



NOVEL CORONAVIRUS FAQ FOR BUSINESSES

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Empire State Development (ESD) has created this FAQ to offer information to businesses regarding State regulations and general guidance related to the coronavirus. If your question is not answered below, please contact ESD at our website at: <https://esd.ny.gov/covid-19-help>

BUSINESS-RELATED QUESTIONS REGARDING COVID-19

[CONTACT US HERE](#)

Background

Now a global pandemic according to the World Health Organization, 2019 Novel (New) Coronavirus was first detected in China and has spread worldwide. This virus causes a disease called COVID-19 and can lead to flu-like symptoms including fever, cough and shortness of breath. There are more than 100,000 confirmed cases in a growing number of countries internationally and the virus is now spreading in the United States. There are ongoing investigations to learn more about this virus. Senior citizens and people with underlying respiratory conditions are at particular risk, but everyone must take the highest level of precautions right now in order to prevent spread in the community.

Individuals who are experiencing symptoms and may have traveled to [areas of concern](#), or have been in contact with someone who has traveled to these areas, should call their health care provider before seeking treatment in person.

This is a rapidly changing situation. Please check this site and the [CDC's COVID-19 webpage](#) regularly for updates.

New York State Department of Health has established a website and telephone number that provide the latest, most comprehensive information about the State's response to the virus.

- **NYS DOH Coronavirus Hotline:** 1-888-364-3065 (fully language accessible)
- **NYS DOH Coronavirus Website:** <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

Other Helpful Resources:

- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce: <https://www.uschamber.com/coronavirus>
- Small Business Administration: <https://www.sba.gov/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>
- NYS Department of Labor: <https://www.labor.ny.gov/home/>
- NYS Department of Financial Services: <https://www.dfs.ny.gov/>

Information for Businesses and Corporations FAQ

Q: Will New York State offer financial support to businesses negatively impacted by coronavirus?

A: NYS is currently assessing options to mitigate hardships to NYS businesses.

The federal government will allow the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to issue Economic Injury Disaster Loans for businesses impacted by the coronavirus. These loans would allow businesses in certain areas to apply for low-interest loans from the SBA.

For more information, visit the Empire State Development Resource Guide to COVID-19 SBA Disaster Loans (located on ESD's COVID-19-related resources page): <https://esd.ny.gov/resource-guide-covid-19-sba-disaster-loans>

Q: What changes are businesses expected to implement at their places of work/office?

A: On March 18, Governor Cuomo [announced](#) he will issue an executive order directing non-essential businesses to implement work-from-home policies effective Friday, March 20, to help reduce density as a social responsibility to protect their workforce. On Friday, March 20, he also [announced](#) the "New York State on PAUSE" executive order, including the directive that 100% of all non-essential businesses statewide must close in-office personnel functions. Exceptions will be made for essential service industries, including shipping, warehousing, grocery and food production, pharmacies, healthcare providers, utilities, media, banks and related financial institutions and other businesses that are essential to the supply chain

Q: How do I know if my business is designated as an essential service based on the executive order?

A: See the ESD Guidance on Essential Businesses at: <https://esd.ny.gov/guidance-executive-order-2026> which includes a [comprehensive FAQ](#).

Q: Where can I send additional COVID-19-related business questions?

A: Submit your questions at: <https://esd.ny.gov/covid-19-help>

Q: Many of my employees are quarantined. I still need to run my business, what is the Governor's bill about Paid Sick Leave mean to me? When will it be passed? How will employees benefit?

A: To address the immediate need of employees affected by COVID-19 who are subject to mandatory or precautionary orders of quarantine or isolation, the Governor signed [legislation](#) on March 18 to provide the following:

- Employers with 10 or fewer employees and a net income less than \$1 million will provide job protection for the duration of the quarantine order and guarantee their workers access to Paid Family Leave and disability benefits (short-term disability) for the period of quarantine including wage replacement for their salaries up to \$150,000.
- Employers with 11-99 employees and employers with 10 or fewer employees and a net income greater than \$1 million will provide at least 5 days of paid sick leave, job protection for the

duration of the quarantine order, and guarantee their workers access to Paid Family Leave and disability benefits (short-term disability) for the period of quarantine including wage replacement for their salaries up to \$150,000.

