



## 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) GUIDANCE FOR BUSINESSES/EMPLOYERS

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- [Nevada County](#)
- [California Department of Public Health](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Businesses](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

### MARCH 14, 2020

The Nevada County Public Health Department (NCPHD) is offering this resource to provide general information about the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) and COVID-19 (the illness caused by the virus), recommend strategies for employers to use to prevent workplace exposures to acute respiratory illnesses, including novel coronavirus, and to guide the management of employees who have recently returned to Nevada County from an area with known transmission of the novel coronavirus or who have had a known exposure to a laboratory confirmed case. This guidance is based on directives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) who are charged with the management of the response to the novel coronavirus across the United States.

Businesses and employees in Nevada County may be concerned about the current outbreak of the 2019 novel coronavirus and COVID-19. The CDC is working hard to learn as much as possible about 2019-nCoV so that we can understand more about how it spreads and better characterize its associated illness. NCPHD will continue to develop and update guidance and education materials as available information evolves.

Please visit the County's Novel Coronavirus webpage for FAQs, resources, and updates:  
[www.mynevadacounty.com/Coronavirus](http://www.mynevadacounty.com/Coronavirus)

There is an ongoing worldwide outbreak of a respiratory illness first identified in Wuhan, China, caused by a novel (new) coronavirus. On February 11, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) announced an official name for the disease that is causing the current outbreak of coronavirus disease, COVID-19. To date, Nevada County has no confirmed cases of novel coronavirus. At this time, novel coronavirus is NOT spreading in the community, though there has been community transmission in California and in other states. The immediate health risk from 2019-nCoV for the general public is currently still considered low.

However, in anticipation of increased risk of exposure to this new coronavirus, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared a public health emergency to allow local, state, and federal officials to fully coordinate responses in partnership with public health departments, emergency management teams, airports, health care professionals, and first responders.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### WHAT IS NOVEL CORONAVIRUS?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Many of them infect animals, but some coronaviruses from animals can evolve (change) and infect humans, then spread from person-to-person. This is what happened with the current novel coronavirus known as 2019-nCoV. Diseases from coronaviruses in people typically cause mild to moderate illness, like the common cold. Some, like the SARS or MERS viruses, can cause serious infections like pneumonia.

### WHAT ARE COMMON SYMPTOMS OF 2019-NCOV?

Information to date shows this new virus causes symptoms consistent with a respiratory illness, such as cough, fever, and, in some, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

If a person develops any of these symptoms within 14 days of their travel from mainland China or other places where there are known outbreaks, or their last contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus, they should seek medical care right away. They should first call the doctor's office or emergency room and tell them about their symptoms and recent travel.

### HOW IS NOVEL CORONAVIRUS SPREAD?

Like other respiratory illnesses, such as influenza, human coronaviruses most commonly spread to others from an infected person who has symptoms through:

- Respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands

Novel coronavirus is new, and we continue learning more each day about how it spreads and how long it takes for people to become sick. As information changes, we will keep you informed.

Do not assume that someone is at risk for novel coronavirus infection based on their race/ethnicity or country of origin.

### HOW IS 2019-NCOV TREATED?

There is no specific treatment for illness caused by the novel coronavirus. However, many of the symptoms can be treated. Treatment is based on the patient's condition.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent novel coronavirus. Be aware of scam products for sale that make false claims to prevent or treat this new infection.

### DO BUSINESS EVENTS NEED TO BE CANCELLED?

To protect public health and slow the rate of transmission of COVID-19, the California Department of Public Health has issued guidance regarding gatherings throughout the state. Gatherings, as described below, should be postponed or canceled for at least the remainder of the month of March. This applies to public, private and business gatherings.

A “gathering” is any event or convening that brings together people in a single room or single space at the same time, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, cafeteria, or any other indoor or outdoor space.

- Large gatherings that include 250 people or more should be postponed or canceled.
  - This includes gatherings such as concerts, conferences, and professional, college, and school sporting events.
- Smaller gatherings held in venues that do not allow social distancing of six feet per person should be postponed or canceled.
  - This includes gatherings in crowded auditoriums, rooms or other venues.
- Gatherings of individuals who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should be limited to no more than 10 people. This includes seniors.

This guidance includes gatherings such as those at retirement facilities, assisted living facilities,

developmental homes, and support groups for people with health conditions.

This applies to all non-essential professional, social, and community gatherings regardless of their sponsor. Gatherings that do not meet the aforementioned criteria should only be conducted when they are essential—that is, if the activity is essential and could not be postponed or achieved without gathering, meaning that some other means of communication could not be used to conduct the essential function.

The full guidance is available from the CPDH website, under [Gathering Guidance](#) (accessed 3/12/2020).

#### RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES FOR EMPLOYERS TO USE NOW TO PREVENT WORKPLACE EXPOSURES TO ACUTE RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES, INCLUDING COVID-19:

- **Support and 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 for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication. Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
  - Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.
  - Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
  - Do not require a healthcare provider’s note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
  - Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members more than is usual.
  
