

# SAFE RE-OPENING UPDATE

A safe & healthy workplace for City employees and the public



CITY OF  
OAKLAND

#oaklandlovelife

June 30, 2021

## **Important Updates & Reminders: New Workplace Guidelines, Upcoming Telecommute Application Deadline, Vaccination Information and More**

We're about two weeks into the re-opening of California, and there's still a lot of adjustment underway, including [new workplace guidelines from Cal/OSHA](#), which we have incorporated into [newly revised Employee FAQs](#). Many of you provided great feedback about our safe re-opening plans through the employee survey—thank you! A brief summary of the survey results is included below. For those of you interested in continuing to [telecommute](#), the application to apply is due this week: **Friday, July 2**. If you haven't been [vaccinated](#) yet, we strongly encourage you to do so. As new COVID variants evolve and circulate, it's the best way to keep our workplace and community safe. More detail on these topics is provided below.

And don't forget that **Monday, July 5 is a City holiday**. Enjoy your long 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend!

### **Re-Opening Plans & Telecommuting**

We continue to plan for the safe **re-opening of our facilities to the public** and the **return of our employees to the office**. The City provides a wide array of services, so we're keeping our re-opening planning flexible as we consider various operational requirements across departments, such as staffing levels, equipment needs, and space considerations. At the same time, we strive to provide some citywide consistency so the expectations for our employees and the public re-entering our facilities are clear.

Many municipalities in Alameda County have already re-opened public facilities or plan to do so soon, including Dublin, San Leandro, Alameda, Fremont, and Livermore. In Oakland we continue to take a measured and thoughtful approach to the process, acknowledging that many of our employees have **never stopped** reporting to work in person, serving the public both indoors and outdoors throughout the pandemic. Thank you for your service to our community!

Some departments have already returned to providing in-person services, and others are planning to have their staff return to the office in the coming weeks/months.

Overall, we are in the information-gathering stage of the process. During the month of July, here's what to expect:

- Telecommute applications are **due this Friday, July 2, 2021**
- Employees can submit revised applications if their circumstances have changed
- Decisions around telecommuting will be informed by the operational needs of each Department to provide those essential government services
- Employees may be allowed to telecommute a **maximum of three days a week**, pending approval of the Department Director
- Departments will review and respond to ongoing telecommuting applications **by July 30<sup>th</sup>**
- Management should consider program areas, supervisory controls, and safe workspaces

## We Hear You!

More than 1,200 City employees responded to the Employee Return-to-the-Office Survey from May 27 to June 11, 2021—what a great response! For those that completed the survey, thank you for your valuable feedback and ideas that will help guide the Safe Re-opening Task Force in the planning effort.

Employees from every City department responded to the survey, with significant participation from Planning & Building, OakDOT, Public Works, Finance, Oakland Public Library, Housing & Community Development, and the Oakland Police Department. The majority of responses came from employees who are currently working remotely or who worked remotely during most of the shelter in place order. About 15% of responses came from front line staff who have been working on site or outdoors during the shelter in place; we appreciate the perspective you bring to the employee experience.

Here are some of the overall findings from the survey:

- The majority of respondents found telecommuting to be beneficial to their work productivity, health and wellness, and work/life balance.
- Communication was the same or improved with supervisors and other staff.
- Employees support an ongoing, permanent telecommute policy which would allow a hybrid approach to their schedule, with some days working from home and some days reporting to their worksite.
- There was also support for meetings and trainings to remain virtual, when possible, to minimize large group settings and commuting to different worksites during the work day.

Employees noted four trending concerns:

1. **Communication** to employees about re-opening and COVID-related issues: employees expressed a need for more departmental communication from their leadership and more communication with specific plans from the City Administrator.

2. **Non-compliance with mandates** and policy from employees and the public (masking, social distancing, vaccination, signage, screening)
3. **Cleanliness** in the City buildings and cleaning supplies for individual work areas. Area configuration in cubicles, common areas such as elevators, restrooms, break / lunch rooms, conference, meeting rooms.
4. **Public safety** near City buildings and on public transportation while commuting. These concerns ranged from increased trends of violent crimes (particularly towards the AAPI community) to theft and robbery.

As next steps, the Task Force will organize the data by department and share specific feedback with each department SPOC and leadership team. This information will be taken into consideration as decisions about re-opening, safety and wellness, and telecommuting are made. We will address all of these concerns in more detail in ongoing updates such as this.

## Why are We Returning to the Office at All?

For those who are telecommuting, many of you have reported increased productivity. Without a commute or having to spend time going from meeting to meeting in person, employees say they have had more time to focus on their work. They have appreciated the flexibility, lower stress, and work/life balance that remote working provides. And there are certainly many environmental benefits to having fewer employees on the road in traffic.

So why return to the office? We want to incorporate the benefits we gained during the pandemic and allow more flexible work assignments, and also be available in person to serve our community. Here are some considerations:

- To re-open our facilities to the public, we need employees in the office. Unlike the private sector, as public servants we have a responsibility to serve everyone, and our public expects us to do that in person.
- There's also an equity factor: many people who come to our offices in person are BIPOC, low income, need language assistance, don't have technology resources to access services online, or require additional support that is best delivered by employees in person.
- We stimulate our local economy; our local coffee shops, lunch spots, and retailers depend on our business, and they have been suffering without customers. Those businesses employ local people and invest in our community, so we all benefit.
- Ultimately we are not just individual employees working on our own projects—we are interdependent teams and departments that function together as a whole. The City provides essential government services, delivered by all of us as public servants.

