

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for Voters, Election Officials and Election Workers

### Recent Updates:

8/21/20: Individuals with underlying medical conditions should speak with their providers before signing up to work as an election worker, or should consider deferring signing up for this activity this year.

California Bill AB 860 has been enacted to ensure that counties provide mail-in ballots for all registered voters for the November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 election. This is an important step towards maintaining the health and well being of voters. Elections with only in-person voting pose a higher risk for the spread of COVID-19 because there can be large crowds and long wait times. Vote by Mail ballots will be processed starting 29 days prior to Election Day and any mail-in ballots received by or postmarked on November 3, 2020 will be counted.

It is important to keep in mind that for some individuals it will still be preferable to vote in person. The Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) office has put multiple measures in place to make in-person voting safer and more accessible, including offering expanded voting days (additional consecutive days prior to, as well as, on election day) and allowing individuals to vote at any vote center. See the [RR/CC website on voting](#) for additional details.

The guidance below offers important information for voters, election officials and election workers to consider in staying healthy during the voting process and in slowing the spread of COVID-19.

### FOR VOTERS

- Stay home if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or if you are in quarantine due to an exposure to COVID-19 within the previous 14 days.
  - You can vote by mail as long as your ballot is postmarked on or before the date of the election.
  - If you were planning on voting in person but fall ill on the day of the election contact the Registrar-Recorder office for alternate options.
- Sanitize your hands before entering and after leaving the vote center.
  - While in the vote center, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol especially after touching surfaces frequently touched by multiple people, such as door handles or voting machines.
- Wear a cloth face covering the entire time you are at the vote center or waiting in line outside the center. Children under 2 and anyone who has trouble breathing, is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance, should not wear a cloth face covering.
- Maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others. It is important to continue physical distancing even when you and others are wearing cloth face coverings.
- Avoid crowds and consider voting alternatives that minimize contact. Check the [RR/CC voting website](#) for information about vote by mail, and early voting.
  - Vote at off-peak times, such as mid-morning

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- If driving to the polls and your schedule allows, monitor the voter line from your car and join it when it's shorter.
- Do not disinfect or wipe down the voting equipment yourself. Electronic voting equipment can be damaged by cleaners and disinfectants. If you use hand sanitizer before touching the voting equipment, ensure your hands are completely dry to avoid damaging the equipment. (Be sure your hands are completely dry before handling ballots as well.) Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer after using the voting equipment.)
- Come prepared so that you can minimize the amount of time you have to spend at the vote center. Do things like verify your [voter registration](#) information in advance and complete a paper or [interactive sample ballot at home and bring it with you](#).

### FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS AND ELECTION WORKERS

#### Measures to Protect Workers:

- Symptom screening is conducted before employees may enter the vote center. Checks must include a check-in inquiring about cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing and fever or chills and if the worker has had contact with a person known to be infected with COVID-19 in the last 14 days. These checks can be done remotely or in person upon the workers' arrival. A temperature check should also be done at the vote center if feasible.
- Election workers who are sick, have tested positive for COVID-19, or have recently had a close contact with a person with COVID-19 should stay home and comply with posted isolation or quarantine instructions. Be sure to contact the Registrar Recorder Office and notify the election worker recruitment staff of your absence.
- Individuals with underlying health conditions should speak with their health care providers about whether they can work as an election worker or should consider deferring this activity this year.
- Ensure that vote centers are adequately staffed to cover any sick workers who need to stay home.
- Encourage election workers to wash their hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or with hand sanitizer (e.g., before entering the vote center, before and after breaks or shifts, after touching or handling cloth face coverings or personal protective equipment (PPE) like gloves, after using the restroom, after touching shared surfaces or objects).
- Cloth face coverings must be used by all workers at all times during the workday when there are any other people in the area. Workers who have been instructed by their medical provider that they should not wear a face covering should use a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it. A drape that is form fitting under the chin is preferred. Masks with one way valves should not be used.
- Ensure adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors. Supplies include soap, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (placed at every station, if supplies allow), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, and no-touch trash cans.
- Physical barriers, such as plexiglass shields, can be used to protect workers and voters when physical distance cannot be maintained, for example at registration desks or between voting stations.

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- Limit nonessential visitors. Election workers and voters should be discouraged from bringing accompanying persons (e.g., family members, friends) to the vote center.

