

Human Resource Policy Manual (HRPM) Policy Bulletin #126

Returning to the Workplace After Identifying a Case of COVID-19 and Close Contacts

This policy bulletin applies to: (1) non-bargaining unit employees/positions (2) bargaining unit employees/positions, except where the applicable collective bargaining agreement contains conflicting provisions or the subject has not been negotiated.

Policy bulletin effective date: 09/01/2022. This policy bulletin will remain in effect until canceled by the Office of Human Resource Management.

Background information: This version replaces and renames Policy Bulletin #126, Returning to the Workplace After a Confirmed, Presumed, or Suspected Case of COVID-19, dated March 28, 2022, to Policy Bulletin #126, Returning to the Workplace After Identifying a Case of COVID-19 and Close Contacts. Revisions made were to align with directives issued by the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force (SFWTF) on August 31, 2022, based on the recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated guidance:

- (1) Updated title;
- (2) Revised paragraph 1 for clarification;
- (3) Updated definitions in paragraph 3 (Close Contact (formerly Suspected COVID-19), Days of Exposure, Isolation, Molecular Test, Quarantine, and Rapid Antigen Test);
- (4) Removed definition of Fully Vaccinated in paragraph 3;
- (5) Updated paragraph 5 to apply specifically to employees required to maintain a medical clearance;
- (6) Updated paragraph 5 to include Office of Aerospace Medicine determination of infection category (mild, moderate, or severe);
- (7) Added reference to the COVID-19 Positive Acknowledgement Form in paragraph 5a;
- (8) Clarified Presumed COVID-19 in subparagraph 5b;
- (9) Incorporated latest SFWTF and CDC guidance in subparagraph 5c Close Contact (Suspected COVID-19).
- (10) Added references to the Close Contact Notification Form in subparagraph 5c;
- (11) Included a note in paragraph 6 to apply to Flight Standards Aviation Safety Inspectors and Agency Pilots; and

Use this policy bulletin in conjunction with: [Policy Bulletin #120, Reducing Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 when Entering any Facility](#); [FAA's COVID-19 Daily Wellness Check](#); [Policy Bulletin #132, COVID-19 Testing Program](#); [Close Contact Acknowledgement Form](#); and [COVID-19 Positive Acknowledgement Form](#).

1. Purpose

Human Resource Policy Manual (HRPM)
Policy Bulletin #126, Returning to the Workplace After Identifying a Case of COVID-19 and Close Contacts

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1. **Purpose.** This policy bulletin implements the requirements for returning an employee to the workplace (i.e., facility) after identifying a case of COVID-19 and their close contacts.

2. **Scope.** This policy bulletin applies to all FAA employees required to enter/work in any facility.

3. **Definitions.**

a. **Close Contact (Suspected COVID-19).** Close contact is being within six (6) feet of a COVID-19 positive individual for 15 cumulative minutes or more in a 24-hour period during the 48 hours prior to the date of positive test or symptom onset through the last day exposed while infectious, whichever is earlier. This can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or working with a COVID-19 positive individual. An individual with a close contact is considered to have Suspected COVID-19.

b. **Days of Exposure.** For purposes of calculating the ten (10) full days after exposure, day zero (0) is the day of their last known exposure to an individual with COVID-19 and day one (1) is the first full day after their last known exposure.

c. **Facility.** Any FAA facility, third-party facility, other Federal facility, supplier, or any other location where an employee performs work such as site audits, site inspections, investigations, and property management.

d. **Isolation.** A process to separate individuals with confirmed or presumed COVID-19 from those without COVID-19. Individuals in isolation should stay home until they meet CDC criteria for release from isolation.

e. **Molecular Test (RT-PCR or NAAT).** A type of test that detects the genetic material of the virus itself. (A molecular test is more accurate than a rapid antigen test for identifying disease, but may return a positive result for up to ninety (90) days following infection.)

f. **Rapid Antigen Test (Home Test).** A type of test that detects specific proteins on the surface of the virus.

4. **General Requirement.** Prior to returning to the workplace after a confirmed or presumed case of COVID-19, the employee must notify their manager, provide the applicable documentation to the manager, and meet the other requirements specified in this policy bulletin.

