

Apple has reportedly closed an Apple Store in Texas due to a COVID-19 outbreak



Apple closed one of its Southlake, Texas retail stores Wednesday after many staff members contracted COVID-19, according to NBC News' Zoe Schiffer. A manager told employees Wednesday that 22 staffers "have shared that they're positive for COVID-19," NBC News reported, and four of the store's 151 employees reported positive cases right after Black Friday. The store will be closed through Sunday.

NBC News' report highlights a few worrying trends about the Southlake location. One employee said they had previously raised concerns about being unable to keep social distancing. He and another employee said the store was packed "shoulder to shoulder" on Black Friday. And a manager at the Southlake store apparently had asked employees to come even if they had called in sick:

NBC spoke with four current and former employees at the Southlake store who said they've received calls from their

manager encouraging them to come to work, even when they called out sick. In two of these cases, the employee had taken the Covid-19 survey and the results said not to come in. The manager did not respond to requests for comment from NBC.

Apple's official policy requires retail staffers to wear masks and to take a COVID-19 survey before they go to work. They must also be tested for COVID-19 frequently: unvaccinated workers must be tested twice per week and vaccinated workers tested once per week.

The company didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. Schiffer reported this month for *The Verge* that many of Apple's frontline workers find working conditions to be untenable.

Most of Apple's corporate employees will return to the offices in a hybrid work pilot beginning February 1st. The company originally announced its hybrid work plans in June with the intent to return in September, but that was delayed to January and then to February. Facebook parent company Meta has also recently updated its return to work policies. Offices will fully reopen on January 31st, but staff will be able to defer coming back by three to five months.

<https://www.theverge.com/2021/12/9/22826604/apple-store-closed-southlake-texas-covid-19-outbreak-black-friday>