

# COVID-19 NON-HEALTH RELATED FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## General

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### **Are state courts continuing to hold trials, hearings and offering in-person services?**

Chief Justice Martha L. Waters has imposed state court restrictions on trials, hearing, and in-person services until March 27, 2020, visit the [Oregon Judicial Department website](#) to learn more.

### **Is it legal for my business to make and distribute hand sanitizer?**

The FDA has provided a temporary exemption to the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to allow Pharmacists in State-licensed pharmacies or Federal facilities and registered outsourcing facilities to prepare alcohol-based hand sanitizers for consumer use and for use as health care personnel rubs.

### **Is it okay to go hiking?**

Yes, it is okay to go hiking so long as you remember to maintain social distancing. Overnight camping is temporarily suspended from April 3 through May 8, 2020. Visit the [Oregon Parks and Recreation website](#) for more information.

### **Is overnight camping allowed during this time?**

ODFW has closed wildlife areas to overnight camping and state park overnight camping is temporarily suspended from April 3 through May 8, 2020. Visit the [Oregon Parks and Recreation website](#) for more information.

### **Are fisheries and wildlife areas open for day-use activities?**

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has closed fish hatcheries to public visitors and wildlife areas to overnight camping. However wildlife areas are still open for day-use activities at this time (March 19) including fishing, wildlife viewing, hunting and hiking. While all events are cancelled (such as family fishing event or hunter education classes), lakes and ponds are still being stocked at this time. All normal hunting and fishing regulations are in effect.

### **Is it safe to congregate outside?**

All gatherings of more than 25 people are canceled statewide through at least April 14, 2020. Additionally, it's recommended that Oregonians avoid gatherings of 10 people or more and observe social distancing.

### **Where can I report price gouging?**

Contact the Oregon Department of Justice's Consumer Hotline if you see merchants charging exorbitant prices for goods and supplies: 1-877-877-9392 or [www.oregonconsumer.gov](http://www.oregonconsumer.gov).

### **What does it mean to flatten the curve?**

Flattening the curve is an expression that describes a public health-based approach to reduce the spread of an infectious disease in a population. Reducing the overall number of cases over time decreases the burden of ill patients on emergency rooms and hospitals. When there are fewer cases of infections impacting the health system at once, the case curve is lowered, allowing the care system to better manage limited health resources and help those with the most severe outcomes.

**Have visiting hours changed at Oregon Youth Authority correctional facilities?**

Visitation at all Oregon Youth Authority youth correctional facilities and youth transitional camps is suspended until further notice. This applies to all visitors and volunteers. Families wishing to do phone calls or Skype video visits with their youth should contact the youth's case coordinator or camp counselor.

## Education

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Please visit the [Oregon Department of Education's website](#) for current information and answers to frequently asked questions.

**How long are schools closed?**

Governor Kate Brown extended Oregon's statewide school closure to April 28, 2020.

**Does the closure apply to Education Service District (ESD) schools?**

Yes, the closure applies to any schools that Education Service Districts (ESD) operates.

**What guidance is being given to Migrant Education programs regarding potential food insecurity, immigration, and language access?**

Schools are encouraged to organize with migrant education programs to arrange food transportation so children do not go hungry during this time. Additional response steps can include Migrant Education directors completing phone calls to survey families informally and coordinating with local organizations.

**What are the impacts for graduating seniors?**

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is working with stakeholders and partners to draft an initial plan for how the closure will affect graduating seniors.

**Will school-based health centers or school social/wraparound services stay open?**

School-based health centers or school social/wraparound services will stay open if they comply with Governor Brown's guidance.

**Are there options for the continuity of school meal programs during school closures?**

Yes. Governor Brown called for districts to meet this challenge and has charged ODE to help.

There are options available to continue meal service at school and non-school sites through the Summer Food Service Program or Summer Seamless Option. The Oregon Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs (ODE CNP) encourages sponsors participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or the School Breakfast Program (SBP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) to use Program flexibilities to help ensure that there is no lapse in food security during a closure.

**What are the requirements and guidance related to online or distance learning during an extended school closure?**

At this time, Oregon does not have the statewide capacity, infrastructure or expertise to equitably move to online learning in the event of prolonged school closures. ODE does not expect districts to transition to online learning as schools close for health and safety reasons. Should districts opt for providing online learning, ODE has a responsibility to ensure all students are served appropriately.