### Infection Control Measures:

- Voters should use cloth face coverings at all times while in the vote center.
  - Cloth face coverings can make it more difficult for people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing to lip-read, hear, or understand what people are saying. Communication can be supported with written communication, posting information/instructions, and decreasing background noise. Lip reading can be supported with clear face coverings, face shields, or plexiglass barriers. Consistent with applicable law, election officials should consider having supplies, such as clear face coverings available, to ensure that voting is accessible to people with disabilities.
- Provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for use at each step in the voting process where voters interact with election workers, after using the voting machine, and as the final step in the voting process. Place alcohol-based hand sanitizer in visible, frequently used locations such as registration desks, where “I Voted” stickers are dispensed, and exits.
- Surfaces that are frequently touched by multiple people, for example door handles, registration tables, pens, and clipboards, should be disinfected frequently using products with [EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens](#).
- If public restrooms are available in the vote center, they should be cleaned and disinfected routinely.
- After the vote center closes, clean and disinfect all facility areas and items, including all tables, chairs, door handles, and restrooms, used by election workers or voters. The facility can be returned to normal use immediately with no additional precautions. All equipment and transport cases should also be cleaned and disinfected following the manufacturer’s instructions prior to returning it to the election office.
- Voting machines, ePollbooks, and other reusable items should be disinfected routinely. Follow the equipment manufacturer’s instructions for appropriate cleaning and disinfection procedures for voting machines and associated electronics.
  - To prevent damage to the equipment, post signs near voting equipment discouraging voters from disinfecting the equipment with their own wipes or touching the equipment with hands that are still wet with hand sanitizer.
  - Consider use of wipeable covers for electronics.
  - If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 60% alcohol to clean voting machine buttons and touch screens. Dry surfaces thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids.
- Where possible, replace shared objects with single-use objects. Shared objects, like pens, reusable ballot activation cards or ballot secrecy sleeves can be deposited into a container instead of handing them to an election worker in order to reduce handling of shared objects. These objects should be cleaned before reuse.
- Headphones for voters with disabilities should be brought by the voter or disinfected between users if provided by the vote center.

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- Relocate vote centers from nursing homes, long-term care facilities, and senior living residences, to help protect older adults and those with underlying medical conditions from potential COVID-19 exposure.
- Vote centers that are held at schools should maintain entrances and exits that minimize the need for election workers and voters to enter any part of the facility that is not being used for voting purposes and/or that are being used by students, teachers, and staff at the school.
- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk.
- Where possible consider offering alternative voting options for voters with symptoms, those who are sick or known to be COVID-19 positive. Alternative voting options should minimize exposure between election workers and voters, Election workers assisting voters with symptoms should be provided with personal protective equipment (PPE), including respiratory protection, face shields, gowns, and gloves, and should be trained in the appropriate use of this equipment.
- Workers handling mail-in ballots should practice hand hygiene frequently.
  - Machines used to process mail in ballots should be cleaned and disinfected routinely. Follow the [equipment manufacturer's instruction](#) for appropriate cleaning and disinfection procedures for voting machines and associated electronics.
  - Ballots can be stored as usual without additional precautions.
- If a voters' face covering may need to be removed to support identification procedures, alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol should be provided at the station so voters can sanitize their hands after removing their face coverings. A plastic barrier between the voter and the poll worker can provide additional protection. Post signs providing instruction on proper removal and handling of face coverings.

### Physical Distancing

- Remind voters upon arrival to leave 6 feet of space between themselves and others. Vote centers may provide signs, or other visual cues such as floor markings, decals, or chalk marks to help voters and workers remember this.
- If 6 feet of distance can not be maintained between election workers and the public a physical or plexiglass barrier should be placed between the public and the election workers.
- Have staff available to manage lines to ensure social distancing of at least 6 feet can be maintained.
- Clearly mark points of entry and exit to avoid bottlenecks.
- Discourage voters and workers from greeting others with physical contact (e.g., handshakes). Include this reminder on signs about social distancing.
- Maintain or increase the total number of vote centers available to the public on Election Day to improve the ability to social distance.
- Minimize lines as much as possible, and do not allow tightly spaced queues in small indoor spaces. Use floor markings or decals and signs to remind voters to maintain social distancing while in line.

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- Limit the number of voters to ensure 6 feet of distancing can be maintained in the facility by moving lines outdoors or having voters wait in their cars where possible. Increase distance between voting booths to ensure that voters remain 6 feet apart.
- To ensure sufficient space for social distancing and other measures, identify larger facilities for use as vote centers.
- Modify the vote center layout to ensure voters move in one direction while in voting locations and to avoid bottlenecks, such as single doors for entry and exit.
- Items to be reviewed, such as poll books or identification, should be placed on a table for examination to minimize handling.
- Ensure that any changes to operations do not limit accessibility to voters with disabilities.
- Consider drive-up voting for eligible voters if allowed.
- Vote centers (e.g., libraries, schools) should ensure that voters can be separated from other facility users. For example, election workers and voters can use designated entrances, exits, and restrooms that are separate from other facility users.

### Signs and Messages

- Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances, in restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs such as by properly washing hands and properly wearing a cloth face covering.
- Include messages about behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19 when communicating with voters (such as on websites, in videos, in emails, and on social media accounts).
- To the extent consistent with applicable law, ensure that any signage and messages are accessible to voters with disabilities, for example by providing large print or braille versions or having audible messages with the same information.
- Notify voters of changes to polling operations, including the availability of alternative voting options that minimize contact.
- Encourage voters planning to vote in-person on election day to arrive at off-peak times. For example, if voter crowds are lighter mid-morning, advertise that in advance to the community.
- Post signs to discourage anyone with symptoms from entering the vote center buildings and provide voting options for those with symptoms.