

**APPENDIX A: Washington State Coronavirus Hazard  
Considerations for Employers (Except COVID-19 Care in  
Hospitals and Clinics)  
Face Coverings, Masks, and Respirator Choices  
September 21, 2021**

Vaccination Status	Transmission Risk Category		
	Low	Medium	High
<b>Work characteristics</b>	Working inside* with other people or a gathering of 500 or more people outdoors, but physical distancing is maintained between unvaccinated individuals and is not considered a medium or high transmission risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical distancing between unvaccinated people is not maintained</li> <li>Work in the presence of COVID-19 quarantined or isolated people, with physical distancing</li> <li>Providing healthcare to individuals not known or suspected to have COVID-19</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close proximity between breathing zones (directly breathing exhaled air).</li> <li>High exertion activities or respiration (&lt;6 foot distancing)</li> <li>Work in the vicinity of aerosol generating procedures</li> <li>Providing care to an individual known or suspected to have COVID-19</li> </ul>
<b>Anyone Working in public areas or, Unvaccinated or vaccination status unknown</b>	Cloth face coverings required by order**	Medical procedure mask, KN95, or voluntary use respirator	N95 filtering facepiece respirator or more protective respirator
<b>Verified fully vaccinated and working in non-public areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employer not required to enforce mask use. Workers may choose to wear PPE. Employer not required to enforce PPE use.</li> <li>Only applies when no customers, students, volunteers, visitors, or other non-employees are present.</li> </ul>		Employer must assess exposures and may consider vaccination status in determining respiratory protection needs per Chapter 296-842 WAC.

\* Inside should be considered broadly to mean not outside. Outside environments have a free flow of air that limits viral transmission. Situations that are under cover or partially surrounded by walls are not necessarily outside or inside. Generally, these situations should be considered inside unless it can be shown that there is good flow of air that maintains an outside air environment.

\*\* The Secretary of Health's order requiring public masking may be referred to for specific requirements and exceptions:  
[https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Secretary\\_of\\_Health\\_Order\\_20-03\\_Statewide\\_Face\\_Coverings.pdf](https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Secretary_of_Health_Order_20-03_Statewide_Face_Coverings.pdf)

## **Exposure Assessment for Respirator Protection Selection:**

Identifying medium and high-risk exposures for unvaccinated workers and high risk exposures for fully vaccinated workers the following factors may be considered:

- Are there individuals in the workspace suspected or known to have COVID-19?
- Fully vaccinated status of workers and others around them.
- Mask use of the other people.
- Close proximity (within 6 feet) for an extended period of time on a frequent or infrequent basis.
- Close by (e.g., within 3 feet) with no option to move safely away or stay behind a physical barrier, particularly when in face-to-face positioning.
- Individuals who need to breathe frequently and/or deeply due to physically strenuous work or other activity that requires deep breathing.
- Aerosol-generating medical procedures that may create fine infectious particles or droplets.
- In an enclosed or confined space.
- In a poorly ventilated area:
  - Indoor spaces are enclosed by walls and ceilings with minimal ventilation are of greatest concern
  - Air flow directly from one person to another can carry respiratory droplets far more than 6 feet
  - Even with good ventilation, air flow indoors does not replace breathing air more than a few times an hour
  - Outdoor spaces have no structures or other objects that restrict air flow and are not a concern unless other factors are combined, even a small breeze will change out the air around people a few times per minute
  - Some spaces, such as breezeways, covered loading docks, covered porches, and so forth are not considered indoors or outdoors. Employers should consider the extent that air flow is constricted in assessing exposures in these spaces.

Generally, if there is a single factor such as very close proximity (3 feet) or elevated breathing, an unvaccinated worker will need a respirator, but protection from vaccination might be considered sufficient to reduce the hazard. If there are two or more factors, involved there is concern that a very high exposure occurs which could break through the protection of vaccination. Respirators are likely needed, regardless of vaccination status, in situations where aerosol generating procedures are conducted, providing face-to-face physical assistance to another individual, or working directly with individuals who are known or suspected to have COVID-19.

Further examples of exposure assessment include, protective masks may not be necessary for fully vaccinated employees riding with fully vaccinated coworkers to a jobsite a couple of hours away; but a respirator may be required for unvaccinated workers in this situation. Even fully-vaccinated employees working in some situations may need respiratory protection; such as, around an unvaccinated coworker performing heavy manual labor inside a confined space with poor ventilation should be considered for respiratory protection due to the particularly high level of exposure that could occur.

## **Other PPE:**

Employers should consider other personal protective equipment when assessing mask requirements. Gloves, gowns, and face shields may be appropriate for limiting exposure to COVID-19.