

NEWS BRIEF

Provided by: Insure NW

CDC Redefines “Close Contact” Under COVID-19 Guidance

On Wednesday, Oct. 21, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) clarified what “close contact” means as it relates to COVID-19-prevention guidance.

Previously, the CDC defined close contact as spending 15 straight minutes within 6 feet of another person. Now, the organization redefined the term to mean a total of 15 minutes within a 24-hour period. That means short, repeated contacts throughout the day count toward that 15-minute threshold.

The CDC strongly encourages anyone who comes into “close contact” with a COVID-19 patient to self-quarantine for two weeks.

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“It’s critical to wear a mask because you could be carrying the virus and not know it.”

- *The CDC, on the importance of masks*

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Employer Takeaway

This update serves as a stark notice that COVID-19 may spread more easily than formerly understood. It may even prompt more contact tracing among health departments and workplaces, especially in situations where contact was previously considered too brief for infection.

Furthermore, this new definition may be most impactful in offices, factories and other facilities that

have many people in close proximity for extended periods. Such locations may implement stricter mask regulations if they haven’t yet done so, per CDC recommendations. The organization stresses that wearing masks is one of the best ways to fight against COVID-19, especially since many infected patients do not exhibit symptoms.

The CDC has amended COVID-19 guidance before on several occasions, usually adopting stricter positions. With that in mind, employers can reasonably expect more updates in the future.

Insure NW will apprise you with any noteworthy developments.

