

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for Employers

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) is asking for your assistance to prepare for and help prevent the spread of the novel (new) coronavirus in Los Angeles County. Globally, there continues to be a growing number of people infected with this virus which causes “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated COVID-19) in mainland China and elsewhere. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization, current global trends indicate that the virus may spread worldwide causing a pandemic. We need to prepare to prevent the spread of this infection locally.

Public Health is proactively taking steps to prevent the spread of this infection. We strongly recommend that all organizations review and update their emergency plans and consider ways to continue essential services if on-site operations must be reduced temporarily.

Earlier this month, we shared with you our [Novel Coronavirus Guidance for Employers](#) which included a variety of personal and organizational preventive measures to reduce the spread of novel coronavirus. If there is significant local community transmission of COVID-19, in addition to continuing to emphasize those measures, Public Health may need to implement more disruptive actions such as canceling events and closing businesses to help to slow the spread of infection. We ask that employers begin to prepare in case such actions are required. This letter summarizes our current recommendations to help prevent the spread of novel coronavirus. In addition, we encourage you to visit the DPH Novel Coronavirus webpage for resources including Guidance for Business and Employers, Frequently Asked Questions and infographics: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>.

General Information

What preventive measures should be taken at an organizational level to reduce the spread of respiratory viruses, like the virus that causes COVID-19?

- Educate and emphasize the importance of the everyday personal prevention actions (see below).
- Encourage and support *staff, and volunteers*, to stay home when they are sick. Remind them to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.
- Provide adequate supplies for good hygiene, including easy access to clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Encourage regular hand washing including before meals, after using the restroom and after coughing and sneezing.
- Minimize, where possible, close contact and the sharing of objects such as cups, food, and drink.
- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs, bannisters, countertops, faucet handles, and phones. Use the usual cleaning agents and follow the label directions.
- Provide employees with accurate information about novel coronavirus and steps they can take to protect themselves and their families.

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Everyday personal prevention actions include:

- Stay home when you are sick. Stay home for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever or symptoms of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and then dispose of the tissue and clean your hands immediately. If you do not have a tissue, use your sleeve (not your hands).
- Limit close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipes.

What should our business be prepared to do if there is increased community transmission of COVID-19

Increased community transmission of COVID-19 would indicate growing risk to the general public and that additional precautions may need to be taken to contain any local community transmission. Organizations should have a plan and be prepared to take these additional actions, if recommended by Public Health:

- Have a plan to communicate with your *staff, and volunteers*. Visit our website, publichealth.lacounty.gov, for accurate and updated information that can be used for your communications.
- Allow staff to stay home if someone in their house is sick or school closures have occurred.
- Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees or volunteers who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities will be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
- Consider how to protect employees who are at higher risk for adverse health complications. This may include strategies such as telecommuting and staggered shifts to increase the physical distance among employees, cross training staff, and canceling non-essential business travel and large face-to-face meetings and events.
- Businesses may need to consider suspending operations if a significant number of employees have been in close contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus; such individuals (close contacts) may be required to quarantine for up to 14 days from last exposure. A call for large scale closure of many businesses would happen only if there was significant community transmission that could not be well-controlled through other strategies.
- Modify, postpone, or cancel large conferences or events. Events where people are in close contact with others for an extended period may need to be cancelled or modified should there be significant community transmission in a particular community or many different communities. We will work with businesses to assess risk and determine effective mitigation strategies. Should we experience a rapid increase in the number of cases across the County, we may call for cancellation of many different types of public events.
- Implement ways to ensure continuity of services if on-site operations are reduced temporarily such as through teleworking, and flexible schedules with cross-training of staff.

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The [CDC's Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\), February 2020](#) outlines important considerations when creating a response plan as well as detailed guidance and practical strategies.

Know where to get reliable information

Beware of scams, false news and hoaxes surrounding novel coronavirus. Accurate information, including announcements of new cases in LA County, will always be distributed by Public Health through press releases, social media, and our website. The website has more information on COVID-19 including FAQs, infographics and a guide to coping with stress, as well as tips on handwashing

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH, County)
 - <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>
 - Social media: @lapublichealth
- The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Access Center 24/7 Helpline (800) 854-7771.

Other reliable sources of information about novel coronavirus are:

- California Department of Public Health (CDPH, State)
 - <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, National)
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html>
- World Health Organization (WHO, International)
 - <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

If you have questions and would like to speak to someone call the Los Angeles County Information line 2-1-1 which is available 24 hours a day