



What Businesses Need to Know About COVID-19

Similar to influenza viruses, SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, has the potential to cause extensive outbreaks. Under conditions associated with widespread person-to-person spread, multiple areas of the United States and other countries may see impacts at the same time. In the absence of a vaccine, an outbreak may also be an extended event. As a result, workplaces may experience:

- Absenteeism
- Changes in patterns of commerce
- Interrupted supply/delivery

While the media continues to report on the subject – not always accurately – the Oklahoma Safety Council wants you to know where to get the best information to help your business make informed decisions on operations in order to keep your workers and their families safe. Ultimately, the best resource for the most current information is the Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). They have a complete page of interim guidance for business and employers at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html> and here's what they are recommending:

- **Actively encourage sick employees to stay home.** Sick workers who do come to work should be separated upon arrival at the workplace. Employers may want to revisit their sick-leave policy and consider a liberal leave option during this time.
- **Perform routine environmental cleaning.** Any frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, computer workstations, elevator buttons, guardrails/stair rails, faucets, etc. should be cleaned with regular frequency using the standard antibacterial/antiviral household cleaner that you might normally use. No additional disinfection is currently being recommended.
- **Advise employees to take certain steps before traveling.** Check with the CDC Traveler's Health Notices for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel. Advise travelers to check themselves for symptoms of respiratory illness and stay home if they are sick. Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand they should notify their supervisor and should promptly call a healthcare provider for assistance, if needed.
- **Additional measures in response to COVID-19 include:**
 - **Employees who are well but who have sick family members with COVID-19** should notify their supervisor and refer to the CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.
 - **If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19**, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The CDC guidance on how to conduct a risk assessment should also be used to assess co-worker's risks of potential exposure.

At this time, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) emphasizes that, while the novel coronavirus, COVID-19 poses a potentially serious public health threat, the risk to individuals is dependent on exposure. For most people in the United States, including most types of workers, the risk of infection with COVID-19 is currently low.

For more information on what your workplace can do to protect its workers you may also visit OSHA's website at <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>

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