

# Wells County Health Department

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Employers are now starting to come to the realization that it is not a matter of “if” but “when” they will be notified by one of their employees that he/she has tested positive for the Coronavirus. That begs the question – what should you, the employer, do in response?

Recent literature and media reports have suggested there is a “14 day incubation period” for the virus, which is why individuals who are not feeling sick and/or test positive are being asked to self-quarantine for a minimum of 14 days and for symptomatic individuals, the quarantine time is 10 days from the date of the first symptom.

Here are some step-by-step practical considerations for employers who are notified that an employee has tested positive for COVID-19.

1. Instruct the infected employee to stay home for at least 14 days if experiencing no symptoms and 10 days if having symptoms and encourage them to self-quarantine during that time. Employers should encourage their employees to contact a qualified health care provider to determine whether a 10 or 14 day self-quarantine is needed, depending on the particular facts and circumstances.
2. Assure the infected employee that he/she will not be identified by name to their co-workers as having contracted the virus, as such would go against the Americans With Disabilities Act (“ADA”).
3. Ask the infected employee (to the best of their recollection) to identify all areas in the office where they were physically present. The employer should have those areas sanitized immediately by a qualified professional or in accordance with CDC guidelines.
4. Ask the infected employee (to the best of their recollection) to identify any individuals they were within 6’ for 15 minutes or more.
5. Contact those employees identified in response to #4. Without disclosing the infected employees’ identity (again, in accordance with the ADA), advise them that an individual that has been physically present in their work area has tested positive for the virus. Therefore, out of an abundance of caution, the Company is requesting that they stay at home for the next 14 days at a minimum, and encourage them to self-quarantine. Where possible, allow the impacted employees to work remotely. For those non-exempt hourly employees that cannot work remotely, consider whether you will continue to pay them during the 14 days, or if you will require them to use their accrued vacation or sick leave. Encourage the impacted employees to reach out to a qualified health care provider to seek advice as to what additional steps, if any, should be taken at that time—including whether the 14-day quarantine period is sufficient.



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6. Be honest with your other employees. Without disclosing the infected employees' identity, advise your employees that an individual that has been physically present in the office has tested positive for the virus.
7. Above all else, remain calm. Make it clear to your workforce that their health and well-being is your top priority, and that you are taking these steps to protect them.

Employers should consult with the local health department regarding the adequacy of any mitigation efforts.

**For an individual to return to work, three things have to happen:**

1. If symptomatic, 10 days have passed since the first symptom
2. Overall, the symptoms experienced have overall improved
3. The individual has been fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications

And, of course, no two situations are alike, and there are no rules written in stone. All, some or none of the above steps may or may not apply to your particular industry or business operation for a variety of reasons.

Please feel free to contact our office with any questions or need for assistance as you navigate your way through this difficult time.

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