- Employers with 100 or more employees, as well as all public employers (regardless of number of employees), will provide at least 14 days of paid sick leave and guarantee job protection for the duration of the quarantine order.

Q: If employees of NYS businesses are dealing with the prospect of unexpected school closures and/or the need to take extra time to care for children or elderly relatives who might be affected or quarantined by this outbreak, can they be covered in some way?

A: All options are being explored and are on the table. Steps so far include:

- Governor Cuomo is amending the Paid Sick Leave Budget proposal to specifically protect workers from termination if they are required to stay home from work because they are being isolated or quarantined because of the novel coronavirus.
- Governor Cuomo has instituted a requirement from the state Department of Financial Services that private health insurers in New York make COVID-19 testing free for patients by waiving any customary out-of-pocket costs.

Q: Is the state's Shared Work Program an option for businesses affected by the coronavirus to help avoid layoffs? How does it work?

A: The New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) Shared Work Program allows businesses to manage business cycles and seasonal adjustments while retaining trained staff and avoiding layoffs. Employees can receive partial Unemployment Insurance benefits while working reduced hours. Full-time, part-time and seasonal employees are eligible. For more information:

- <https://www.labor.ny.gov/ui/employerinfo/shared-work-program.shtm>
- Email: sharedworkinfo@labor.ny.gov
- Contact: 518-549-0496 or 518-457-2635

Q: Are barber shops, hair and nail salons still allowed to open?

A: On March 20, Governor Cuomo [announced](#) that these businesses – and other personal care-related services – would temporarily close as of 8 p.m., March 21. This density reduction restrictions will apply not only to these businesses in New York State, but also in Connecticut, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Q: The Governor has called on businesses to produce needed supplies related to COVID-19. How do I offer to do so?

A: If your business is interested, please contact us: COVID19supplies@esd.ny.gov

Q: Where can my business offer additional assistance to help with the NYS response to COVID-19?

A: If you— or your business—would like to offer services, space or staffing for ongoing response efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19, please do so through this [Volunteer and Donation Assistance form](#).

Q: Should businesses recommend face masks or other protective equipment during travel?

A: CDC does not recommend individuals wear face masks to protect themselves from COVID-19. You may choose to wear a mask, but it is more important to follow these prevention practices:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a household cleaning product.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60%–95% alcohol.

Q: Employees at my business just came back from a country designated a high risk (Level 3) by the CDC—can they come to work?

A: Depending on your employee’s travel history, they may be asked to stay home for a period of 14 days from the time they left an area with widespread or ongoing community spread (Level 3 Travel Health Notice). Countries that have a Level 3 Travel Health Notice are listed on the [CDC website](#).

If they traveled to a Level 3 designated country the advice is as follows:

- Stay home for 14 days from the time you left an area with widespread, ongoing community spread (Level 3 Travel Health Notice countries) and practice **social distancing**.
- Take these steps to monitor your health:
 - Take your temperature with a thermometer two times a day and monitor for fever. Also watch for cough or trouble breathing.
 - Stay home and avoid contact with others. Do not go to work or school for this 14-day period. Discuss your work situation with your employer before returning to work.
 - Do not take public transportation, taxis, or ride-shares during the time you are practicing social distancing.

- Avoid crowded places (such as shopping centers and movie theaters) and limit your activities in public.
- Keep your distance from others (about 6 feet or 2 meters).

