In-Home Repair Services

This section provides guidance for in-home repair services workers, such as those providing plumbing, electrical, or heating/air conditioning/ventilation installation and repair. This guidance supplements the general interim guidance for U.S. workers and employers of workers with potential occupational exposures to SARS-CoV-2.

Employers should remain alert of changing outbreak conditions, including as they relate to community spread of the virus and testing availability, and implement infection prevention measures accordingly. As states or regions satisfy the gating criteria to progress through the phases of the guidelines for Opening up America Again, employers will likely be able to adapt this guidance to better suit evolving risk levels and necessary control measures in their workplaces.

Employers should assess the hazards to which their workers may be exposed; evaluate the risk of exposure; and select, implement, and ensure workers use controls to prevent exposure. The table below provides examples of in-home repair services work tasks associated with the exposure risk levels in OSHA's occupational exposure risk pyramid, which may serve as a guide to employers in this sector.

Examples of in-home repair service work tasks associated with exposure risk levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower (caution)</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Most in-home repair services work tasks are associated with at least medium exposure risk.</td>
<td>• In areas with ongoing community spread of COVID-19, entering a home where no occupants report signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19.</td>
<td>• Entering the home of a person suspected of having or known to have COVID-19, including when an occupant of the home reports signs and symptoms consistent with COVID-19.</td>
<td>• Category not applicable for most anticipated work tasks. Note: Most in-home repair service work tasks are associated with no more than high exposure risk; see the other columns of this chart. Avoid tasks that would place workers in this risk category, including those that could re-aerosolize potentially infectious SARS-CoV-2 from environmental surfaces.</td>
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Note: For activities in the lower (caution) risk category, OSHA's Interim Guidance for Workers and Employers of Workers at Lower Risk of Exposure may be most appropriate.

Engineering Controls

In the in-home environment, utilize closed doors and walls as physical barriers to separate workers from any individuals under voluntary or required self-quarantine or isolation or who are experiencing signs and/or symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

Employers and workers may also be able to use plastic sheeting when workers need to occupy specific areas of a home for an extended period that are also occupied by such potentially infectious individuals.

Administrative Controls

Administrative controls should ensure and reflect that:

• Employers are aware of the local, state, and federal guidance regarding COVID-19, and have educated themselves and their employees on the spread of the disease in the geographic areas they serve.
Employers are screening calls at the point of scheduling to assess potential exposures and circumstances in the home, to the extent possible, before worker entry.

Below are sample questions for screening work assignments before sending a worker on a service call. Please be advised that some of these are sensitive and personal questions and should be prefaced with an explanation that they are only being asked to protect workers and minimize the spread of COVID-19.

### Screening Questions

1. **Is the work urgent or an emergency?**
   - **Recommended Action**: If "yes", proceed with a hazard assessment to determine how best to proceed while minimizing exposure for the worker. Other questions in this table (i.e., Question 3 onward) can help guide hazard assessment efforts.

2. **Is the work routine preventive maintenance or other work that can be postponed until a later time?**
   - **Recommended Action**: If "yes", the work is elective (i.e., not an emergency), consider postponing the work and **not entering the dwelling** until the COVID-19 pandemic ends.

3. **If the work is determined to be urgent or emergency work, ask if there are any individuals in the home under either voluntary or required self-quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19?**
   - **Recommended Action**: Closely follow recommended infection prevention measures in the sections on Engineering Controls, Administrative Controls, Safe Work Practices, and PPE.

4. **If the work is determined to be urgent or emergency work, ask if there are any individuals in the house suffering flu-like symptoms? If so, will they be directly interacting with the service representative?**
   - **Recommended Action**: Closely follow recommended infection prevention measures in the sections on Engineering Controls, Administrative Controls, Safe Work Practices, and PPE.

5. **Following routine practice, ask for the address for the service call. Consider whether the home is located in an area where there is ongoing community transmission of COVID-19.**
   - **Recommended Action**: Employers may consider advising service workers to discontinue service if the home is located in an area where there is ongoing community transmission of COVID-19 and if the worker or employer is concerned about health and safety on the job.

