



Get your Workplace Ready for Novel Coronavirus

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LIVINGSTON COUNTY 
Health Department

Introduction

This guide provides information about preventative actions employers and businesses can take to reduce the spread of disease. Use this guide to develop an emergency plan that is specific to you and your agency.

Novel Coronavirus

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some coronaviruses are common and cause respiratory illness in people. Others circulate among animals, including camels, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can evolve, infect people, and then spread between people.

A *novel* coronavirus is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The virus causing novel coronavirus, is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold. A diagnosis with common human coronavirus (including 229E, NL63, OC43, or HKU1) is not the same as a novel coronavirus diagnosis. Patients with novel coronavirus will be evaluated and cared for differently than patients with a common coronavirus diagnosis.

Novel coronaviruses are concerning to health experts because little is known about the new virus and it has the potential to cause severe illness and pneumonia. However, you can take steps to prepare for novel coronavirus and prevent the spread of disease.

Symptoms of Novel Coronavirus

Patients with novel coronavirus may experience fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath. The symptoms typically appear 2-14 days after exposure. Illnesses can range from mild symptoms to severe illness and death.



Fever



Cough



**Shortness
of Breath**

If an employee develops symptoms, send them home immediately. If a member of the public becomes sick at your workplace, separate them from others as soon as possible. Provide them with a clean disposable facemask until they can leave. *Note: Providing sick persons with facemasks does not replace the need to encourage them to go home and stay home when they are sick. Facemasks may be in short supply during an outbreak.*

Practice Everyday Preventative Actions

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends several actions for preventing the spread of respiratory illnesses, like coronavirus. It is a good habit to practice everyday preventive actions at all times and encourage employees to do the same.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

In some situations, public health officials may recommend additional preventative measures. These can include social distancing (keeping a distance of 6 feet between people), staying home when someone in your household is sick, and postponing/canceling large events. Everyone should be prepared to take these additional actions, if recommended by public health officials.

Make a Plan

Update your Emergency Operations Plan

✓ **Talk with your agency's emergency planning team and update emergency plans.** Review all aspects of your workplace emergency plan, such as personnel, systems, services, and other resources. Prepare to implement the key prevention strategies outlined in this guide, which may be recommended during a response to novel coronavirus.

✓ **Establish ongoing communication with the Livingston County Health Department.** Establishing a relationship with your local health department now can give you access to relevant information before and during an outbreak. Your local health department can provide up-to-date information and recommendations to help reduce the spread of infection.

✓ **Plan ways to continue essential services.** If on-site operations are reduced temporarily, identify essential services that must continue (ex., payroll, reporting, finances, etc.). Provide Web-and mobile-based communication and services, if possible. Plan to increase the use of email, conference calls, video conferencing, and web-based seminars.

✓ **Ensure you are able to distribute timely and accurate information.** Identify everyone in your chain of communication (ex., staff, customers, suppliers, and key stakeholders) and establish systems for sharing information with them. Maintain up-to-date contact information. Identify platforms you use, such as a hotline, automated text messaging, or a website to help disseminate information to those inside and outside your workplace.

Address Key Prevention Strategies in your Emergency Operations Plan

✓ **Promote the daily practice of everyday preventive actions at all times (See Page 3).** Use health messages and materials developed by credible public health sources, such as your local public health department or the CDC.

Public health officials may recommend workplaces to take additional preventative actions:

- ✓ Allow workers to telework, if possible
- ✓ Be prepared to allow workers to stay home if someone in their house is sick
- ✓ Increase space between people at work
- ✓ Decrease the frequency of contact among workers
- ✓ Modify, postpone, or cancel large work events
- ✓ Postpone or cancel non-essential work travel

✓ **Plan to provide infection prevention supplies in your workplace.** Have supplies on hand for workers, such as soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, tissues, and trash baskets. Plan to have extra supplies on hand during an outbreak.

