



GUIDANCE ON PREPARING WORKPLACES FOR COVID-19



About COVID-19

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It has spread from China to many other countries around the world, including Kenya. Depending on the severity of COVID-19's international impacts, outbreak conditions—including those rising to the level of a pandemic—can affect all aspects of daily life, including travel, trade, tourism, food supplies, and financial markets.

To reduce the impact of COVID-19 outbreak conditions on businesses, workers, customers, and the public, it is important for all employers to plan now for COVID-19. Lack of continuity planning can result in a cascade of failures as employers attempt to address challenges of COVID-19 with insufficient resources and workers who might not be adequately trained for jobs they may have to perform under pandemic conditions.



Symptoms of COVID-19

- Infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, can cause illness ranging from mild to severe and, in some cases, can be fatal. Symptoms typically include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
- Some people infected with the virus have reported experiencing other non-respiratory symptoms.
- Other people, referred to as asymptomatic cases, have experienced no symptoms at all.
- According to the CDC, symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure.



How COVID-19 Spreads

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, including:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
- It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has SARS-CoV-2 on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.
- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (i.e., experiencing fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath). Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this type of asymptomatic transmission with this new coronavirus.



How a COVID-19 Outbreak Could Affect Workplace

Similar to influenza viruses, SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, has the potential to cause extensive outbreaks. In the absence of a vaccine, an outbreak may also be an extended event. As a result, workplaces may experience:

Absenteeism- Workers could be absent because they are sick ,are caregivers for sick family members, are caregivers for children if schools or day care centers are closed, have at-risk people at home, such as immunocompromised family members or are afraid to come to work because of fear of possible exposure.

Change in patterns of commerce- Consumers may also change shopping patterns because of a COVID-19 outbreak. Consumers may try to shop at off-peak hours to reduce contact with other people, show increased interest in home delivery services, or prefer other options, such as drive-through service, to reduce person-to-person contact.

Interrupted supply / delivery- Shipments of items from geographic areas severely affected by COVID-19 may be delayed or cancelled with or without notification.



Steps All Employers Can Take to Reduce Workers' Risk of Exposure to SARS-CoV-2

Develop an Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response Plan- Plans should consider and address the level(s) of risk associated with various worksites and job tasks workers perform at those sites:

- Where, how, and to what sources of SARS-CoV-2 might workers be exposed, including: The general public, customers, and coworkers.
- Sick individuals or those at particularly high risk of infection (e.g., international travelers who have visited locations with widespread sustained (ongoing) COVID-19 transmission, healthcare workers who have had unprotected exposures to people known to have, or suspected of having, COVID-19).
- Non-occupational risk factors at home and in community settings.
- Workers' individual risk factors (e.g., older age; presence of chronic medical conditions, including immune-compromising conditions; pregnancy).
- Controls necessary to address those risks.



Steps All Employers Can Take to Reduce Workers' Risk of Exposure to SARS-CoV-2 (Cont'd)

Follow government recommendations regarding development of contingency plans for situations that may arise as a result of outbreaks, such as:

- Increased rates of worker absenteeism.
- The need for social distancing, staggered work shifts, downsizing operations, delivering services remotely, and other exposure-reducing measures.
- Options for conducting essential operations with a reduced workforce, including cross-training workers across different jobs in order to continue operations or deliver surge services.
- Interrupted supply chains or delayed deliveries.



Implement Basic Infection Prevention Measures

For most employers, protecting workers will depend on emphasizing basic infection prevention measures. As appropriate, all employers should implement good hygiene and infection control practices, including:

- Promote frequent and thorough hand washing, including by providing workers, customers, and worksite visitors with a place to wash their hands. If soap and running water are not immediately available, provide alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Encourage workers to stay home if they are sick.
- Encourage respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes.
- Provide customers and the public with tissues and trash receptacles.



Implement Basic Infection Prevention Measures

Employers should explore whether they can establish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others if state and local health authorities recommend the use of social distancing strategies.

Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible.

Maintain regular housekeeping practices, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, equipment, and other elements of the work environment. When choosing cleaning chemicals, employers should consult information on Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - approved disinfectant labels with claims against emerging viral pathogens.



Develop Policies and Procedures for Prompt Identification and Isolation of Sick People

Prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a critical step in protecting workers, customers, visitors, and others at a worksite.

Employers should inform and encourage employees to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 if they suspect possible exposure.

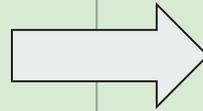
Employers should develop policies and procedures for employees to report when they are sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

Where appropriate, employers should develop policies and procedures for immediately isolating people who have signs and/or symptoms of COVID-19, and train workers to implement them.



Develop Policies and Procedures for Prompt Identification and Isolation of Sick People (Cont'd)

Take steps to limit spread of the respiratory secretions of a person who may have COVID-19



Provide a face mask, if feasible and available, and ask the person to wear it, if tolerated. Note: A face mask (also called a surgical mask, procedure mask, or other similar terms) on a patient or other sick person should not be confused with PPE for a worker

Protect workers in close contact with (i.e., within 6 feet of) a sick person or who have prolonged/repeated contact with such persons by using additional engineering and administrative controls



Workers whose activities involve close or prolonged/repeated contact with sick people are addressed further in later sections covering workplaces classified at medium and very high or high exposure risk.



Develop, Implement, and Communicate about Workplace Flexibilities and Protections

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home.

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.

Recognize that workers with ill family members may need to stay home to care for them.

Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.

Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.

Be aware of workers' concerns about pay, leave, safety, health, and other issues that may arise during infectious disease outbreaks. Provide adequate, usable, and appropriate training, education, and informational material including proper hygiene practices and the use of any workplace controls (including PPE).



Implement Workplace Controls - Administrative

Encouraging sick workers to stay at home.

Minimizing contact among workers, clients, and customers by replacing face-to-face meetings with virtual communications and implementing telework if feasible.

Establishing alternating days or extra shifts that reduce the total number of employees in a facility at a given time, allowing them to maintain distance from one another while maintaining a full onsite work week.

Discontinuing nonessential travel to locations with ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks.



Implement Workplace Controls - Administrative (cont'd)

Developing emergency communications plans, including a forum for answering workers' concerns and internet-based communications, if feasible.

Providing workers with up-to-date education and training on COVID-19 risk factors and protective behaviors (e.g., cough etiquette and care of PPE).

Training workers who need to use protecting clothing and equipment how to put it on, use/wear it, and take it off correctly, including in the context of their current and potential duties. Training material should be easy to understand and available in the appropriate language and literacy level for



Implement Workplace Controls - Engineering

Installing high-efficiency air filters.

Increasing ventilation rates in the work environment.

Installing physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards.

Installing a drive-through window for customer service.

Specialized negative pressure ventilation in some settings, such as for aerosol generating procedures (e.g., airborne infection isolation rooms in healthcare settings and specialized autopsy suites in mortuary settings).



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