (including FOMS) • Utility and Infrastructure • Security Guards • Laboratory Staff • Animal Care Staff • Mail Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical/procedure mask (rare cases where close contact is necessary) • Cloth face coverings are required** when working in areas where others are present and there is no potential exposure to hazardous materials (e.g., hazardous chemical use, work with biohazards). If work with hazardous materials is taking place, a medical/procedure mask and/or other appropriate PPE is worn.
------------------------------------	---	---	---

*Close contact means being within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for a cumulative total of at least 15 minutes during a 24 hour period (even if both persons are wearing face coverings), living with or caring for a person who has COVID-19, or having direct contact with infectious secretions (e.g., being coughed on, kissing, sharing utensils).

**Face coverings are required to be worn indoors where other people are present because keeping at least a 6-foot distance may not be possible. This includes common areas such as hallways, stairways, restrooms, and elevators. Face coverings are required to be worn outdoors when keeping a 6-foot distance from other people may not be possible. Follow the [EH&S Guidance on Facemask Use for Preventing the Spread of COVID-19](#).

*** There are additional industry-specific PPE requirements specified in the Governor’s [Healthy Washington – Roadmap to Recovery](#) plan.

****Follow UW medical facility procedures and policies regarding PPE