



## *MEMORANDUM*

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**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR &  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Edward D. Reiskin  
City Administrator

**SUBJECT:** COVID-19 and Workplace Safety

**DATE:** January 18, 2022

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### **INFORMATION**

This informational memorandum provides an update on workforce safety in the City of Oakland during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

City of Oakland employees have worked tirelessly through the global pandemic and Shelter in Place orders - many directly with the public - at a time when City services are in high demand. In delivering these services, the City has an obligation to keep its workforce and the public as safe as possible.

In March 2020 Oakland was one of the first cities in California to offer free testing to its employees. Since then, many policies and procedures are in place, including a Temporary Sick Leave Procedure, Face Covering Policy, a Mandatory Vaccination Policy, and countless additional resources available to City staff on the City's [website](#). Free vaccines were immediately made available to front-line workers in February 2021 and continue to be available to all city employees.

The City continues to adhere to CalOSHA regulations for contact tracing and workplace safety. Thankfully, most (95%) of our employees are vaccinated, avoiding serious illness. It appears that the vast majority of cases originated from outside the workplace. So far in January, there have been approximately 200+ positive cases among City employees of which the City is aware. Most positive cases are in the Police Department (sworn police officers) and Oakland Public Works.

Most office-based employees continue to work remotely to deliver City services. This action has improved the safety of hundreds of City employees. The administration is monitoring Alameda County health data carefully and will determine a date to bring employees who are now telecommuting back to the office. As of now, that date is Monday, February 7, 2022, which is subject to change. It is anticipated that re-opening Civic Center buildings to the public would occur sometime thereafter.

Risk Management and Oakland Public Works have been responding to the increase in positive cases by implementing mandatory vaccination compliance, increased contact tracing, and expanded facility and vehicle cleaning.

**City services impacted include:**

**Oakland Police Department**

1. Increased use of sick leave department-wide, from an average of five staff members a day to 20 members a day, resulting in vacant patrol beats citywide. The COVID-19 emergency contingency plan is being implemented, which requires the reallocation of officers from Community Resource Officers assignments (CRO), Criminal Investigation Division, and other non-patrol assignments to fill beats.
2. Increased need for overtime usage to fill beats.
3. Purchasing of additional PPE and personal COVID-19 tests for staff.

**Public Works**

A significant number of employees have called in sick in the Sewer, Storm Drains and Keep Oakland Clean and Beautiful (KOCB) divisions, negatively impacting services.

1. Sewer – A pipe and plant contractor has been activated and will respond to service calls if needed.
2. Storm Drains – Service requests can be met as long as there is no rain.
3. KOCB – Unit is prioritizing homeless encampment and street sweeping services. Vegetation patrol and litter container service is being suspended but monitored. Waste Management assistance with litter pick-up may be needed.

**Department of Transportation**

A significant number of employees have called in sick in the Streets and Sidewalks division, reducing the volume of paving, pothole repair, and sidewalk repair.

**Library**

1. Absence/isolation due to Covid-19 has increased from approximately one employee per month to about five per week.
2. No libraries have closed or reduced hours.
3. Management has staffed some locations since Sunday, January 9<sup>th</sup> due to the absence of managers/supervisors, not due to lack of total employees.
4. Library's total positive cases in January is nine. Several have completed isolation and returned to work. This has not impacted operations as there are 180-225 employees scheduled to work each day.
5. There is a slight increase in sick leave usage due to staff concern and those who are quarantining with school children/families in the household who have potential exposures.

**Parks, Recreation and Youth Development**

1. After school attendance is down approximately 35% due to illness.
2. Mosswood has delayed new programs, including tennis and outdoor basketball. The classes were filled.
3. Staffing: Four Center Directors are absent at Central West and East Units.
4. Studio One delayed after-school program reopening.
5. Rotary Nature Center is closed due to staff illness.

**Oakland Fire Department (OFD)**

1. Firehouse staffing shortage: In some cases, firefighters are working up to 14 days straight without relief and firehouses may close due to lack of staffing. Actions taken by the administration prevented this from happening, but if new cases continue to rise, temporarily closing firehouses will be inevitable.
2. Extended response time from private ambulance provider: Due to short staffing with our private ambulance provider and lack of staffing at hospitals, firefighters and residents may wait at least 30 minutes for an ambulance to arrive. Additionally, OFD Firefighter/Paramedics are riding to the hospital with the private ambulance provider due to a lack of ambulance paramedics. This places critical OFD engines and ladder trucks out of service for up to 90 minutes because the Emergency Rooms are unable to accept patients in a timely manner.
3. Mental health and burnout of firefighters: Due to the number of consecutive days that OFD members are having to work, morale, health, and safety are compromised due to burnout.

**Human Services Department (HSD)**

1. Head Start - As of January 11, 2022, Head Start has closed five centers (San Antonio Park, Manzanita, Sungate, Tassafaronga, Broadway), other sites are scheduled for half-day, and the central kitchen is closed. After 10 days, pending negative tests, sites will reopen, full days will be restored, and the kitchen will reopen. Client families are stressed and staff is working on food support, home Covid test supply, PPE, and other emergency supports.
2. Aging/ Adult Services - Senior Centers are experiencing reduced demand for in-person classes and activities but remain open. Food distribution continues uninterrupted with demand up. Working to distribute higher quality masks for all seniors.
3. Homeless Services - All homeless programs have been impacted by positive COVID-19 cases and, as a result, programs are at capacity or not accepting clients. There are very few vacant beds in the system; a County isolation hotel was activated and is full. DHS staff is working closely with Alameda County to test clients and support isolation in place with food delivery and PPE distribution.  
Outbreaks in encampments have not yet been observed but it is anticipated and likely due to limited testing. Staff is distributing higher quality masks to encampments and working with the County to test the most vulnerable clients.  
Due to positive cases at St. Vincent de Paul, this program closed Saturday, and residents have successfully been transferred to County COVID hotels.

**City Administrator's Office - Homelessness Division**

1. Encampment Management Team (EMT) operations are unable to execute closures due to the impact of positive COVID-19 cases to Homeless Services programs.
2. Outreach services will continue to monitor conditions at encampments and perform referrals to the County Health upon notification of positive cases in encampments.
3. EMT operations will intensify focus on abating and suppressing health, sanitation, and safety at City encampments until the surge declines and CDC-authorized shelter resources become available to provide safe spaces for the unhoused.

**Leave Concerns:**

Labor groups that represent City employees have raised concerns, specifically of those regularly reporting to work, about employee leave banks being exhausted due to increased use related to positive infections. Fortunately, the City provides generous leave resources, which have been supplemented by federal and state-mandated leave. It is anticipated the state will require the City to provide additional leave for employees. In the meantime, the administration is exploring offering additional temporary leave to employees for COVID-19-related absences.

**Mandatory Vaccination Policy:**

Approximately 95% of City employees are vaccinated with others engaged in the interactive process. This high vaccination rate has prevented severe cases of illness among City employees.

Respectfully submitted,



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Edward D. Reiskin  
City Administrator