



## Coronavirus (COVID-19) Employer Guidance

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News about the increasing threat of coronavirus have employers wondering how to prepare their businesses and their employees for corona-related impact. It's up to employers to advise employees and protect against the spread of illness in our workplaces, including COVID-19\*:

### Advise Employees About Preventative Measures:

- Frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- The CDC recommends singing Happy Birthday twice to approximate 20 seconds' washing time.
- Consider sending out handwashing guidelines, like the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)'s [handwashing website](#).
- Use hand sanitizer when handwashing isn't possible. Use a formula with at least 60% alcohol (per the CDC).  
*Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands, but they are not effective against all viruses.*
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and then dispose of the tissue.
- Advise employees to stay home if they are experiencing a fever or other symptoms of illness.
- Advise employees to seek immediate medical attention if they experience flu-like symptoms or believe they have been exposed to coronavirus.
- If employees become sick at work, send them home.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as copiers, elevator buttons, and door handles with a cleaning spray or wipe.
- The CDC does not recommend general use of a facemask for people who are well. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms.
- Consider distributing hand sanitizer to employees and making sanitizers available in common areas such as conference rooms, lunch and break rooms, restrooms, reception areas, etc.



## Implement Calm, Regular Employee Communications:

- Provide helpful resources from known sources:
  - [CDC Guidelines for Prevention and Treatment of COVID-19](#)
  - [World Health Organization's Q&A on Coronaviruses](#)
  - [CDC's Coronavirus Disease Information for Travel](#)
- Remember that the hype of the 24-hour news cycle can create panic. The news coverage isn't designed to take a long view and can cause overreaction.

## Review Your Disaster Preparedness Plan and Policies

- Review and share your disaster preparedness plan in case employees must work from home.
- Ensure that those who may work from home have up-to-date remote access information and tools. Management, in particular, may wish to be prepared to work from home.
- Ensure you have accurate personal emails and mobile phone numbers. Remember: if non-exempt employees work during non-working hours, including responding to emails or texts or phone calls, they must be paid in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- Consider limiting travel, particularly by air. If traveling, see the [CDC's Coronavirus Disease Information for Travel](#).
- Remember: under OSHA, these and other highly communicable diseases count as "known hazards" under that law which means employers have an obligation to protect their workforces from those hazards.
- OSHA does not have specific standards relating to COVID-19, but indicates that "some OSHA requirements may apply to preventing occupational exposure to COVID-19." Review OSHA's [COVID-19 website](#), including [COVID-19 standards](#).
- Any type of influenza, including COVID-19, could qualify as a serious health condition under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or state-specific family leave regulations. Generally, companies with 50 or more employees are covered by FMLA and states have differing requirements.
- Influenza and other viruses could rise to the level of a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act and state disability statutes. Care must be taken not to discriminate on this basis.

*\*There are many types of human coronaviruses, some of which cause mild upper-respiratory illnesses. The current threat which was initially identified in Wuhan, China is coming from a newly identified coronavirus named COVID-19 for Coronavirus-19.*