

# Rural Alaska Waste Workers

## Suggestions and Guidance During Covid-19 and Anytime



Can you handle trash and keep yourself safe? **YES.**

Medical Experts, like the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization, agree -- *Regular municipal trash is not a source of exposure.* The virus gets transmitted from *person to person.*

Eliminate the ways you are exposed to people while managing trash, and you eliminate your virus risk while managing trash.

**DISTANCE YOURSELF!** The most powerful way to reduce infection risk on the job is to stay more than 6 feet from everyone as much as possible. Do not enter any homes. Don't accept waste directly from anyone.

**General Sanitary Actions to Take** The Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) has this Covid-19 advice for waste workers at transfer stations, a job applicable to most rural Alaska waste workers:



- ◆ Clean and disinfect hands hourly
- ◆ Use radio-based communication to relay information instead of in-person
- ◆ Do not share pens, phones, pencils with anyone
- ◆ Sanitize your hands after using shared keys, radio, phone, clipboard, etc.
- ◆ Use latex gloves or washable gloves
- ◆ If you are able, rotate out gloves to a clean pair during breaks
- ◆ *Avoid touching your face while wearing gloves (or anytime)*
- ◆ Wash (if possible) and sanitize your hands right after removing your gloves

**A cloth face cover is** recommended during times that you are unable to stay 6 feet away from non-household members. Infected people may not have any symptoms, *including you.* Covering your face reduces the chance of infecting others. If you can change your waste management activities so you stay 6 feet away, there is no recommendation for a face cover. To make, use, and wear a face cover correctly, see the [State of Alaska Recommendations regarding cloth face coverings](#).



**Your community needs to do their part.** Trash should be securely tied up and set outside for waste collectors to handle safely. Self-haulers and those bringing their bags to in-town waste bins must also securely tie up their bags. **Don't collect overfull or leaky bags.** Talk to families and if necessary, bring the issue to your Council and/or your employer.

**Do you have ill community members?** The [CDC recommends that families dedicate a lined trash can for an ill person.](#) Caretakers should use gloves when removing or disposing their trash and trash bags – and must **Wash their hands** afterwards. Families using washbowls should discard the wash & sanitize the bowl after. **Not sure if its Covid-19?** If someone shows symptoms, they should call the clinic right away. Treat their trash as if they have it until you know you don't. Households should tell you if there is an ill person. Trash bags should be double-bagged, closed securely, and *placed in a hard container, like a trash can or bucket, outside the home.*

