

# Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

## Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for Businesses/Employers

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) is offering this resource to provide general information about the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), recommend strategies for employers to use to prevent workplace exposures to acute respiratory illnesses, including novel coronavirus, and to guide the management of employees who have recently returned to Los Angeles County from an area with known transmission of the novel coronavirus or who have had a known exposure to a laboratory confirmed case. This guidance is based on directives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) who are charged with the management of the response to the novel coronavirus across the United States.

Many businesses and employees in Los Angeles County are concerned about the current outbreak of the 2019 novel coronavirus. The CDC is working hard to learn as much as possible about 2019-nCoV so that we can understand more about how it spreads and better characterize its associated illness. Public Health continues to develop and update guidance and education materials in the face of evolving information. Please visit the DPH Novel Coronavirus webpage for FAQs, infographics, and other resources: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>

There continues to be a significant increase in the number of people infected with this virus in mainland China. To date, Los Angeles County still only has one confirmed case of novel coronavirus in a non-resident traveler from Wuhan, and there are a relatively small number of additional cases diagnosed across the United States. At this time, novel coronavirus is NOT spreading in the community in either California or the United States. Thus, the immediate health risk from 2019-nCoV for the general public is still considered low.

However, because the risk of exposure to this new coronavirus in mainland China is increasing over time, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared a public health emergency to allow local, state, and federal officials to fully coordinate responses in partnership with public health departments, emergency management teams, airports, health care professionals, and first responders.

**In the United States currently, the threat to the general public for contracting coronavirus remains low.**

### General Information

#### **What is novel coronavirus?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Many of them infect animals, but some coronaviruses from animals can evolve (change) and infect humans, then spread from person-to-person. This is what happened with the current novel coronavirus known as 2019-nCoV. Diseases from coronaviruses in people typically cause mild to moderate illness, like the common cold. Some, like the SARS or MERS viruses, cause serious infections like pneumonia.

#### **What are common symptoms of 2019-nCoV?**

Information to date shows this new virus causes symptoms consistent with a respiratory illness, such as cough, fever, and, in some, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

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If a person develops any of these symptoms within 14 days of their travel from mainland China or their last contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus, they should seek medical care right away. They should first call the doctor's office or emergency room and tell them about their symptoms and recent travel.

### How is novel coronavirus spread?

Like other respiratory illnesses, such as influenza, human coronaviruses most commonly spread to others from an infected person who has symptoms through:

- Respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands

Novel coronavirus is new, and we continue learning more each day about how it spreads and how long it takes for people to become sick. As information changes, we will keep you informed.

Do not assume that someone is at risk for novel coronavirus infection based on their race/ethnicity or country of origin.

### How is 2019-nCoV treated?

There is no specific treatment for illness caused by the novel coronavirus. However, many of the symptoms can be treated. Treatment is based on the patient's condition.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent novel coronavirus. Be aware of scam products for sale that make false claims to prevent or treat this new infection.

### Do business events need to be cancelled?

No. At this time, there is no need to cancel business or social events. There is no current threat to the general public in the United States, and there are no restrictions on public gatherings. Remind and support employees that part of good health hygiene is staying home from business-related events and other social events when they are ill.

The following strategies are adapted from in the CDC's [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\), February 2020](#) [accessed on February 11, 2020]

### Recommended strategies for employers to use now to prevent workplace exposures to acute respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19:

- **Support and 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 for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication. 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.

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- 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:**
  - It is recommended that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, fever, 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), then immediately wash their hands (preferable) or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Support and emphasize the use of respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees:**
  - Place posters that encourage [staying home when sick](#), [cough and sneeze 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 to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, preparing or serving food, and after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing. 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 [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) and [clean hands webpage](#) for more information.
- **Perform routine environmental cleaning and disinfection:**
  - Routinely clean and disinfect 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 disinfectant wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

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- **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 travel is planned. 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.

Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/guidance-business-response.html> for additional CDC guidance related to planning for a possible 2019-nCoV outbreak in the US

### **What do businesses need to know about how travelers returning from mainland China are being screened and managed?**

Because of the explosion in the number of new cases in mainland China the past few days, the White House recently issued a set of new directives that became effective on February 3. The orders mandate the following:

- All foreign nationals who have traveled or been in mainland China in the last 14 days are restricted from entering the US. *(This order can be renewed by the President every 14 days.)*
- All US citizens, legal permanent residents, and their close family members returning from mainland China are required to enter through one of eleven airports in the US (including LAX), where they will be screened and directed to do one of the following by US Customs and Border Protection agents:
  - If travelers show signs of respiratory illness, they will be transported from the airport to a health care facility for further evaluation to determine whether they need further medical assessment and care.
  - All travelers who were in the Hubei Province at any time in the past 14 days are considered high risk and need to be immediately quarantined and monitored at a safe location for 14 days from their last exposure.
  - Returning travelers from other places in mainland China who have been in close contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus in the last 14 days are considered high risk and

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will be immediately quarantined and monitored at a safe location for 14 days from their last exposure.

- All other returning travelers from mainland China outside Hubei Province are considered medium risk and can travel to their final destination. Once they arrive at their final destination, they are asked to practice social distancing, stay home, and monitor their health for up to 14 days. Public health departments will follow-up with all travelers designated medium risk.

### Who do these updated directives apply to?

The risk of exposure to this new coronavirus in mainland China has been increasing over time. For this reason, these orders apply only to travelers from mainland China arriving in the United States effective Monday, February 3, 2020. Persons who have arrived from mainland China prior to this date are at lower risk of infection with novel coronavirus and do not need to be excluded from activities unless they are ill.

### How is Public Health implementing the traveler directives? And how will employers be informed?

- Returning travelers who do not require quarantine but have recently traveled in mainland China are identified as being at medium risk and should contact the LA County Public Health Department at (add number). Public Health staff will provide guidance for social distancing and self-monitoring of health status for up to 14 days. Returning travelers will be instructed to contact Public Health should they become ill.
- The quarantine or social distancing of medium risk travelers will be done with public safety and privacy in mind. Public Health will not provide employers with information about specific travelers but will encourage returning employees to contact their employer regarding their need for social distancing.
- Businesses will be informed by Public Health if there is an identified case of novel coronavirus in their workplace that resulted in exposures at the workplace.
- Members of the public are encouraged to call 2-1-1 for more information.

### What is social distancing?

Social distancing means remaining away from others and out of public places where close contact with others may occur, e.g., workplaces (unless the person works in an office space that allows complete distancing from others), shopping centers, movie theaters, stadiums, schools and other classroom settings, and local public conveyances (e.g., bus, subway, taxi, ride share) for the duration of the potential incubation period unless presence in such locations is approved by the state or local health department. The returning traveler is free to return to all their normal activities once the incubation period is over (this is usually 14 days for the last possible exposure to the virus) and they have no symptoms of illness.

### How will Public Health inform businesses if there is an exposure at the workplace?

*If there is a confirmed case that may have exposed others at the workplace, a DPH official will call the administrative manager at that location. Public Health staff will work with designated staff to identify who*

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was in contact with the case and to begin the process to notify and monitor contacts. Public Health Communications will work with your administrative and HR managers to develop internal messaging for communication to employees.

### For more information:

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health, County)
  - <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH, State)
  - <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, National)
  - Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV), February 2020 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/guidance-business-response.html>
  - Main coronavirus webpage <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html>
  - World Health Organization (WHO, International)

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