Social distancing means remaining out of:

- Public places where close contact with others may occur (such as shopping centers, movie theaters, stadiums).
- Workplaces (unless the person works in an office space that allows distancing from others).
- Schools and other classroom settings.
- Local public transportation (such as on a bus, subway, taxi, ride share, plane, ship)

These restrictions are to be in effect for 14 days from the time the person was possibly exposed.

What to Do If You Get Sick

If you get sick with fever (100.4°F/38°C or higher), cough, or have trouble breathing:

- Seek medical care. Call ahead before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room.
- Tell your doctor about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others.
- If you need to seek medical care for other reasons, such as dialysis, call ahead to your doctor and tell them about your recent travel to an area with widespread or ongoing community spread of COVID-19.

For more information: [Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)

Q: What are the recommended precautions for businesses?

A: To help reduce density, the Governor has spoken to business leaders and asked businesses around the state to voluntarily implement telecommuting for employees and/or staggered work shifts.

Businesses should follow these guidelines regarding sick employees:

- Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisors 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.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.

Separate sick employees:

- CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, 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 if no tissue is available).

Emphasize staying home when sick, 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 wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. 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](#) for more information.

Perform routine environmental cleaning:

- Routinely clean 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 recommended at this time.
- Provide disposable 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 you will travel. 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 should promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
- If outside the United States, sick employees should follow their 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.

Additional Measures in Response to Currently Occurring Sporadic Importations of the COVID-19:

- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.

Q: What should I consider when creating an outbreak plan for my business?

A: All employers should be ready to implement strategies to protect their workforce from COVID-19 while ensuring continuity of operations. During a COVID-19 outbreak, all sick employees should stay home and away from the workplace, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene should be encouraged, and routine cleaning of commonly touched surfaces should be performed regularly.

Employers should:

- Ensure the plan is flexible and involve your employees in developing and reviewing your plan.
- Conduct a focused discussion or exercise using your plan, to find out ahead of time whether the plan has gaps or problems that need to be corrected.
- Share your plan with employees and explain what human resources policies, workplace and leave flexibilities, and pay and benefits will be available to them.

- Share best practices with other businesses in your communities (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.

Recommendations for an Infectious Disease Outbreak Response Plan:

- Identify possible work-related exposure and health risks to your employees. The U.S. Occupational and Health Administration (OSHA) has more information on how to [protect workers from potential exposures](#) to COVID-19.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) websites).
- Explore whether you 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. For employees who are able to telework, supervisors should encourage employees to telework instead of coming into the workplace until symptoms are completely resolved. Ensure that you have the information technology and infrastructure needed to support multiple employees who may be able to work from home.
- Identify essential business functions, essential jobs or roles, and critical elements within your supply chains (e.g., raw materials, suppliers, subcontractor services/products, and logistics) required to maintain business operations. Plan for how your business will operate if there is increasing absenteeism or these supply chains are interrupted.
- Set up authorities, triggers, and procedures for activating and terminating the company's infectious disease outbreak response plan, altering business operations (e.g., possibly changing or closing operations in affected areas), and transferring business knowledge to key employees. Work closely with your local health officials to identify these triggers.
- Plan to minimize exposure between employees and also between employees and the public, if public health officials call for social distancing.
- Establish a process to communicate information to employees and business partners on your infectious disease outbreak response plans and latest COVID-19 information. Anticipate employee fear, anxiety, rumors, and misinformation, and plan communications accordingly.
- In some communities, early childhood programs and K-12 schools may be dismissed, particularly if COVID-19 worsens. Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from school. Businesses and other employers should prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies for these employees.
- Local conditions will influence the decisions that public health officials make regarding community-level strategies; employers should take the time now to learn about plans in place in each community where they have a business.

- Consider canceling non-essential business travel per [travel guidance](#) on the CDC website
 - Travel restrictions may be enacted by other countries which may limit the ability of employees to return home if they become sick while on travel status.
 - Consider cancelling large work-related meetings or events.
- Engage [state](#) and [local](#) health departments to confirm channels of communication and methods for dissemination of local outbreak information.