

# California Nurses Know Your Rights: Protections at Work for COVID-19

## It's the Law: Your Employer Must Protect You

- The Cal/OSHA Aerosol Transmissible Diseases Standard (ATD Standard) requires airborne and contact precautions for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.\*
- PPE for COVID-19 must include, **at minimum**, N95 respirators or higher, isolation gowns, eye protection, and gloves. Surgical and non-respirator face masks **do not** protect persons from airborne infectious diseases and **cannot** be relied upon for novel pathogens such as COVID-19.
- A Powered Air-Purifying Respirator (PAPR) with high efficiency particulate air filters must be worn during aerosol generating procedures on suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases.

## ATD Standard Requirements for COVID-19:

- **Screening protocols to identify patients who may have COVID-19 infections.**
- **Open and continuous communication.** Employers must continually inform nurses and other health care workers about any potential exposure to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case(s).
- **Plans to ensure prompt isolation of patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infections in negative pressure isolation rooms.**
- **Protective PPE for nurses and other health care workers providing care to patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infections including airborne and contact precautions. PPE for COVID-19 must include, at minimum, N95 respirators or higher, isolation gowns, eye protection, and gloves.** Employers must ensure the adequate supply of PPE necessary to reduce worker exposure to COVID-19 in routine operations, foreseeable emergencies, and surge events.
- **A Powered Air-Purifying Respirator (PAPR) with high efficiency particulate air filters must be worn during aerosol generating procedures on suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases.** These procedures include endotracheal intubation, airway suction, tracheostomy, bronchoscopy, and sputum induction.
- **14 days paid precautionary leave for a nurse or other health care worker who is exposed to COVID-19.** The employer must notify the employee in a timely fashion in the event of an exposure to a suspected or confirmed patient(s).
- **Exposure incident procedures.** Employers must identify, evaluate, and investigate potential worker exposures including the cause and chain of employee/patient transmission. Medical follow-up services must be provided, free of charge, to all exposed employees.

\* See the full Aerosol Transmissible Diseases (ATD) at <https://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5199.html>. Cal/OSHA's guidance on COVID-19 is available at <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Coronavirus-info.html>.

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