### **What about the possible impacts on state assessments?**

Oregon offers a long testing window for statewide summative assessments from January 7 - June 5. The U.S. Department of Education is [offering flexibility and waivers](#) that may be needed in the future. Visit the [Oregon Department of Education's webpage](#) for updates on this topic.

## **Businesses**

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### **Where can I find guidance on what's considered paid sick leave, unemployment insurance, and paid family and medical leave?**

Read the [COVID-19 related scenarios and benefits](#) quick guide for an outline on what's considered paid sick leave, unemployment insurance, and paid family and medical leave.

### **What are the rules about providing sick leave to employees?**

Oregon law requires employers to give sick time. Employees get at least 1 hour of protected sick time for every 30 hours of work. Sick time can be used for many reasons, including if an employees' family member is sick, injured, experiencing mental illness, or needs to visit the doctor. Click here to [read more about Oregon sick leave](#).

### **Are there coronavirus safety posters I should display at my workplace?**

- [Preventing germ spread](#)
- [Preventing germ spread \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Symptoms of coronavirus](#)

### **What if I have to lay people off or temporarily close my business because of issues related to COVID-19?**

Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits may be available to those who are on a temporary layoff. These benefits occur for claimants whose employer stops operation for a short period of time, such as cleaning following a coronavirus exposure. In these cases, employees expect to be back to work in four weeks or less. Workers can get UI benefits, and do not need to seek work with other employers. They must be able to work, stay in contact with you as their employer, and be available to work when you call them back to the job.

Also, check with your insurance company or agent to see if your policy covers an epidemic or pandemic. Most business interruption policies cover business closures for events such as fire, a burst pipe, or a windstorm.

### **Are there any programs to help minimize my layoffs?**

One option to consider is whether you may be able to use Oregon's [Work Share program](#). It helps employers prevent layoffs by reducing the schedules of workers, instead of laying them off, while benefits help to offset employees' lost wages.

### **What if I permanently close my business because of COVID-19 coronavirus?**

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission has [rapid response services](#) to plan for job transitions needed when a business closure or mass layoff occurs, including cases of natural and other disasters. Local Rapid Response teams coordinate with employer, worker representative, Trade Act and Labor.

### **What are the resources that can help me keep my company in business?**

Visit [Business Oregon](#) and the [Small Business Administration](#) to learn about financial resources that are available to your business.

### **What's the best way to clean my workplace?**

To clean your home and workplace and reduce the spread of COVID-19, look at your cleaning products. If it says it kills coronavirus on the label, it is EPA-approved and okay to use. Visit this webpage for more [information about what areas to clean and disinfect](#).

### **Can I require an employee traveling back from an affected area to stay home?**

Yes, employers have the ability to ask an employee returning from an affected area (or exposure to a person with the disease) to stay home. The incubation period for a coronavirus is typically 14 days. If someone develops the disease, they may be contagious for longer.

Any absence due to actual illness or an order by a public official declaring a public health emergency would trigger protected sick time. For employers covered by Oregon Family Leave Act (OFLA) or Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), a progression of the disease could result in a serious health condition that qualifies for protected leave (and a right to access to any other paid leave bank).

### **What should I do if my employee refuses to handle merchandise that came in from China and even sealed the shipment with biohazard tape?**

Employers have a general duty to provide a place of employment free from recognized hazards that cause or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees. Employees also have the protected right to raise good faith concerns about the health and safety of the workplace (even if the employee is wrong on the merits). A calm conversation about actual risks, supplemented with trusted material from sources like the CDC on how viruses are transmitted may go a long way to alleviating concerns.

**Is it legal for my business to make and distribute hand sanitizer?** The FDA has provided a temporary exemption to the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to allow Pharmacists in State-licensed pharmacies or Federal facilities and registered outsourcing facilities to prepare alcohol-based hand sanitizers for consumer use and for use as health care personnel rubs.

### **How can big chain grocery stores help keep employees and customers safe?**

Grocery stores may want to consider instituting the sale of ready packed essential kits to limit exposure for workers and customers. Stores could offer a variety of pre-made kit options that include essentials and make them available for pick up or drive through.

## **Employees**

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*The Oregon Employment Department provides Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits to most workers who are out of work through no fault of their own. To get benefits, workers must meet some requirements. In general, to receive UI benefits for a week, you must be able to work, be available for work, and look for work you can do. Please consult your HR staff to get answers to your specific questions.*

### **What can I do if my workplace temporarily closes because of coronavirus?**

UI benefits may be available to those who are on a temporary layoff. These benefits occur for claimants whose employer stops operation for a short period of time, such as cleaning following a coronavirus exposure. In these cases, employees expect to be back to work in four weeks or less. Workers can get UI benefits, and do not need to seek work with other employers. They must be able to work, stay in contact with you as their employer, and be available to work when called back.

