



# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

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The Chesapeake Health District is closely monitoring the outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus termed COVID-19. This corona virus strain is novel or “new” as it had not previously been found in people. Symptoms have included fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. The first case in the United States was announced on Jan 21, 2020 in a traveler returning from Wuhan, China, where a widespread outbreak has been reported. Many other cases related to travel and now community transmission have since been reported in many areas of the US and worldwide.

Here are recommended steps you can take to prevent or reduce workplace exposures:

- Actively encourage employees to stay home if they are ill with symptoms of acute respiratory illness. Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home until fever free for at least 24 hours.
- Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.
- Separate sick employees when they are identified and send them home.
- Emphasize staying home when sick, practicing respiratory etiquette, and using good hand hygiene by all employees all the time.
- Make sure routine environmental cleaning is performed consistently and provide disposable wipes for commonly used and shared surfaces (doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks).
- Review travel plans and consider alternatives for meetings. Consult CDC and WHO websites for international travel restrictions or cautions.

Consider discussing your plans for dealing with increased illness in the community that impacts your business with your employees in staff meetings and involve them in planning to meet your business needs as well as everyone’s personal needs in the possible difficult months ahead.

There are many resources to answer further questions and to track information about this disease in the United States and worldwide. Some of these are:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

See also CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

The World Health Organization’s (WHO) website: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>

Virginia Department of Health (VDH) website: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus>.

Please contact our regional hotline at 757-683-2745 for additional assistance.

Sincerely,

Nancy Welch, MD, MHA, MBA  
Health Director  
Chesapeake Health District