

### COVID-19 Precautions for Security Service Firms

The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has presented new challenges to the security services industry. Here are some issues to consider:

- Avoid exposure to potentially infected individuals and respiratory droplets as much as possible. This advice is the same as for the general public – stay at least 6 feet away from others (social distancing), wash hands frequently for 20 seconds, avoid touching the face, and disinfect frequently touched surfaces. Check the CDC website for updated, detailed guidance.
- Develop alternate work procedures and protective measures. Although personal protective equipment (PPE) may be part of an organization’s protection program, it does have limitations and may be subject to shortages. Some tasks may still require being within 6 feet of other people, but other tasks might be able to be redesigned. Ideas might include:
  - Mark out 6 foot distances on the floor to remind people in queues to stay back from the security officer and each other.
  - Install Plexiglas barriers in front of security stations.
  - Check IDs without taking them from the individual or touching the card.
  - Move security officers 6 feet from driver’s license scanners, metal detectors, badge cameras, etc.
  - Provide security equipment that can be operated with minimal interaction such as walk through metal detectors vs handheld wands, self-service driver’s license scanners, self service badge cameras and badge printers.
  - Consider the applicability of guidelines developed for related professions:
    - OSHA guidance for border protection workers:  
<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html#border>
    - CDC guidance for law enforcement personnel:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-law-enforcement.html>





- Consider how the services provided to clients may have changed due to COVID-19, or whether the organization may have added new clients with needs you may not be as familiar with. Consider how these changes might increase your employees' potential exposure to COVID-19 and what new protective measures might be required.

For instance, clients may ask you to screen their employees and visitors for fever before allowing them to enter their facilities. Have you trained your employees on how to properly operate no contact infrared thermometers? Are the thermometers FDA-approved?

Clients with populations that are older or otherwise more susceptible to COVID-19 – such as hospitals, nursing homes or long term care facilities – may require special procedures. Employees may need to be trained/ refreshed on conflict de-escalation techniques. Family members attempting to visit patients may need to be turned away. High traffic clients such as supermarkets may have difficulty enforcing social distancing or may experience stock shortages which may lead to conflicts with customers.

Clients with unsheltered homeless populations near their facilities may require special procedures. The CDC recommends not dispersing individuals from encampments, which may further spread COVID-19. Further guidance can be found via the CDC website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/unsheltered-homelessness.html>

- Ensure employees are trained in the changes to work procedures and protective measures your company implements in response to COVID-19. Ensure new employees who may be hired for the expanded security needs of clients are properly trained, especially employees without prior security experience.
- Ensure access for employees to clean restrooms. This may be a challenge even under normal circumstances. Security officers in remote locations may need to be provided with disinfecting products to ensure restrooms are sanitary. If soap and running water are not available, employees should be provided with hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content.
- Check in frequently with security officers in remote locations by cell phone, radio and/or supervisor rounds. Ensure they are following the protective measures outlined in this document and/ or your organization's protection program.



- Perform (or update) your PPE Hazard Assessment. This is an existing OSHA requirement for all types of companies, but you may need to update your assessment to address COVID-19. Different tasks may require different protection, for instance patrolling a remote area versus screening visitors versus detaining a suspect. The work environment may also affect the opportunity for social distancing, such as performing walking patrols in densely populated areas. See the above links which include PPE guidance for related professions.
- Provide gloves and safety goggles (or a face shield) for security officers who may need to make direct contact with individuals such as when detaining suspects. Non-sterile medical exam gloves made from nitrile, natural rubber (latex) or polychloroprene are appropriate for COVID-19 per the CDC. Employees with latex allergy will not be able to wear latex gloves. If employees are armed, they should ensure the fit and feel of the gloves do not interfere with them handling or discharging their firearm.

Employees must understand that wearing gloves should not replace washing hands frequently. The outer surface of the gloves will become contaminated, so avoid touching the face. When removing the gloves, avoid touching skin as much as possible and then immediately wash hands.

- Develop respiratory protection procedures. Some considerations include:
  - OSHA requires respiratory protection to be addressed in the PPE Hazard Assessment described above. Recommendations for when respiratory protection should be worn for COVID-19, and the type of protection that should be worn, have been an evolving topic. The changing understanding of how COVID-19 is transmitted and the shortages of different types of masks have affected these recommendations.
  - Under normal circumstances, only NIOSH-approved respirators with at least an N95 rating would be recommended for protection against COVID-19. Other types of masks may provide limited protection against COVID-19, but they have not been tested or approved for this purpose. Due to shortages of N95 respirators, you should check for updated CDC guidance on when other types of masks may be used in certain emergency situations. This could include FDA-approved surgical masks (sometimes called “face masks”), non-approved masks (sometimes called “comfort masks” or “nuisance dust masks”), and even homemade cloth masks.
  - As of the date of publication, public health officials have prioritized the limited supply of masks for: 1) healthcare workers, 2) those infected with COVID-19 and 3) those caring for COVID-19 patients in non-healthcare settings. Check frequently for updated guidance from the CDC and



other reputable sources on the availability and prioritization of respiratory protection.

- OSHA requires employees who must wear respirators to be included in a Respiratory Protection Program. This includes elements such as preplacement and annual training; respirator fit testing and medical examinations. As of this date, OSHA has relaxed only some minor elements of their respiratory protection requirements due to COVID-19. Check frequently for updated guidance from OSHA. Their 4/3/20 Enforcement Guidance on this topic can be found at the osha.gov link:

<https://www.osha.gov/memos/2020-04-03/enforcement-guidance-respiratory-protection-and-n95-shortage-due-coronavirus>

- If an employee has been exposed to an individual they believe has COVID-19, they should call a healthcare provider for guidance. Calling a healthcare provider rather than going to their office or to the emergency room will help prevent spreading the virus. If the symptoms are life-threatening, call 911.

If an individual at a client's facility is suspected of having COVID-19, they should call their healthcare provider for guidance. If they feel the symptoms are life-threatening, they should call 911.

The guidance from public health officials on COVID-19 is evolving quickly as more is learned about how the virus spreads, and as the availability of resources changes. Frequently check for updates from the CDC, OSHA and other reputable organizations:

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### Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/index.html>

Additional guidance for security service firms on COVID-19 issues is available from ASIS International and the Security Industry Association:

<https://www.asisonline.org/publications--resources/security-topics/disease-outbreak-security-resources/>

<https://www.securityindustry.org/coronavirus-resources/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

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