5. **Employees Required to Maintain Medical Clearance Under FAA Order 3930.3C (Air Traffic Control Specialists) and Other Air Traffic Organization (ATO) Employees Working in Operational Areas (Technical Operations and ATO Management).** The Office of Aerospace Medicine (AAM), i.e. the [Regional Flight Surgeon's Office](#), will determine COVID-19 infection category (mild, moderate, or severe) and advise when an ATO operational employee may return to the facility after a confirmed positive test for COVID-19, provided the employee has met CDC criteria for release from isolation. Managers must inform their employees of the following conditions specific to COVID-19:

a. **Confirmed COVID-19 positive.** Managers will provide employees with the [COVID-19 Positive Acknowledgement Form](#), as applicable.

- (1)** An asymptomatic employee with a confirmed positive test for COVID-19 may return to the workplace on or after five (5) full days after the positive test if they have developed no symptoms. In addition:
 - (a)** Wear a high-quality tight-fitting mask such as a surgical procedure mask at all times when indoors or around others until day ten (10) after positive test or symptoms first appeared (whichever is earliest);.
 - (b)** An asymptomatic employee who tested positive using a rapid antigen test and subsequently tested negative with a molecular test may return to the workplace, if they are well enough to work.
 - (c)** Employees who become symptomatic are advised to consult with their personal healthcare provider.

- (2)** An employee with a confirmed positive test for COVID-19 with mild symptoms may return to the workplace under the following conditions:
 - (a)** At least 24 hours have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improving other symptoms. Note, loss of taste/smell and cough may persist for several weeks; and
 - (b)** At least five (5) full days have passed since the initial positive test or symptoms first appeared (whichever is earliest); and
 - (c)** Employees returning to the work site must:
 - I.** Wear a high-quality tight-fitting mask such as a surgical procedure mask at all times when indoors or around others until day ten (10) after positive test or symptoms first appeared (whichever is earliest);.
 - II.** Eat separately from others; and
 - III.** Avoid being around people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19.
 - (d)** Employees with a prior confirmed COVID-19 infection within the previous ninety (90) days, who retest positive without symptoms, or develop rebound symptoms, should be referred to their personal healthcare provider. The five (5)-day restrictions restart with day zero (0).

- (3)** An employee with a confirmed positive test for COVID-19 with moderate symptoms (experienced shortness of breath or difficulty breathing) may return to work when the following criteria have been met:
 - (a)** At least 24 hours have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improving other symptoms. Note, loss of taste/smell and cough may persist for several weeks; and
 - (b)** At least ten (10) full days have passed since the positive test or symptoms first appeared (whichever is earliest); and
 - (c)** Employees with a prior confirmed COVID-19 infection within the previous ninety (90) days, who retest positive without symptoms, or who develop rebound symptoms, should be referred to their personal healthcare provider. The ten (10)-day restriction restarts with day zero (0).

- (4) An employee with a confirmed positive test for COVID-19 with severe symptoms (hospitalized) may return to work when the following criteria have been met:
 - (a) At least 24 hours have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improving other symptoms. Note, loss of taste/smell and cough may persist for several weeks; and
 - (b) At least ten (10) days have passed since the positive test or symptoms first appeared (whichever is earliest); and
 - (c) No limitations from AAM following review of hospitalization documents and a release from the personal healthcare providers.
 - (d) Employees with a prior confirmed COVID-19 infection within the previous ninety (90) days, who retest positive without symptoms, or who develop rebound symptoms, should be referred to their personal healthcare provider. The ten (10)-day restriction restarts with day zero (0).

b. Presumed COVID-19 positive. An employee exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 who has not had a confirmed positive test is presumed COVID-19 positive (unless their personal healthcare provider has made a different diagnosis).

- (1) An employee exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., respiratory illness with fever, cough, or shortness of breath) evaluated/treated by a medical professional who is directed to self-isolate at home is eligible to return to the workplace under the following conditions:

Note: An employee not evaluated, treated and/or tested is highly encouraged to seek medical attention upon first learning of their illness. Criteria for return to the workplace are the same.

