

February 28, 2020



Guidance for Businesses and Employers - Coronavirus (COVID-19)

COVID-19 Situation Summary

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a new coronavirus (COVID-19) that was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China and which has now been detected in multiple locations internationally, including cases in the United States. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.

Current knowledge of COVID-19 is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in humans and many different species of animals. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread between people, such as with MERS and SARS.

Imported cases of COVID-19 in travelers have been [detected in the U.S.](#) Person-to-person spread of COVID-19 also has been seen among close contacts of returned travelers. The first suspected case of community spread of COVID-19 in the U.S. was reported on Wednesday, February 26 in California.

Risk Assessment

For individuals in our community, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low. However, it's important to note that current circumstances suggest it is likely that this virus will cause a [pandemic](#). In that case, the risk assessment for exposure in our community would change.

What May Happen

More cases are likely to be identified, including more cases in the United States. It's also likely that person-to-person spread will continue to occur, including in the United States. Widespread transmission of COVID-19 in the United States would translate into large numbers of people needing medical care at the same time. Schools, childcare centers, and workplaces may experience more absenteeism. Critical infrastructure, such as law enforcement, emergency medical services, and transportation may also be affected. Health care providers and hospitals may be stressed. At this time, there is no vaccine to protect against COVID-19 and no medications approved to treat it. Thus, [Nonpharmaceutical interventions](#) are the most important response strategy. These include:

- [Cover your mouth and nose](#) with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Put your used tissue in a waste basket.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Remember to [wash your hands](#) after coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers for employee use.
- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home.

What You Can Do

Many facilities developed pandemic plans in 2008-09 with H1N1. Now is a good time to dust off, read and update your pandemic plan. If you have not developed a pandemic plan, see the resources below to get you started.

In addition, it is important to understand how a pandemic may affect your ongoing ability to operate. Your Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) should address your ability to sustain operations with staff illnesses. For example, would your facility be able to maintain operations if 25% of your employees were out due to illness?

For more information, contact the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department:

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Resources:

[CDC COVID-19: Pandemic Preparedness Resources](#)

[Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\), February 2020:](#)

[FEMA's Pandemic Influenza Continuity of Operations Template:](#)

[Pandemic Flu Checklist: Childcare Program Administrators](#)

[Occupational Safety & Health Administration \(OSHA\) Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic:](#)

Reference:

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, About Coronavirus Disease 2019:](#)