After 15 months of shelter in place, several deadly surges of the virus, and global uncertainty, it's natural for us to feel anxious about returning to the office. Even the

familiar seems new again. If you need support, please know that [Claremont Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP) provides a range of [free services](#) and [resources](#) for you and your family, including counseling and mental health support, legal services, and financial consultation. If your need is urgent, call **800-834-3773**. Counselors are available at all times.

## Applications are Due Friday for the New Telecommuting Program

Employees who are interested in an on-going telecommuting arrangement will need to [fill out and submit this online form](#). The form will be routed to your Department SPOC and Director for consideration and approval. The deadline to apply is **this Friday, July 2**. Please review the new [Employee Telecommute Policy/Administrative Instruction](#) for more details. Telecommuting requests will be considered for up to three days per week.

## Masking Requirements for Employees and the Public

The safety and wellness of our employees are of utmost concern. Our COVID-related workplace health and safety rules are based on Cal/OSHA's [revised standards](#), which went into effect on June 17.

Cal/OSHA's revised regulations state that, "Employers may allow fully vaccinated employees not to wear face coverings indoors, but must document their vaccination status." Under these regulations, since the City of Oakland is not currently recording the vaccination status of its employees, it is requiring all employees to wear a face covering.

We are also not asking the public to reveal their vaccination status. With COVID still circulating in our community and many people remaining unvaccinated, including children under 12, we must assume that people are unvaccinated and continue masking to keep everyone safe.

The City of Oakland will continue to require employees and visitors to our facilities to wear cloth face coverings, **even those who are vaccinated**. Please review the City's [Face Covering Requirements](#) for more details.

The City just published newly revised [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) for employees which incorporates the latest Cal/OSHA regulations and covers topics such as COVID safety protocols, SB 95 supplemental paid sick leave, and testing and exposure protocols.

## Get Vaccinated! Stay Healthy and Enjoy that Mask-Free Feeling

COVID-19 is still spreading widely among those who are unvaccinated. If you aren't vaccinated yet or haven't completed your vaccination series, we strongly encourage

you to drop in to a [community-based site](#) or [make an appointment](#) to protect yourself from COVID-19. Anyone who missed their second dose can call (510) 208-4VAX to schedule an appointment.

Still unsure? For real talk and a bit of humor, check out Oakland's own W. Kamau Bell, host of CNN's series "United Shades of America," ask Black health care workers about the COVID vaccine on ["The Conversation: Between Us, About Us."](#) Or check out [We>COVID](#).

## From Our Partners at Alameda County Public Health

Alameda County has lifted its Shelter in Place order and has fully aligned with the State of California's [Beyond the Blueprint](#) guidance. Restrictions like physical distancing and capacity limits have ended. Daily life moving forward may resemble pre-pandemic days in many ways, and vaccinated people can go unmasked in many settings. Even with many restrictions lifted, businesses may require masking or capacity limits on their own. **Remember to bring a mask when you are out in public** in case you are requested to wear one.

The Alameda County **local emergency declaration remains in effect**. While COVID-19 restrictions can be relaxed due to rising vaccination rates, the need for emergency response efforts continues for the time being. Good news for renters: the [eviction moratorium ordinance](#) will remain in effect until 60 days after the local health emergency is lifted. (See [FAQ](#) for more information.)

**Protect yourself against COVID-19 – get vaccinated.** The more individuals get vaccinated, the closer we are to moving beyond this pandemic. COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective at preventing COVID-19 disease, especially severe illness and death. Alameda County welcomes anyone needing their second dose to walk up to one of their sites, regardless of where you received your first dose. Click [here](#) for more information.

**Are you up to date on all vaccinations?** Plan for back to school vaccinations to protect your child with important vaccines for diseases like measles or whooping cough in addition to COVID-19. You can get your COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines at the same time. Visit this [website](#) to find COVID-19 vaccine-supported sites across Alameda County.

The state has announced the **Digital COVID-19 Vaccine Record portal**, a website that Californians can use to get a digital copy of their vaccine record. The portal draws COVID-19 records from California's immunization systems and is an optional program, not a vaccine passport. Visit the [FAQ](#) for more information.

Please **be kind if you see someone masked** after the CDC and CDPH removed requirements for fully vaccinated people. People may have health conditions such as cancer or autoimmune diseases. They may have unvaccinated children at home, or high-risk loved ones they are protecting. They may have asthma and have realized

over the last year that their symptoms are alleviated by a mask outdoors. Or they may not yet be vaccinated.

## For More Information

- [Employee Resources](#) section of City’s COVID website—provides a one-stop shop for City employees looking for information, policies, forms, and updates
- [Frequently Asked Questions for City Employees](#)—provides detailed guidance on COVID-related leave policies, COVID testing for City employees, what to do if you are exposed to COVID, etc.
- House Calls for Vaccinations: Oaklanders who need a vaccination should visit [this site](#) or call **510-208-4VAX**. Residents who need an in-home vaccination can call **1-833-422-4255** or visit [www.myturn.ca.gov](http://www.myturn.ca.gov)
- News, stats and information from the [Alameda County Department of Public Health](#)
- Updates from the [California Department of Public Health](#)