

December 30, 2021

Dear Indiana Conference Employee,

As you may have heard, the federal courts have allowed OSHA to implement the COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing Emergency Temporary Standard (“ETS”) for employers with 100 or more employees. Since the Indiana Conference has over 200 employees this ETS applies to us. The Supreme Court will be hearing appeals to that decision, but it is not likely to be reversed or changed before the ETS is enforced.

The ETS gives employers the option to either (1) require vaccinations of all employees, no exceptions, or (2) offer employees the choice of either being vaccinated or masking and being tested. The Indiana Conference has chosen to implement the second option, that is, to permit its employees to choose either vaccination or masking/testing.

We know there are a wide variety of opinions about the wisdom and appropriateness of these regulations, even within the Church. The reality is, however, that the ETS has enough flexibility to it that nearly everyone’s convictions and conscience on the matter of the pandemic and vaccines can be accommodated. No one is required to be vaccinated. Those that object to vaccination on grounds of religion, conscience, or even medical disagreement, can avail themselves of the testing/masking option, and the Conference will reimburse the testing cost up to \$10 per test.

We believe that when state regulations can be applied consistently with the beliefs and teachings of our church, and with fairness and respect to the consciences of our employees, that we and our employees have an obligation to abide by them. This is what Paul says in Romans 13, where he directed us to “submit to the governing authorities” when they legislate “for our good.” Christ also made clear that we should “render to Caesar” the things that are his, which includes those issues related to health and safety. (Compare Luke 20:25 with Luke 17:11-14).

In light of these principles, we are asking you to read our policies and procedures to implement the requirements of the ETS. **Specifically, please read the attached conference policy (Attachment 5); sign, date and return the employee acknowledgment (see Attachment 5) either by email attachment ([fnico@indysda.org](mailto:fnico@indysda.org)) or regular mail by January 9.**

Here is some additional basic information:

- Please provide to Faith Nico (email: [fnlco@indysda.org](mailto:fnlco@indysda.org)) information on your COVID-19 vaccination status by January 9, 2022. We are requesting that you submit copies of your vaccine card, either hard copy or by e-mail, showing the date(s) of your shot(s), as well as where they were administered.
- If you do not get your last COVID-19 vaccine dose (i.e., second dose of a two-dose series, or first dose of a one-dose series) by February 8, 2022, you will be required to get tested weekly for COVID-19 and wear a face covering while you are at inside at work (when you are not alone in your office), and while traveling in a car or other vehicle with co-workers.
- If you choose the testing/masking pathway, you will need to arrange for weekly testing and submission of the results to Conference HR. The Conference will reimburse you up to \$10 a test for costs associated with testing and is also working on a plan to proctor at-home tests over Zoom. We will provide more information about that plan at a later time. It would be wise to purchase a few of these tests now as there will very likely be a rush on these as this ETS is implemented nation-wide.
- You will be provided reasonable time, including up to four hours of paid time, to receive each COVID-19 vaccine dose, and reasonable time and paid sick leave to recover from any side effects.
- You must immediately notify us if you have tested positive for COVID-19 or have been diagnosed with COVID-19 by a licensed healthcare provider, and you will be removed from the workplace until you meet return-to-work criteria.

In addition to informing you about our policies and procedures to implement the requirements of the ETS, attached is some additional information about the standard:

- Attachment 1: The requirements of OSHA's COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing ETS;
- Attachment 2: CDC's "[Key Things to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines](#);"
- Attachment 3: The requirements of 29 CFR 1904.35(b)(1)(iv), which prohibits employers from discharging or in any manner discriminating against an employee for reporting a work-related injuries or illness, and section 11(c) of the OSH Act, which prohibits employers from discriminating against an employee for exercising rights under, or as a result of actions that are required by, the ETS. Section 11(c) also protects the employee from retaliation for filing an occupational safety or health complaint, reporting a work-related injuries or illness, or otherwise exercising any rights afforded by the OSH Act; and
- Attachment 4: The prohibitions of 18 U.S.C. 1001 and of section 17(g) of the OSH Act, which provide for criminal penalties associated with knowingly supplying false statements or documentation.
- Attachment 5: Conference COVID-19 Vaccination, Testing and Face Covering Policy

We are planning zoom meetings on Tuesday, Jan 4 at 6:00 pm and Wednesday, January 5 at 9:30 am to answer questions. Attendance is optional. Links for these meetings will be sent to your email address.

Finally, please understand that regardless of your personal opinion about this ETS, non-compliance is not an option. OSHA has broad enforcement powers and its fines are severe: up to \$13,653 for each violation and \$136,532 (10X) for willful violations. Payment of these fines would be ruinous to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Indiana.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation. We will monitor the legal developments on this matter closely, especially the decision of the Supreme Court, and make policy changes as needed and communicate those changes to you. Let us pray that the work of the Indiana Conference will go forward uninterrupted in spite of the current challenges facing us.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Vic Van Schaik". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vic Van Schaik  
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark M Eaton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark M Eaton  
Secretary-Treasurer