

Humboldt County COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions Sheltering Safely

Sheltering in place and physical distancing remain the best ways to curb the spread of COVID-19. However, wildfires are forcing many to evacuate their homes and move into temporary shelters.

Local health officials urge community residents and organizations to take steps to limit exposure to COVID-19 while sheltering wildfire evacuees. The following are frequently asked questions for individuals in need of shelter and those providing it.

How can I protect myself if I need to leave home and stay in a congregate shelter?

- Stay at least 6 feet away from those you don't live with.
- Wear facial coverings in public settings when around people who don't live in your household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
- Find a "buddy" in the facility to check on you, and make sure you are getting basic necessities such as food and household essentials.

• What if I'm evacuated and considered at-risk for COVID-19?

- Keep up-to-date lists of medical conditions and medications, and ensure you have a sufficient supply of your prescription and over-the-counter medications.
- Contact your health care provider about getting extra prescription medications to have on hand for a longer period of time, or consider using a mail-order medication option.
- Be aware of serious symptoms if you have underlying medical conditions. Know who to ask for help and when to call 911.

What if I get sick, have COVID-19 or suspect I do while in a congregate setting?

You, along with any roommates and close contacts, need to self-isolate and limit the use of shared spaces as much as possible.

- Wear a mask when it is necessary to be in shared spaces.
- Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing or taxis.
- Notify the facility manager and contact your health care provider. If you don't have a provider, call the Joint Information Center at 707-441-5000.

• How can I shelter fire evacuees as safely as possible?

- Require the use of facial coverings in shared spaces.
- Encourage use of outdoor space as much as weather and conditions allow, except for sleep.
- Since it is not possible to use facial coverings while eating, having meals outdoors and distanced is the safest option as weather and conditions allow.
- COVID-19 prevention supplies should be provided in common areas, such as soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizers that contain at least 60 percent alcohol, tissues, trash baskets. If possible, provide facial coverings that are regularly washed or discarded after each use.
- Non-essential volunteers and visitors in shared areas should be limited or avoided.
- Avoid entering residents' rooms or living quarters unless it is absolutely necessary.
- Staff should use virtual communications and check-ins (phone or video chat) as appropriate.

How can I help limit transmission in shared areas such as kitchens, dining rooms, laundry rooms and bathrooms?

- Restrict the number of people in these spaces at one time to maintain six feet of distance at all times.
- Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups or eating utensils. Non-disposable food service items should be handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher.
- Post guidelines for doing laundry such as washing instructions and handling of dirty laundry.
- Sinks are a possible source of infection. Avoid placing toothbrushes or other hygiene items directly on counter surfaces. Totes can be used for personal items so they do not touch the bathroom countertop.
- Frequent cleaning of all commonly used surfaces can help prevent spread of COVID-19 and other infections.

What should I do if someone I'm housing shows symptoms of COVID-19?

 Individuals who are ill should seek medical evaluation and may need COVID-19 testing. • People who are sick, their roommates and those who have a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should eat or be provided meals in their room if possible.

• Where can I go for more information?

• CDC interim guidance for general population disaster shelters during the COVID-19 pandemic.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Guidance-for-Gen-Pop-Disaster-Shelters-COVID19.pdf

 The CDC's Guidelines on Living in Shared Housing https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/shared-housing/index.html