

Health and Safety: PREVENT, PLAN, PROTECT

Text highlighted in blue should be adapted to your Business/Organization.

OVERVIEW AND BEST PRACTICES

PREPARE AN OUTBREAK RESPONSE PLAN

- Ensure the plan is flexible and involves employees in development and review.
- Conduct a focused discussion or exercise using the plan, to find out ahead of time whether the plan has gaps or problems that need to be corrected.
- Share the plan with employees and explain available human resources policies, workplace and leave flexibilities, and pay and benefits information.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the [Department of Labor](#) and [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's](#) websites).
- Explore whether you can establish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others if state and local health authorities recommend the use of social distancing strategies. For employees who are able to telework, supervisors should encourage employees to telework instead of coming into the workplace until symptoms are completely resolved. Ensure that you have the information technology and infrastructure needed to support multiple employees who may be able to work from home.
- Identify essential business functions, essential jobs or roles, and critical elements within your supply chains (e.g., raw materials, suppliers, subcontractor services/products, and logistics) required to maintain business operations. Plan for how your business will operate if there is increasing absenteeism or these supply chains are interrupted.
- Set up authorities, triggers, and procedures for activating and terminating the company's infectious disease outbreak response plan, altering business operations (e.g., possibly changing or closing operations in affected areas), and transferring business knowledge to key employees. Work closely with your local health officials to identify these triggers.
- Plan to minimize exposure between employees and also between employees and the public, if public health officials call for social distancing.
- Establish a process to communicate information to employees and business partners on your infectious disease outbreak response plans and latest COVID-19 information. Anticipate employee fear, anxiety, rumors, and misinformation, and plan communications accordingly.
- In Texas all school have been closed. Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from school. Businesses and other employers should prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies for these employees.
- Local conditions will influence the decisions that public health officials make regarding community-level strategies; employers should take the time now to learn about plans in place in each community where they have a business.

- If there is evidence of a COVID-19 outbreak in the US, consider canceling non-essential business travel to additional countries per [travel guidance](#) on the CDC website.
 - Travel restrictions may be enacted by other countries which may limit the ability of employees to return home if they become sick while on travel status.
- Contact health departments to confirm channels of communication and methods for dissemination of local outbreak information.
- Share best practices with other businesses in the community (especially those within the supply chain), Business/Organization Names of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

All employers need to consider how best to decrease the spread of acute respiratory illness and lower the impact of COVID-19 in their workplace in the event of an outbreak in the US. They should identify and communicate their objectives, which may include one or more of the following: (a) reducing transmission among staff, (b) protecting people who are at higher risk for adverse health complications, (c) maintaining business operations, and (d) minimizing adverse effects on other entities in their supply chains. Some of the key considerations when making decisions on appropriate responses are:

- Disease severity (i.e., number of people who are sick, hospitalization and death rates) in the community where the business is located;
- Impact of disease on employees that are vulnerable and may be at higher risk for COVID-19 adverse health complications. Inform employees that some people may be at higher risk for severe illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions.
- Prepare for possible increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in employees and their family members, dismissals of early childhood programs and K-12 schools due to high levels of absenteeism or illness:
 - Employers should plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace. Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher than usual absenteeism.
 - Cross-train personnel to perform essential functions so that the workplace is able to operate even if key staff members are absent.
 - Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products. Be prepared to change your business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations if needed).
- Employers with more than one business location are encouraged to provide local managers with the authority to take appropriate actions outlined in their business infectious disease outbreak response plan based on the condition in each locality.
- Coordination with [state](#) and local health officials is strongly encouraged for all businesses so that timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses in each location where their operations reside. Since the intensity of an outbreak may differ according to geographic location, local health officials will be issuing guidance specific to their communities.

PREVENT

Educate, Communicate and Inform

STATEWIDE PREVENTION EFFORTS

The Texas Health and Human Services is actively monitoring the coronavirus (COVID-19) and has established a task force to facilitate and disseminate information, marshal resources, and ensure an appropriate response to a potential outbreak. Individuals and families have been urged to prepare themselves and work within their communities to prevent the spread of disease. Steps recommended by the Texas Health and Human Services include:

- Avoid non-essential travel.
- Avoid travel and contact with other people if you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid contact with sick people.

Beginning, **March 16**, we have begun to:

- Restrict gatherings to less than **xx** healthy individuals. (These restrictions are not mandatory but are meant to be proactive and preventative.) **In Texas social distancing of 10 or more is mandatory.**
- Provide the option for telecommuting to all employees where possible.

The **Business/Organization Name** has established **link to online resource guide** to provide information and active measures employers and employees can take for prevention. More information — particularly concerning treatment for the coronavirus — is available through the Texas Health and Human Services; <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/tools.aspx>.

BEST BUSINESS PRACTICES FOR PREVENTING THE CORONAVIRUS

The highest priority of any business is to protect the health, safety, and life of employees and clients. Every decision emanates from that single objective, including guidelines employees have within their places of business, the flexibility and encouragement they are given to attend to their own health needs — as well as those of their families — and a supportive workplace environment that has considered and prepared for disruptions in services, manufacturing, marketing, sales, and supply chains.

All employers should be ready to implement strategies to protect their workforce from COVID-19 while ensuring continuity of operations. During a COVID-19 outbreak, all sick employees should stay home and away from the workplace, [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) and [hand hygiene](#) should be encouraged, and routine cleaning of commonly touched surfaces should be performed regularly.

Best practices encouraged by business and health care experts separate into two categories, 1) those who are not feeling well or suspect they have the coronavirus and 2) those who are feeling well and need to take precautions.

