

Coronavirus “Top Takeaways” for Employers



In responding to the new coronavirus, 2019-nCoV, employers are advised to comport with the following recommended practices:

- Do not panic. It is important to provide accurate and consistent information reflecting the guidelines offered by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) and other government agencies, including the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) (OSHA).
- Remember that any policies implemented during this period must be enforced uniformly.
- Review your company’s Communicable Disease Plan and Emergency Action Protocol (EAP) contained within the company’s Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP); if you do not have these programs, work with outside counsel to develop them.
- Impacted employers, or those that have (1) employees who have traveled to/returned from China within the past 14 days; or, (2) employees who have had close contact with someone confirmed to have the virus or someone who is being evaluated for infection, should require these employees to work from home for 14 calendar days, the length of the suspected incubation and transmission period.
- If an employee is unable to work for health reasons, he or she should be placed on administrative leave for the extent of the 14-day period.
- Encourage employees to work from home if exhibiting signs and symptoms of illness, and encourage them to employ precautionary measures to protect against the spread of illness, including washing hands regularly and practicing general sickness etiquette (e.g., covering your mouth while coughing, etc.).
- Employees working from home should be instructed to “self-monitor” for symptoms of the virus, which include fever, coughing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. If symptoms develop, the employee should immediately inform the company and should not return to work prior to completing a Fitness for Duty evaluation with their doctor.
- Employers that are not affected by the outbreak (*i.e.*, those that do not have any employees who have traveled to/returned from China within the past 14 days, or who have had close contact with someone confirmed to have the virus or is being evaluated for infection) are encouraged to inform employees that they are carefully monitoring the outbreak and proceeding with all employees’ best interests in mind.
- Employers should not identify or disclose to other employees the reason that an employee, who may be working from home preventively, is not at work.
- Any documents pertaining to, or communications with, employees about their medical conditions should be kept in a secure and confidential location separate from the employee’s personnel file.
- Employers should engage employees in the interactive process and accommodate employees exhibiting signs and symptoms of the virus by allowing them to take time off from work to see a doctor, and offering to pay for health screenings, although doing so is not required.