Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance Letter

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When to Use

An employer may use this letter to provide guidance to its employees on how to prevent or reduce the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). This letter also advises employees on the steps an employer is taking in response to COVID-19, including its position on business travel and remote working.

An employer should customize this letter to fit its organization's needs and workforce as the health emergency continues to evolve.

Customizable Letter

**[insert organization's logo, name and address]**

**[insert date]**

**[insert recipient's name]**

**[insert recipient's physical address (and/or email address if applicable)]**

Subject: **[insert subject of letter]**

Dear **[insert recipient's name]**:

As the coronavirus (also known as COVID-19) continues to spread, we would like to explain how we are responding to this global health crisis.

We would also like to remind you of the steps that we can all take to reduce the spread of COVID-19, while continuing our operations as normally as possible.

**Reducing the Spread of Infection**

Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

In addition, please ensure that you:

* Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze;
* Throw all used tissues in the trash right away and wash your hands immediately after handling used tissues;
* Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth;
* Avoid close contact with people who are sick; and
* Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, such as your keyboard or mouse, using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

**Symptoms**

Common symptoms of COVID-19 include:

* Fever;
* Dry cough; and
* Shortness of breath.

Note that symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

Exhibiting these symptoms does not necessarily mean that you have the coronavirus. However, if you have symptoms, do not come to work. Notify your supervisor by telephone before you are due to start work, or as soon as possible if that is not practical.

If you develop symptoms or have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19, call your doctor.

**Self-Quarantine and Self-Isolation**

You must go under self-quarantine for 14 days, at a minimum, if you have:

* Been in contact with a person known to have COVID-19; or
* Recently traveled to an affected area (e.g., China, Iran).

You must remain self-quarantined at home for 14 days until it can be determined that you are not sick.

If you are not sick, your supervisor will discuss with you what, if any, work you can do remotely from home. If it is not possible for you to work from home, discuss alternative options with your supervisor.

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you must go under self-isolation and contact your supervisor and/or Human Resources to discuss leave options.

**Travel**

*Affected areas*

Business-related travel to certain areas has been suspended until further notice. For an up-to-date list of restricted areas, please see **[insert link to a list of restricted areas].**

*If you have recently been, or are planning a trip, to an affected area*

If you have been to a restricted area in the last 14 days, or plan to travel to a restricted area outside work (e.g., on a personal vacation or for family reasons), inform **[insert Human Resources, supervisor or department head]** immediately.

*Other areas*

Work-related travel to non-restricted areas can continue as usual. However, you should:

* Think about whether or not you really need to travel. It may be that meetings with **[insert colleagues/customers/suppliers, as applicable]** can be conducted over the telephone or via **[insert video conferencing/Skype/Teams, as applicable]**; and
* Ensure that you practice good hygiene and take other appropriate precautions if you do have to travel.

**[OPTIONAL: Telecommuting**

Given the nature of this health situation and our commitment to protect our employees and workplace, be prepared to work at home in the event of an office closure due to an outbreak or cleaning.

Please ensure that, where possible, you take your laptop home with you after work each day and familiarize yourself with **[insert details regarding remote-working system]**, which is explained at **[insert link to guidance].**

If you use a desktop, you can access your emails remotely from most devices and computers via **[insert details regarding email-access system]**, which is explained at **[insert link to guidance]**.

Contact the IT department if you have any questions about how to access your email or other work-related software.**]**

**Further Communications From Us**

This is a rapidly changing situation. We will continue to provide you with guidance and updates as to how COVID-19 affects our organization, including any expansion of the list of restricted travel areas as well as changes to working arrangements.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact **[insert Human Resources, supervisor or department head]** if you have any questions or concerns.

**[insert closing (e.g., Sincerely, Very truly yours)]**

**[insert handwritten signature (for a mailed letter) and typed signature]**

**[insert sender's title]**

**[insert enclosure line as applicable (e.g., Enclosure or Enclosures)]**

Tips

Employers have a duty under the [General Duty Clause](https://www.xperthr.com/employment-law-manual/hr-and-workplace-safety-osha-compliance-federal/3146/#general-duty-clause) of the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act to ensure that their employees have a safe and healthy workplace. As a result, provide employees with personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves, eye and face protection, and respiratory devices, when particular hazards may cause injury or impairment.

Education as to the transmission and symptoms of COVID-19 is critical in stemming the spread of the virus. Ensure that related policies and communications to employees about the coronavirus reiterate the importance of how they can take steps to protect themselves and the workplace.

In order to promote good hygiene, place hand sanitizers and tissue boxes at several key locations around the workplace (e.g., by the printer, cafeteria, restrooms, etc.).

Employees may be scared and nervous so be prepared to be understanding of requests to alter their working arrangements. Consider requests to telecommute, if possible, or to work at another office location. It is also a good idea to ask employees who use laptops and can work remotely to take them home after work each day as part of contingency planning (for example if the workplace closes suddenly because of an outbreak).

The letter refers to a list of restricted areas. Develop and maintain an evolving list of restricted areas in a place that employees can easily access (e.g., the organization's intranet). The list can be compiled and updated by referring to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) [website](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html).

If including the optional telecommuting language in the above letter, include links to the organization's guidance on remote working and email access. Maintain such guidance in a place that employees can easily access (e.g., the organization's intranet).

The sender's address usually is included in letterhead. If not using letterhead, include the sender's address at the top of the letter one line above the date. Do not write the sender's name or title, as it is included in the letter's closing. Include only the street address, city and ZIP code.

Warnings

Since this is a quick moving and unpredictable health situation, employers must keep current on the rights and responsibilities they owe to their employees and workplace. It is also just as important to reassure employees that their health and safety is top of mind and steps are being taken to ensure their wellbeing.

Monitor global, federal, state and local government and health agencies as to the status of COVID-19, including the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/) (CDC) and the [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int/) (WHO).

An employer's duty to ensure the health and safety of its employees means that it should not send staff to areas critically affected by COVID-19. Be prepared to postpone or cancel business-related travel to affected areas. Check CDC guidance to determine whether a particular country or region is under a "warning" or "alert" before sending an employee on a business trip. Also, bear in mind each employee's willingness to travel and adapt travel strategies accordingly.

Understand that while an employee may not themselves be experiencing symptoms, a family member may be. As a result, there may be times that an employee may need to telecommute or otherwise stay home to remain with a sick family member. Since school closures are also likely to occur, a parent or caretaker may need to stay home with their children. Be open to alternative working arrangements or leave options in order to address each unique circumstance.

The above letter is a model letter but, if necessary, it should be modified so that it is in compliance with any applicable state and local laws.