✓ **Review your process for planning workplace events.** Identify actions to take if you need to temporarily postpone or cancel events either in the workplace or in the community. Follow public health guidance, restrictions, and recommendations.

✓ **Develop a method for monitoring and tracking illness related staff absences.** Understand your usual absenteeism patterns at each worksite. Determine what level of absenteeism will disrupt day-to-day operations. If worker absenteeism increases to disruptive levels, some workplaces may need to consider temporarily reducing on-site operations and services.

Develop Flexible Policies

✓ **Plan for worker absences.** Develop flexible attendance and sick-leave policies to use during an outbreak. Workers may need to stay home when they are sick, caring for a sick household member, or caring for their children in the event of school dismissals. Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff.

✓ **Consider adjusting workplace policies during a novel coronavirus outbreak.** It may not be possible to require a healthcare provider's note for sick employees. Healthcare providers may be extremely busy and unable to provide such documentation in a timely manner.

Take Action

Communicate Frequently

✓ **Provide regular communication updates.** Update key community partners and stakeholders regularly. Continue to promote everyday preventive actions by distributing health messages and materials to staff and posting information like flyers or fact sheets so it is visible to the public.

✓ **Help reduce stigma surrounding novel coronavirus.** Stigma can hurt efforts to stop the spread of novel coronavirus. No specific race or ethnicity is more susceptible to novel coronavirus. People can be exposed to novel coronavirus by traveling to an area with widespread illness or having contact with someone diagnosed with novel coronavirus.

Put your Plans into Action

✓ **Continue practicing everyday preventive actions and encourage staff to do the same (See Page 3).** Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid sharing personal items like food, drinks, or lip-gloss. Consider sending out handwashing reminders and hanging flyers in bathrooms or locker rooms.

✓ **Limit close contact between employees and plan for social distancing.** Viruses can travel through the air when sick people cough or sneeze. Public health officials may ask people keep a distance of at least 6 feet to help slow the spread of illness. Identify ways to increase space between people to at least 6 feet or limit face-to-face contact between staff and those who come to the workplace.

Several ways to do this include offering staff the option to telecommute, creating reduced or staggered work schedules, spacing staff farther apart, and postponing or canceling non-essential meetings and travel. Also, consider postponing potlucks and/or parties to promote social distancing.

✓ **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 (100.4° F or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.

✓ **Provide infection prevention supplies in your workplace.** Have supplies on hand for staff and customers, such as soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, tissues, and no-touch trash baskets.

✓ **Perform routine environmental cleaning.** Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs and encourage staff to do the same. Clean surfaces and objects with regular soap and water or Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved products. Always follow product labels when using disinfectants. Encourage staff who work off-site (from a vehicle or out in the field) to also continuously wipe down surfaces they frequently come into contact with.

Healthcare workers and first responders may need to consider additional steps to protect themselves:

- ✓ Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at work
- ✓ Clean uniforms more frequently
- ✓ Avoid shaking worn uniforms/clothes
- ✓ Clean equipment/gear prior to reuse
- ✓ Clean transport vehicles more frequently

✓ **Take administrative action (as needed) to maintain operations.** During an outbreak of novel coronavirus, normal policies and procedures may need to be adjusted. Notify staff of your workplace plans and policies during an outbreak. Implement flexible attendance and sick-leave policies (if possible). Encourage staff to stay home if they are sick or caring for a sick household member. Provide instructions about how and when to safely return to work by following guidance from the Livingston County Health Department and the CDC.

Stay Informed

Make sure you are getting accurate information. During emergencies, rumors can circulate on social media and cause unnecessary panic or worry. You can get accurate and up-to-date information from local public health officials, such as your county or state health department. National and international updates will be provided by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO).

Resources

Livingston County Health Department (LCHD): <https://www.livgov.com/health/ph/Pages/COVID19.aspx>

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS): <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus>

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

World Health Organization (WHO): <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>



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This preparedness guide is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov. The information provided in this guide has been adapted from the CDC's *Get your Workplace Ready for Pandemic Flu*, 2017.