

How The OSHA Vaccine Or Testing Requirement Protects Workers

COVID-19 is the single greatest occupational health crisis for American workers since the creation of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), claiming the lives of more than [820,000](#) Americans and continuing to infect more than [400,000](#) individuals each day. The emergency standard requires companies with 100 or more employees to ensure that their workers are vaccinated or tested weekly – a move that will protect [84 million](#) workers and the communities they live in.

OSHA's vaccine or testing requirement will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, yet Republicans have launched a highly-partisan legal attack on these safety measures, threatening America's entire strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. In November, partisan judges on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals' temporarily blocked OSHA's standard, before being [lifted](#) by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, and will now be ultimately decided by the Supreme Court. Experts agree that this lawsuit not only threatens the safety of American workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also OSHA's ability to protect workers during future emergencies.

Vaccinations continue to be a safe and effective tool, essential to ending the pandemic and preventing illness and death. OSHA's vaccine or testing requirement will protect 84 million workers and create the safest possible workplaces by preventing the spread of COVID-19 on the job.

COVID Dangers In The Workplace

The Pandemic Is Ongoing. COVID-19 has claimed the lives of more than [820,000](#) Americans and continues to infect more than [400,000](#) individuals each day. No worker should be forced to choose between protecting themselves and their families against a deadly virus, or putting food on the table.

Lack Of Workplace Protections Has Devastating Consequences. Over the course of the pandemic, there has been rampant spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. The House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis found [nearly 60,000](#) reported COVID cases among just five meatpacking companies and 269 deaths between March 2020 and February 2021. In some meatpacking plants, the committee found more than half of workers had become infected. At JBS's plant in Hyrum, Utah [54 percent](#) of workers were infected, and a rate of 50 percent was discovered at Tyson's plant in Amarillo, Texas. More [meatpacking workers have died](#) from work-related COVID-19 in one year than from all other work-related causes in the past 15 years. Workplace transmission continues to be a significant driver of the pandemic. In Washington state, 80 of 84 new outbreaks reported between December 5 and 11 were in workplace settings outside of health care, representing a [175 percent increase](#) in just two weeks. Tennessee reported 250 active COVID-19 outbreaks on December 20, [144 of which were in work settings](#).

Inequality In COVID Outbreaks. COVID-19 outbreaks have occurred among workers in numerous industries, including service and sales, education, hospitality, construction, domestic work, transportation, prison, and healthcare industries. Like in the general population, communities of color, the elderly, the immunocompromised and those with underlying medical conditions are particularly at risk for workplace transmitted infection. And workplace outbreaks have both tracked and exacerbated inequality, as lower-wage employees are more likely to have jobs that can only be done in person.

OSHA Rules Protect Workers

Millions Of Workers Will Be Protected. OSHA's vaccine or testing requirement applies to more than [84 million](#) private sector workers. Vaccines play a critical role in ending the pandemic and have saved countless lives. The vaccine or testing rule works to provide the safest possible workplace for individuals by preventing the spread of COVID-19 on the job.

Requires Vaccination OR Weekly Testing. OSHA's vaccine policy requires private businesses with more than [100 workers](#) to ensure their workforce is fully vaccinated, or submitting to weekly testing. The OSHA standard is not a vaccine mandate; for workers that do not wish to receive one of the three effective and safe FDA approved COVID-19 vaccines, [testing is an available](#) solution.

Paid Time Off For Vaccination. If a worker does choose to become vaccinated, the OSHA rule requires employers to provide [paid time off](#) for individuals to get vaccinated, as well as time to recuperate from any side effects of the vaccine.

Vaccinated Or Masked. Unvaccinated workers will be required to wear [masks](#) at work, to better protect themselves and their fellow workers from infection.

Vaccine Requirements Are Effective And Save Lives

COVID-19 Vaccines Are Effective. The COVID-19 vaccines greatly reduce the likelihood of contracting infection. The three vaccines authorized in the United States are [between 72 percent and 91.3 percent effective](#) against infection, and even more effective against serious illness and death. For comparison, flu vaccination reduces the risk of contracting the flu by 40 percent to 60 percent. Because people who do not contract COVID-19 cannot spread it, vaccination significantly reduces the spread of the virus.

Private Business Vaccine Requirements Are Proven Successful. Vaccine requirements are an extremely effective tool to increase vaccination rates, with many private companies already enforcing their own requirements. After issuing a vaccine requirement, United Airlines reported that [99.7 percent](#) of its 67,000 member workforce complied and is vaccinated.

Vaccine Requirements Boost Vaccinations. Of the 84 million workers covered under OSHA's vaccine or testing requirement, 31 million are estimated to already be vaccinated. It is expected that of the currently 53 million unvaccinated workers, [72 percent](#) will receive a vaccination as a result of the requirement, resulting in nearly 40 million additional vaccinated Americans.

OSHA Has Issued Rules Around Infectious Diseases Before

Previous Standards Have Worked and Saved Lives. When infectious diseases threaten the health or lives of workers, OSHA has stepped in to provide guidance and prevent illness. In [1991](#), under Republican President George H.W. Bush, OSHA issued a requirement to limit exposure to Hepatitis B and HIV/AIDS in occupational settings through a combination of methods including Hepatitis B vaccination and use of personal protective equipment.

Vaccine Requirements For Workers Maintain Strong Support

Majority Of Americans Support Worker Vaccine Requirements. A Politico/Morning Consult poll conducted in November 2021 found [55 percent](#) in support of requiring all employers with 100 or more workers to require COVID-19 vaccinations or weekly testing. Even without the option of weekly testing, [51 percent](#) would continue to support the requirement.