

# Summary of WA DOH COVID-19 Guidance for Temporary Worker Housing

The [COVID-19 emergency rule for temporary worker housing](#) (TWH) expired on January 14, 2023. The Washington State Department of Health (WA DOH) recognizes a need for continued guidance. WA DOH is in the process of updating [Guidance for Non-Healthcare Businesses and Organizations during COVID-19](#) to continue to provide COVID-19 prevention and response recommendations for temporary worker housing facilities.

In the meantime, this guidance summary describes existing COVID-19 guidance for TWH operators. Local health officers may require more strict disease control measures or more stringent guidance to control the spread of COVID-19 ([RCW 70.05.070](#) and [WAC 246-100-036](#)). The following practices are recommendations unless noted as a requirement.

- **Vaccination:** Vaccination is an important tool to prevent COVID-19 infection and severe disease. Employers should support vaccination of their workers and facilitate their workers being [up to date](#) on COVID-19 vaccinations.
- **Masks:**
  - Everyone two years of age or older should wear a mask in shared living areas of TWH (excluding bedrooms) and on employer-provided transportation when [CDC COVID-19 community level](#) is medium or high.
  - TWH operators may require masking at their facilities. Indoor mask use is strongly recommended when there is an outbreak in TWH, regardless of CDC COVID-19 community level.
  - Employers and businesses should continue to support employees with using masks and other work practices that reduce exposure. Employees have a right to use masks, respirators, and other personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect themselves.
  - See WA DOH [COVID-19 Mask Guidance](#) for further details.
- **Testing:** Washington Administrative Code ([WAC 246-101](#)) requires facilities conducting COVID-19 tests to report results to public health. This includes employers performing COVID-19 point-of-care testing or self-tests under a Medical Test Site/CLIA license. More information about reporting can be found on [Reporting COVID-19 Test Results for Point-of-Care Testing Facilities](#). More information about Medical Test Site/CLIA licenses can be found [here](#).
- **Ill occupant:**
  - If a person has [COVID-19 symptoms](#) in TWH, immediately shut down the area used by the person to keep others away and follow [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#). The ill occupant should immediately wear a well-fitting mask (if not already doing so), notify their designated COVID-19 point of contact in the TWH, isolate, and get tested for COVID-19.
  - People in TWH should isolate for 10 days after their symptoms first appear (or after their positive COVID-19 test date if they don't have symptoms); they may leave isolation after 10 days if they don't have a fever and their symptoms are improving. The occupant should be

isolated in a space with fully private sleeping quarters and a bathroom so they do not interact with others. Operators should provide occupants in isolation with food, water, access to medical care, and access to a working telephone to summon emergency care.

- TWH operators should provide occupants with [What to do if you test positive for COVID-19](#). The section “If you are staying or working in any of these congregate settings” provides TWH-specific recommendations.
- If someone in TWH is contagious with COVID-19, the operator should identify all close contacts in the facility in order to provide guidance ([What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19](#)) and notify all employees and the employers of subcontracted employees of potential exposure to COVID-19.
  - The definition of a close contact can be found in [What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19](#) in the section “How was I exposed to COVID-19?”.
- TWH operators are required to report to the local health officer the name and address of any individual in the housing known or suspected of having a notifiable condition, including COVID-19 ([WAC 296-833-60010](#)).
- Everyone is required to cooperate with public health authorities in the investigation of cases, suspected cases, outbreaks, and suspected outbreaks ([WAC 246-101-425](#)). This includes providing public health authorities with information about workers with COVID-19 if requested.
- **Occupants exposed to COVID-19:**
  - Occupants should follow the recommendations in [What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19](#). In summary:
    - Occupants exposed to COVID-19 should get tested for COVID-19 3-5 days after their last exposure.
    - Occupants exposed to COVID-19 should take the following steps for 10 days after their last exposure:
      - Wear a [high-quality mask or respirator](#) around others at home and in public. They should continue to wear a mask even if they test negative for COVID-19.
      - Avoid being around people at [high risk of severe disease](#), and do not go to high-risk settings (e.g., healthcare facilities).
      - Watch for [symptoms of COVID-19](#).
  - Quarantine is no longer a standard recommendation in TWH. However, quarantine may be considered in TWH in the following circumstances:
    - Outbreak control, especially if other prevention and response measures have not been successful at halting transmission
    - If other prevention measures are not in place for people exposed to COVID-19, such as testing and masking.

Facilities may consult with their local health jurisdiction about whether quarantine or a quarantine alternative would be appropriate in a situation, and facilities should follow any local health jurisdiction guidance. It is possible local health jurisdictions will require quarantine in circumstances where quarantine may be considered.