

**Communicable Disease Emergency Policy and Coronavirus FAQs**  
**March 6, 2020**

As the State of North Carolina prepares for potential impacts of coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, state agency employees are encouraged to review the [Communicable Disease Emergency policy](#). **The OSHR Communicable Disease Emergency Policy is to be used when the State Health Director or the Governor declares a public health emergency.** Questions or concerns should be discussed with your supervisor in consultation with your Human Resources Office.

Additional COVID-19 information:

- [NC Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), including [business guidance](#), [travel guidance](#), and [email updates](#)

***PRIOR TO, AND DURING, A DECLARED PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY:***

***Should I cancel a planned business trip if the location is among the places where the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued an elevated warning?***

Seek direction from your agency management before traveling to any at-risk location identified by the CDC. The CDC is responsible for issuing and communicating travel warnings to protect Americans from risk. Current CDC [Travel Health Notices](#) include warnings for several countries.

The State of North Carolina follows CDC's [guidance on work-related travel](#), and recommends that employees consider this direction when planning personal travel.

***If I am stranded on personal travel in an affected location and do not have adequate leave to cover my absence, what should I do?***

Maintain contact with your supervisor and agency Human Resources Office. You may be eligible for leave without pay or may be advanced leave to be made up within the calendar year.

***If I am returning from a location under travel restrictions, whether for work or personal travel, am I allowed to return to work immediately?***

You may be required not to return to your workplace for the duration of one incubation period, as defined by public health officials.

***I'm worried about being exposed to coronavirus at work. How can I reduce my risk?***

Employees are encouraged to use common-sense precautions at all times (when working, in the public, or at home). Precautions include:

- [Wash your hands with warm soapy water](#) for at least 20 seconds each time.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

- Do not reuse a tissue after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched (cell phones, desk phones, keyboards, remote controls, countertops, refrigerator and door handles, etc.).
- And remember that employees who are sick should not come to work.

When possible, use Social Distancing to minimize your direct contact with others who may be unwell or who are vulnerable to illness.

***What is social distancing and why is it important?***

Social distancing is designed to limit the spread of a disease by reducing the opportunities for close contact between people. Strategies include using conference calls and video conferencing in place of face-to-face meetings, avoiding unnecessary travel, and reinforcing handwashing and other common-sense precautions. If you are among a group of people where anyone appears to be ill or may have had contact with a person diagnosed with coronavirus, try to keep a distance of six feet from one another.

***May an agency require an employee to work elsewhere than their primary duty station?***

Pursuant to federal law that employers provide a workplace free from recognized hazards causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm, the supervisor, in consultation with their Human Resources Office, may temporarily assign an employee to an alternate work site.

***I am concerned about exposure to a coworker who seems sick. Can I insist that they be sent home?***

If you have a concern about an employee who appears sick, speak to your supervisor. If agency management believes that an employee has symptoms associated with a communicable disease such as coronavirus, management, in consultation with their Human Resources Office, may require the employee not to report to work and to use any available compensatory leave, sick leave, vacation leave or bonus leave.

***What should I do if I have been exposed to COVID-19 and believe I am developing symptoms associated with the virus?***

If you think you are developing symptoms associated with COVID-19 and have reason to believe you have been exposed to the virus, the CDC recommends calling your doctor or public health department. Notify your supervisor that you have taken this step. An employee told by a doctor or public health official that they should be under isolation due to illness should not report to work and should follow the Sick Leave policy when recording leave. An employee also may be required to provide a certification of fitness to return to work.

***What should I do if I have been exposed to COVID-19 but do not have symptoms associated with the virus?***

If you have reason to believe you have been exposed to the virus, the CDC recommends calling your doctor or public health department. Notify your supervisor that you have taken this step. During a declared public health emergency, a permanent or temporary employee told by a public health official that they should be under quarantine due to exposure to COVID-19 but not yet symptomatic will be eligible for paid leave. When an employee is quarantined, the employee shall be granted paid leave until the specified period of time ends or the employee becomes ill with the communicable disease,

whichever comes first. The employee must provide proof of quarantine. An employee also may be required to provide a certification of fitness to return to work.

**DURING A DECLARED PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY:**

***An individual living in my household has returned from a CDC Level-3 country and has been asked by their employer to self-quarantine for 14 days. The individual is not symptomatic and has not been confirmed as having COVID-19. Will I be required to self-quarantine, too?***

Employees should seek direction from their supervisor, in consultation with their agency Human Resources Office. The State of North Carolina follows CDC's recommendations regarding whether to self-quarantine.

***Is it possible that mandatory employees will be expected to remain at their workstation around the clock?***

Yes. In the event of a public health emergency that requires mandatory employees to remain at their location 24/7, the state will provide meals and overnight accommodations. Mandatory employees who fail to report to work may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

***I am a mandatory employee with young children. If day care facilities and public schools close due to coronavirus, can I use leave to care for them? Would this also apply to a closed eldercare facility?***

With a supervisor's approval, policy allows mandatory employees to use earned leave if they are required to care for a member of their immediate family who is quarantined or ill, or if they are a parent or guardian who is required to stay home because of the closure of a day care facility, public school or eldercare facility due to a public health threat declared by the State Public Health Director or the Governor to be a public health emergency.

***I am a temporary employee who does not earn sick leave and I believe I am exhibiting symptoms of coronavirus. I am afraid if I take time off from work that I could lose my job. What should I do?***

If you think you are developing symptoms associated with COVID-19 and have reason to believe you have been exposed to the virus, follow the recommendation of the CDC and call your doctor or public health department, then notify your supervisor that you have taken this step.

If an employee with a temporary appointment is quarantined after having been exposed to a sick person, the employee shall be granted paid leave until the quarantine ends or the employee becomes ill with the communicable disease, whichever comes first.

The employee will provide proof of quarantine. An employee also may be required to provide a certification of fitness to return to work.

***Will I be notified if someone I work with is confirmed to have coronavirus?***

Employees known to be exposed to an individual diagnosed with coronavirus will be notified that a case of coronavirus has been confirmed, but the Americans with Disabilities Act protects the identity and medical information of people with communicable diseases.

***Can I work from home or another location during a public health emergency?***

Management's decision to allow an employee to work at another location or from home will depend on several factors, including the employee's job responsibilities and whether tasks can be completed temporarily at another location. For example, some state agency employees require a secure computer environment or other resources that are not easily replicated.

***If I contract coronavirus, am I eligible for workers' compensation?***

If you become ill and it is determined to be work-related in accordance with the Workers' Compensation Act, the [Workers' Compensation Policy](#) applies. If your illness is determined not to be work-related, the Sick Leave Policy applies.

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