Employers should train in-home service workers on:

- The signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and an explanation of how the disease is spread.
- All policies and procedures that are applicable to the employee's duties. It is helpful to provide employees with a written copy of those standard operating procedures (SOPs).
- Information on appropriate social distancing and personal hygiene practices, including:
  - Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from customers and other individuals, whenever possible.
  - Appropriate cleaning practices (i.e., wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or, if not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol; sanitize all surfaces workers will touch).
  - The proper way to cover coughs and sneezes in accordance with CDC recommendations (i.e., sneezing or coughing into a disposable tissue or rag, or into the elbow crease).
  - Alternatives to shaking hands upon entry, and the importance of workers not touching their own faces (mouth, nose, eyes).
  - The types, proper use, limitations, location, handling, decontamination, removal, and disposal of any PPE being used.

Employers should also implement SOPs and employee training to ensure that, before entry into home environments, workers:

- Request that any individuals under voluntary or required self-quarantine or isolation or who are experiencing signs and/or symptoms of COVID-19 remain physically separated from the worker (e.g., request that the sick person go into a different room, level of the home, or outside if weather and applicable emergency orders permit), if possible, and communicate remotely with the worker (e.g., by cell phone, through internet-based payments and electronic signature or confirmation that work was completed).
- Ask individuals in the home to cover coughs and sneezes.
- Employers may consider advising service workers to discontinue the service if the quarantined/isolated individual(s) do not comply with the above requests (e.g., not remaining at least 6 feet away, not covering their coughs and sneezes).
- Request that shared spaces in the home have good air flow, such as by turning on an air conditioner or opening windows, weather permitting, consistent with CDC recommended precautions for people in households.

### Safe Work Practices

It is recommended, in all cases, that employers equip workers with gloves and provide disinfectants and sanitizers that workers can use to wipe surfaces or equipment that they touch, including any shared pens or styluses.

As mentioned above, workers should avoid shaking hands with occupants of homes upon arrival or entry.

Workers should avoid touching their faces, including their eyes, noses, and mouths, particularly until after they have thoroughly washed their hands upon completing work and/or removing PPE.

If permitted under employer policies, stop work and leave unsafe work environments, especially if you cannot maintain a safe distance from individuals in the home who are under voluntary or required self-quarantine or isolation, or who are experiencing signs and/or symptoms of COVID-19.

Encourage payment by electronic means or over the phone rather than handling credit cards, debit cards, or cash.
Personal Protective Equipment

Most in-home services workers are unlikely to need PPE beyond what they use to protect themselves during routine job tasks. However, employers should consider whether their hazard and risk assessments warrant the use of more protective PPE ensembles.

Make every effort to protect workers through measures other than PPE.

When other control measures are not sufficient to protect workers, equip those who must enter potentially hazardous homes with adequate supplies of appropriate PPE. PPE ensembles may include some combination of gloves, eye protection, and/or face shields.

In limited circumstances, including situations involving close (e.g., within 6 feet) contact with an affected individual, respiratory protection may be needed and provided by the employer following the criteria below.

- When respiratory hazards exist, employers must comply with OSHA’s Respiratory Protection standard (29 CFR 1910.134). OSHA is providing enforcement flexibility under the standard, including through enforcement memoranda.
- When disposable respirators are used, employers must comply with the requirements of OSHA’s Respiratory Protection standard (29 CFR 1910.134) including the requirement to train workers to don respirators before entry and to remove and properly dispose of respirators upon exit.

Please see 29 CFR 1910.132(d)(1) and 1910.134(d)(1)(iii) for information about OSHA’s hazard assessment/evaluation requirements for PPE and respiratory protection, respectively.

Flexible around OSHA’s PPE Requirements and Prioritization of PPE during COVID-19

Some employers may experience shortages of PPE, including face shields and respirators, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

See information on PPE flexibilities and prioritization in the Personal Protective Equipment Flexibilities section within the Interim Guidance for U.S. Workers and Employers of Workers with Potential Occupational Exposures to SARS-CoV-2, above.