- (a) At least 24 hours have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improving other symptoms. Note, loss of taste/smell and cough may persist for several weeks; and
 - (b) At least ten (10) days have passed since symptoms first appeared; and
 - (c) If hospitalized, provides documentation through their manager from their personal healthcare provider regarding test results and clinical course with no further limitations; and
- (2) A presumed COVID-19 positive employee who takes a COVID-19 test (rapid antigen or molecular) must refer to paragraph 5a if the test is positive. If the test is negative, they may return to the workplace, providing they are well enough to work.

c. Close Contact with a confirmed COVID-19 positive individual (Suspected COVID-19).

Managers will determine which employees meet the close contact criteria as defined in paragraph 3a and provide the employee with a [Close Contact Acknowledgement Form](#). Suspected COVID-19 individuals are required to:

- (1) Wear a high-quality tight-fitting mask such as a surgical procedure mask at all times when indoors or around others until day ten (10) from their most recent close contact exposure;
- (2) Continue to report to their FAA facility unless they develop symptoms regardless of vaccination status;
- (3) Test for COVID-19 on or after five (5) full days after exposure or the first duty day, if return is within ten (10) days after exposure. COVID-19 test is not required if employee had recovered

from COVID-19 in the preceding 30 days. Refer to [Policy Bulletin #132, COVID-19 Testing Program](#); and

- (4) Avoid individuals with increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness by avoiding crowding and maintaining social distancing.
- (5) Exceptions are:
 - (a) If symptoms of COVID-19 develop, follow presumed COVID-19 guidelines, refer to paragraph 5b;
 - (b) If employee receives a positive COVID-19 test, follow confirmed positive COVID-19 guidelines, refer to paragraph 5a; or
 - (c) If they have been in close contact with someone else testing positive for COVID-19; restart timeline for ten (10) days of high-quality tight-fitting mask and any COVID-19 testing that OPM mandates.

Note: When required as outlined above, employees must wear high-quality tight-fitting masks or may voluntarily choose to wear respirators following [CDC mask guidelines](#). Managers will provide employees with a [Close Contact Acknowledgement Form](#).

6. Employees Not Subject to Medical Standards. The same general procedures outlined for employees subject to medical standards apply (refer to paragraph 5); however, there is no requirement for review by AAM or to provide documentation describing the course of their illness and actions or medications taken.

Note 1: Air Traffic Organization managers must follow guidance from AAM ([Regional Flight Surgeon](#)) to return an operational employee to the workplace who is either confirmed or presumed COVID-19 positive. Other Lines of Business and Staff Offices are not required to; however, they may consult with the [Regional Flight Surgeon](#) as appropriate.

Note 2: Managers of Flight Standards Aviation Safety Inspectors and Agency Pilots required to maintain an Airman Medical Certificate are not required to (but may consult with) the [Regional Flight Surgeon](#) as appropriate. Employees required to maintain an Airman Medical Certificate are also subject to FAA Airman Certification policy in [Aviation Medical Examiner Guide](#) and [14 CFR 61.53](#).

7. Privacy Act and Confidentiality. The FAA will comply with the requirements of the [Privacy Act](#), with respect to medical information the FAA maintains. Medical information the FAA maintains pertaining to COVID-19 testing is covered by System of Records Notice [OPM/GOVT-10, Employee Medical File System Records](#). The Privacy Act permits disclosure within the FAA to employees “who have a need for the record in the performance of their duties.” External disclosure is permitted only if a Privacy Act exception, including a routine use in the applicable [System of Records Notice](#), applies, or if the FAA has received written consent from the individual to whom the record pertains.

8. Records Management Requirements. The FAA will maintain test results and information indefinitely until such time the National Archives and Records Administration issues a General Records Schedule.

9. Point of Contact. For more information on this policy bulletin, please contact your assigned [Labor and Employee Relations, Headquarters, or Regional Office](#).

Revision History Log

Date	Revision
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03/28/2022	Established Policy Bulletin #126 to provide guidance, consistent with best health practices, for returning an employee to the workplace (i.e., facility) after a confirmed, presumed, or suspected case of COVID-19.
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