Those who believe they may have been exposed to coronavirus or who are not feeling well should:

- Be actively encouraged to remain at home except to receive health care.
- Stay separate and apart from individuals and animals within the home.
- Call the doctor before visiting to describe symptoms and receive instructions.
- Wear a facemask in public and among household companions.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Clean hands and wash often with soap and water for 20 seconds or an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Avoid sharing household items.
- Clean all “high touch” surfaces every day.
- Have clothing and bedding washed as frequently as possible.
- Monitor symptoms and inform healthcare professionals, particularly if they worsen.
- Confirm illness and contagion have passed before returning to work or public engagement.
- CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Sick employees should [cover their noses and mouths](#) with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available).

Those who are feeling well and have no reason to believe they have been exposed to coronavirus should proceed as they would during any cold and flu season:

- Perform hand hygiene frequently.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Try to remain in open spaces with good airflow.
- Maintain a healthy diet and exercise.
- Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, and clothing items with workmates.
- Clean all “high-touch” surfaces, such as counters, desk- and tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, and tablets, every day.
- Sanitize workspaces and public transportation areas like handles and stabilizing bars in subway cars, as well as arm rests and tray tables in buses, trains, and airplanes.
- Wash clothing regularly.
- Maintain a comfortable distance in conversations in a tight working environment, such as two or more gathered around a computer.
- Consider replacing a handshake with a fist bump or friendly salute.

Suggested Prevention Efforts:

- Identify possible work-related exposure and health risks to your employees. OSHA has more information on how to [protect workers from potential exposures to COVID-19](#).
- [Place posters](#) that encourage [staying home when sick](#), [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#), and [hand hygiene](#) at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.

- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
- Instruct employees to clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
- Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.
- Visit the CDC [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) and [clean hands web page](#) for more information.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.
- Cancel all potlucks and shared meals.
- Run the dishwasher every evening.
- Communicate regular updates to employees and stakeholders.
- Physical Facility - Appoint a team member to coordinate and understand the building management plan for regular cleaning and communication should someone in the office become sick.

PLAN

SICK EMPLOYEES

The United States Department of Health and Human Services, along with the CDC, recommends that companies:

- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.
- Do not require a health care provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as health care provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
- Speak with vendors that provide contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.
- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:
 - Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
 - Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.

- Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
- Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.
- Separate sick employees:
 - CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Sick employees should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available).
- Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees:
 - [Place posters](#) that encourage [staying home when sick](#), [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#), and [hand hygiene](#) at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
 - Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
 - Instruct employees to clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
 - Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.
 - Visit the CDC [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) and [clean hands web page](#) for more information.
- Perform routine environmental cleaning:
 - Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
 - No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.
 - Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

SICK FAMILY MEMBERS

Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with coronavirus should notify their supervisor and refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](#) of their potential exposure. If an employee is confirmed to have coronavirus, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed coronavirus should refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](#) of their potential exposure.

- Additional measures in response to currently occurring sporadic importations of COVID-19:
 - Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and refer to 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). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](#) of their potential exposure.

REMOTE WORK CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Should an **Emergency Remote Work Plan** become necessary due to infection among employees, family members, or the community at large:

- Acknowledge the possibility that all or part of your workforce may need to work remotely.
- Map out jobs and tasks that could be affected.
- Audit available IT hardware and software, and close any gaps in access and adoption.
- Set up a communications protocol in advance.
- Ensure that IT support has a redundancy plan and can support staff remotely.
- Survey staff members to assess remote working needs. Provide missing tools as needed.
- Assess departments, redundancy, staggered work shifts and backup work plans.
- Create individual plans for each department to include back up for sick co-workers, schedule calls for team meetings, upcoming work or obstacles to complete the work.
- Identify supply chain, vendors, partners and options.
- Identify ways to measure performance that could inform broader change.

Detailed information concerning these recommendations are included in [“What’s Your Company’s Emergency Remote-Work Plan?”](#) *The Harvard Business Review*, February 28, 2020.

TRAVEL ADVICE OR RESTRICTIONS

- Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps:
 - Check the [CDC’s Traveler’s Health Notices](#) for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from China, and information for aircrew, can be found at on the [CDC website](#).
 - Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of [acute respiratory illness](#) before starting travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
 - Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and should promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
 - If outside the United States, sick employees should follow your company’s policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to assist them with finding an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities

do not have the legal authority, capability, and resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

PROTECT

In the event of a community cluster outbreak:

See Crisis Communication Plan

Internal: Staff

- Email, text, phone call to each team member
 - Updates on the situation
 - Notify we have activated remote-work plan
 - All staff call to review instructions
 - Instructions and notification to our members and stakeholders about meetings that are planned and instructions on how to participate remotely
 - Executive Team calls to determine next steps with upcoming activities and events
 - Regular communication with supervisor and HR on personal and family health status changes
 - Supervisors continue to communicate daily and manage the workload and team
 - Communication to building management if a team member becomes sick and implement restricted access and cleaning
 - Monitor office cameras remotely
 - Determine restricted or no staff entry to the offices
 - Place signage on doors with numbers to call for information updates
 - Main number transferred to remote receptionists
 - Communication with IT support and activate a remote support team

External: Member and Community Partners

- Email prepared and ready to be sent to our members and community partners alerting them to office closing and remote-work status.
 - Our team is still available and work continues
 - We will keep them updated
 - See our website for continued updates

PRACTICE

- Test the plan - identify a day and practice from top to bottom.
- Test front desk call forwards.
- Test all staff remote work environments and communication.
- Revise plan as needed.