### **Do I have to look for other work if my employer temporarily closes because of the coronavirus?**

If your employer expects the closure to be four weeks or less, you do not actively have to look for another job to receive benefits. To get benefits, you must:

- Be able to work;
- Stay in contact with your employer; and
- Be available to work when your employer calls you back to work.

**If I am forced to remain in my home, either because I am sick or am under quarantine, will I be eligible for unemployment benefits?**

If you are sick for more than half the week or under quarantine you would not be able and available to work. This is part of the requirements for UI eligibility. The Oregon Employment Department is working with partner agencies nationwide and the U.S. Department of Labor to seek benefit options for those missing work while quarantined.

**What if my employer is paying me while they are closed?**

Generally, you will not be eligible for benefits if your employer is paying you to remain away from the site or as stand-by pay.

**Will I be eligible for unemployment benefits if my employer remains open but I don't want to come to work because of the risk of exposure to the coronavirus?**

In this case, unemployment benefits would generally not be an option, because you must be willing to work and available for work you usually do. You can file a claim, and the Employment Department will gather information from you and your employer to see if benefits would apply.

**What if I am allowed to work from home for my job to reduce risk of getting coronavirus, and I don't want to work offsite?**

Generally, you will not be eligible for unemployment benefits. You can file an [initial claim](#) to determine the possibility of receiving benefits.

**What if I can take vacation or other leave pay while my employer is closed?**

If you are getting vacation or other leave pay while your employer is closed, you generally are not able to also receive unemployment insurance benefits.

**Can I take sick leave if I, or someone in my family, has COVID-19 coronavirus?**

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries issues guidance related to Oregon's [sick time](#) and other leave time laws.

**What if I have COVID-19 coronavirus, and I got it at my workplace?**

Contact the Workers' Compensation Division of the Department of Consumer and Business Services for information on filing a [workers' compensation claim](#) related to coronavirus. They can also be contacted at 800-452-0288 or [workcomp.questions@oregon.gov](mailto:workcomp.questions@oregon.gov).

**Will I get unemployment benefits if I become seriously ill with COVID-19 coronavirus and I have to quit my job?**

You will generally not be eligible for unemployment benefits if you quit your job. You can still file an [initial claim](#) to find out if you can receive benefits.

**What if my employer goes out of business as a result of COVID-19 coronavirus?**

Generally, you will be eligible for unemployment benefits. To find out if you are eligible, file an [initial claim](#). We will gather information from you and your employer about your circumstances to determine your eligibility.

**Are any benefits available if I'm out of work due to the coronavirus and I'm self-employed?**

Self-employed individuals generally do not pay Unemployment Insurance taxes and are not eligible for benefits. You can still file [an application](#) for a benefits claim.

**What if I am unemployed and I am sick or quarantined with COVID-19 coronavirus?**

If you are sick due to the coronavirus, you are likely not able and available to work, which would mean you cannot receive unemployment insurance benefits. Being able to work means that you are physically and mentally able to do the work you are looking for or usually do, unless:

- You were sick or injured for less than half of the week; or
- You have a long-term condition preventing you from working, but you can still do some work.

If you had an opportunity to work, but did not because you were sick, you likely cannot receive unemployment insurance benefits for that week, but may be eligible for benefits for other weeks.

### **How can I meet my welcome process and job seeker registration or in-person meeting requirements if I am sick with coronavirus?**

Please call your [WorkSource Oregon center](#) to ask about alternative options for completing your appointments.

### **Can I use Oregon Family Leave (OFLA) to care for my kids during the coronavirus school closures ordered by Governor Kate Brown?**

Oregonians can use Oregon Family Leave to take protected time off to care for their children during official school closures to limit the spread of coronavirus. This leave is not paid unless employees use available paid time off they have, but it is protected. People who work for an employer that has at least 25 employees are eligible for OFLA.

### **Will my employer tell me if someone I work with comes down with coronavirus?**

Employers have a duty to provide a place of employment, free from recognized hazards that cause or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees. That said, privacy laws will prevent your employer from sharing any specific medical information of another employee.