- **Separate sick employees:**
  - It is recommended that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, fever, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Sick employees should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder covered by a sleeve if no tissue is available), then immediately wash their hands (preferable) or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if hand washing is not available.
  - The current data around COVID-19 tells us that 80% of those infected with this disease will likely have only mild to moderate symptoms and are likely able to recover on their own. Those with cold-like symptoms who can manage their symptoms at home with over the counter medications should do so, regardless of whether they have a cold, the flu or COVID-

19. If, however, difficulty breathing and lethargy develops, or symptoms were better and then get worse, they should call their healthcare provider or urgent care center ahead so they can prepare to take care of them. People should only call 911 or go to an emergency department if they believe they are extremely sick, or their life is in imminent danger.

These recommendations are part of an effort to prevent our local health care systems from being quickly overwhelmed and ensuring local capacity to care for those who are most ill and most at risk for serious complications from their illness.

- **Support and emphasize the use of respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees:**
  - Place posters that encourage [staying home when sick](#), [cough and sneeze etiquette](#), and [hand hygiene](#) at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
  - Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
  - Instruct employees to clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol or to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, preparing or serving food, and after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
  - Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.
  - Visit the [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) and [clean hands webpage from the CDC](#) for more information.
  
- **Perform routine environmental cleaning and disinfection:**
  - Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
  - No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is formally recommended at this time, but you may want to consider cleaning hard surfaces with products that are meant to kill viruses.
  - Provide disposable disinfectant wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.
  
- **Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps:**
  - Check the [CDC's Traveler's Health Notices](#) for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which travel is planned. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from China, and information for aircrew, can be found at on the CDC [website](#).
  - Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of acute respiratory illness before starting travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.

- Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
- If outside the United States, sick employees should follow your company’s policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to assist them with finding an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, and resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.
- In addition to China, the CDC has increased the risk level to Level 3 Travel Health Notice for travelers arriving from **Iran, South Korea, and most of Europe**. This list is likely to change rapidly and potentially expand. Employers and travelers should monitor these notices from the CDC’s [Travel Precautions website](https://www.cdc.gov/travel/qa/coronavirus.html) and follow real-time recommendations. At this time, the CDC warns that all individuals returning from Iran, South Korea, and most of Europe must stay home for 14 days after returning from travel, monitor their health, and practice social distancing.

Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/guidance-business-response.html> for additional CDC guidance related to planning for a possible 2019-nCoV outbreak in the US.

### WHAT DO BUSINESSES NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HOW TRAVELERS RETURNING FROM MAINLAND CHINA ARE BEING SCREENED AND MANAGED?

The White House issued a set of directives that became effective on February 3. The orders mandate the following:

- All foreign nationals who have traveled or been in mainland China in the last 14 days are restricted from entering the US. *(This order can be renewed by the President every 14 days.)*
- All US citizens, legal permanent residents, and their close family members returning from mainland China are required to enter through one of eleven airports in the US (including LAX), where they will be screened and directed to do one of the following by US Customs and Border Protection agents:
  - If travelers show signs of respiratory illness, they will be transported from the airport to a health care facility for further evaluation to determine whether they need further medical assessment and care.
  - All travelers who were in the Hubei Province at any time in the past 14 days are considered high risk and need to be immediately quarantined and monitored at a safe location for 14 days from their last exposure.

- Returning travelers from other places in mainland China who have been in close contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus in the last 14 days are considered high risk and will be immediately quarantined and monitored at a safe location for 14 days from their last exposure.

The CDC is currently working on updating their recommendations regarding travelers returning from other places in the world where outbreaks are occurring.

#### HOW IS PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLEMENTING THE TRAVELER DIRECTIVES? AND HOW WILL EMPLOYERS BE INFORMED?

Businesses will not necessarily be informed by NCPHD if there is an identified case of COVID-19 in their workplace that resulted in exposures at the workplace.

Members of the public are encouraged to call 2-1-1 (or 1-833-DIAL211) for more information.

#### WHAT IS SOCIAL DISTANCING?

Social distancing means remaining away from others and out of public places where close contact with others may occur, e.g., workplaces (unless the person works in an office space that allows complete distancing from others), shopping centers, movie theaters, stadiums, schools and other classroom settings, and local public conveyances (e.g., bus, taxi, ride share) for the duration of the potential incubation period unless presence in such locations is approved by the state or local health department. The returning traveler is free to return to all their normal activities once the incubation period is over (this is usually 14 days for the last possible exposure to the virus) and they have no symptoms of illness.

#### HOW WILL PUBLIC HEALTH INFORM BUSINESSES IF THERE IS AN EXPOSURE AT THE WORKPLACE?

If there is a confirmed case that may have exposed others at the workplace, the NCPHD will not necessarily be able to provide notification to managers or employers. As NCPHD moves from disease containment strategies to disease mitigation strategies, individual notification of potential exposures will likely only occur with those most vulnerable to COVID-19.