



The CHESS Tournament

Safety News and Views you can use.

Complete Health, Environmental & Safety Services, Inc.

Complete Health Environmental & Safety Services, Inc. Newsletter

December 2, 2020

In This Issue

[Environmental
Updates - AQ](#)

[Winter's Coming](#)

[Be a Smart Salter](#)

[Happy Holidays](#)

Quick Links

[Visit our website!](#)

[About Us](#)
[Read our blog](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

COVID Updates

While some companies have, unfortunately, become very adept at handling issues when employees test positive for COVID-19, for others this is still a new experience.

Remember the definition of close contact: less than 6 feet apart and more than 15 minutes of contact within a 24-hour time period.

Updates to quarantine guidelines

On December 2, the CDC updated their quarantine guidelines. The new guidelines are consistent with what the Minnesota Department of Health recommends for employees who work for businesses in the critical infrastructure:

- Employees should still quarantine for 14 days, if possible.
- Quarantine can end after Day 10 without testing and if no symptoms have been reported. Testing is widely available in Minnesota, so employees should still get tested. Quarantine can end after seven days if there are no symptoms and a negative test. The test should be done within 48 hours of the final day of quarantine (so, on day 5). Employees should continue to monitor for symptoms.

If you have an employee who lives with someone who is positive:

Tell employees that someone is quarantining because of a close contact. People may know who it is, but don't reveal names unless the person gives you the okay to do so.

Emphasize the need to wear masks (covering the mouth and nose!) while at work.

Emphasize the need to physically distance.

Emphasize the need to keep track of their physical well-being and to stay home if they develop any symptoms.

Remind everyone that people are best able to spread the disease before symptoms develop, which is why masks and distance are so important.

What if an employee does not want to wear a mask at work?

That becomes a discipline or enforcement issue, treated like refusing to do any other part of the job.

The first step is to try to determine if there's a good reason why they refuse to wear masks. If it's because it is infringing on their rights, that's not an acceptable excuse. If it is a comfort issue or safety glasses fog up, try different masks (or look up many of the online suggestions to prevent fogging). If it is because masks are too difficult to breathe through, try different masks.

If the employee becomes sick or infects someone else at work, that second case is considered work-related and you will be required to file a first report of injury for it - you need to file for each case that seems due to workplace transmission.

What it comes down to: if employees won't wear masks, they should not be at work.

Can someone with a beard or mustache wear a mask?

Yes. Even if you're hairy-faced, the face covering will stop most of those respiratory droplets that can make others sick. But the mask won't do a good job of keeping you safe from others. For that, you need a mask that fits tightly to your face.

The story is different if you're wearing a respirator to protect yourself. The CDC has a [simple infographic](#) on facial hairstyles and filtering facepiece respirators (N95s). If facial hair interferes with the mask sitting directly on the skin, the mask will not be effective at protecting you.

Who should be tested?

As of November 25, Minnesota has updated their recommendations on who should get a COVID19 test:

1. Anyone with symptoms should get a test immediately. Symptoms include: loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath, fever, chills, headache, muscle pain, or sore throat.
2. Anyone who has been exposed to someone who is positive should be tested five days after that exposure.
3. Anyone who is still working at places that remained open. Minnesota recommends that everyone going into work be tested at least once before December 18. Even better, get tested now and then be tested again at the end of four weeks. Why? According to a recent study in *The Lancet Microbe*, you are most likely to transmit the disease from two days before symptoms appear to five days after. If we can catch and trace positive cases in December, we increase our ability to stop the virus.

To find a free testing location, go to:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html>. You can even have a saliva test sent to your home.

You can also download the Minnesota COVID notification app, which will let you know if you have had contact with someone who tested positive. More information is available here:

<https://mn.gov/governor/news/#/detail/appId/1/id/455263>

What if an employee asks to take a voluntary lay-off due to COVID?

It's really up to you as an employer, but some considerations:

a) Is the employee high risk or living with people at high risk? If so, it's good will to allow this and a way to increase the chances of this employee

being able to return to work.

b) Is there any work that the employee could do from home? If the employee works in a position other than office-based, that's unlikely.

c) How short-staffed will you be without this employee?

d) If the employee expects to collect unemployment, not take vacation/sick leave, there are considerations for you, as the employer, and for the employee. According to the Governor's Executive Order 20-05, [unemployment benefits paid as a result of COVID](#) will not be considered when your unemployment tax rate is calculated for 2021. You might get a notice that your account will be charged for unemployment benefits paid, but the state unemployment office states that they'll review the account and remove those charges without you having to do anything.

The employee may not be eligible for unemployment benefits if it's a voluntary unpaid leave of absence. For more information, look at <https://www.uimn.org/employers/employer-account/news-updates/covid-19.jsp>

Environmental Updates: air quality reminder

If your air quality permit was voided because you qualify as insignificant or conditionally exempt, you still have to keep a record of your VOC-containing materials purchases in the past year. Contact your supplier in early January to get that. You need to verify that you are below the amounts that require a permit. If you used less than 2000 gallons of VOC-containing materials and still have a permit, contact us and we can advise you on whether you can give up your permit.

Winter's Coming

When I originally wrote this, we already had record snowfall for October. November may have been mild and dry, but that snowy October is a warning to remind employees about winter hazards:

- Walking on ice? Walk like a penguin.
- Slippery? Consider wearing snow and ice cleats.
- Wear shoes and clothes appropriate for the weather. You can always change once indoors.
- Get your winter vehicle tuned up (we recommend your independent automotive repair shop). If you're no longer driving miles to work, your car may be sitting for long periods. Get it checked to ensure it is working properly.
- Prepare for being stranded. Keep your gas tank full, cell phone charged, and keep a blanket in the car.
- Working from home? Keep moving

With the cold weather and working from home, it is important to get up and move. Set an alarm to remind yourself to do some quick stretches once an hour. Remember to get up from your desk frequently.

Be a Smart Salter

Some salt is necessary for safe roads, driveways and sidewalks. However, salt (chloride) runs off into our local lakes and rivers. Salt levels have been rising in many of these waters around the metro, affecting fish and plant life. It only takes one teaspoon of salt to permanently pollute five gallons of water.

Protect our waters while you make sure your sidewalks are safe:

- **Shovel first.** The more snow and ice you manually remove, the less salt you will have to use and the more effective it will be.
- **Use less salt.** One 12-ounce cup of salt is enough to cover 10 sidewalk squares. Leave about three inches between salt granules.
- **15 degrees is too cold for dry salt to work.** If it's that cold, use a different product if you must use anything.

- **Sweep up** any excess salt and reuse it.
- **Attend training to be Smart Salter certified.**

Learn how to save money, keep your customers safe and protect water resources.

[Find free training by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.](#)

From *Dakota County E-News*

Happy Holidays

With no snow on the ground, it is hard to believe it is December already. We are busy helping our maintenance clients in Hennepin County with their annual reporting, and will be scheduling all the other metro area reporting soon.

We hope the newsletters this year have been helpful. We will continue to send newsletters and updates on COVID-19, providing guidance and sharing questions that we are asked (we figure if one person has a question, it probably applies to others as well).

This has been a challenging year for everyone; may 2021 bring a return to business and life as we used to know it (even though that likely will not occur until late 2021). We hope that you, your families and all your staff have a safe, distanced holiday season. It will definitely wrap up the year differently from any other year. We appreciate our clients and wish you all health and prosperity.