### **Will my health insurance cover COVID-19 testing?**

The state has reached an agreement with several health insurance companies to waive co-payments, co-insurance, and deductibles for their customers who need COVID-19 testing. Visit the [Department of Consumer and Business Services webpage](#) for more information.

## **State Response**

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### **What has Gov. Brown ordered to help manage the pace of the pandemic in Oregon?**

Gov. Brown issued a [Declaration of Emergency](#) which expanded the authority of Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) to devote all available state resources to contain the spread of COVID-19 in Oregon. Gov. Brown continues to oversee the state's actions, issuing [executive orders](#) focused on controlling the spread of the coronavirus, promoting public health measures, and protecting vulnerable populations. The following restrictions are currently in effect for all Oregonians:

- Gatherings over 25 people are canceled statewide through April 14, 2020.
- It's additionally recommended that Oregonians avoid gatherings of 10 people or more observe social distancing whenever possible, maintaining a distance of at least three feet from others.
- Oregon public schools are closed through April 28, 2020.
- Restaurants and bars are restricted to carry-out and delivery only.
- All other businesses are urged to assess their practices, implement strong social distancing measures, and close their doors temporarily if they cannot put the new guidance in place.

### **What does a "Declaration of Emergency" mean?**

The declaration allows OHA to activate reserves of emergency volunteer health care professionals, bringing online auxiliary medical professionals to work with local health authorities to identify and contain new cases of COVID-19 in Oregon. The declaration additionally grants broad authority to the State Public Health Director, OHA and OEM to take immediate action and devote all available state resources towards containing the coronavirus in Oregon.

### **How are law enforcement agencies preparing and responding?**

The Superintendent of the Oregon State Police (OSP) sits on Gov. Brown's Coronavirus Response Team and he has activated the OSP continuity of operations plan, which prioritizes essential public safety services during an emergency. Law enforcement at the county and local level also are readjusting their public safety priorities with the activation of emergency operations centers and emergency response plans.

### **Are public investments being impacted by COVID-related market disruptions?**

The Oregon Short Term Fund, which is used by the state and local governments to safekeep operating funds, is not invested in equities and continues to generate positive returns for about 1,000 public fund depositors.

Separately, the Oregon Public Employees Retirement Fund (OPERF) is diversified across multiple asset classes. Strategies are based on the long-term financial horizon -- not a single episode or economic cycle -- and investment decisions are made to stand over the long haul, in both up and down markets. Treasury has taken deliberate steps over the past several years to make OPERF more resilient in anticipation of changing environments, including reducing and rebalancing risk, moving to lower cost index funds, and increasing corporate governance activities to ensure that our investment practices pursue strategies that produce strong, sustainable long-term results.

### **Are state offices open for business?**

Currently yes, although there have been some reductions in hours for public buildings and offices, due to staffing reductions at building sites. Visit the [Department of Administrative Services](#) for a list of executive branch agency building closures.

## **Emergency Coordination Center (ECC)**

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### **What is the ECC and how is it overseeing the Oregon COVID response?**

The ECC is the state's unified command center. The center has representatives from all major state agencies and is integrated with the Oregon Health Authority's public health response efforts. The ECC is focused on minimizing any disruption to critical services in Oregon.

### **Who is involved in the ECC?**

The following state agencies are represented at the ECC:

1. Department of Corrections
2. Office of Emergency Management
3. Department of Education
4. Department of Environmental Quality
5. Department of Human Services
6. Department of Justice
7. Department of State Police
8. Department of Transportation
9. Judicial Department
10. Business Oregon
11. Department of Administrative Services
12. Oregon Health Authority
13. Oregon Military Department/Oregon National Guard
14. Oregon Tourism Commission
15. Public Utility Commission
16. Secretary of State
17. Department of Agriculture
18. Department of Energy
19. State Fire Marshal
20. Department of Forestry

## 21. Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

### **Where is the ECC located and what are the hours of operation?**

The ECC operates out of the Anderson Readiness Center in Salem. The center currently operates on an 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. basis with duty officer coverage 24/7. These hours will be expanded as needed.

### **What are the objectives of the ECC?**

The objectives of the ECC are as follows:

- Ensure the healthcare system has the capacity to respond to surges across the continuum of care.
- Keep Oregon children and families safe.
- Ensure timely and accurate information is provided in a transparent way to allow Oregonians to make the best decisions they can for themselves and their families.
- Sustain Oregon businesses and keep the economy healthy.
- Minimize disruption to critical state services.
- Provide support to Oregon's cities, counties and tribal governments.