STRATEGIES FOR EMPLOYERS - PREVENTING ACUTE RESPIRATORY ILLNESS

The following guidance is intended for employers in non-healthcare settings to help prevent workplace exposures to acute respiratory illnesses, including the 2019 novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:

- Employees who have signs of respiratory illness are recommended to stay home until they are free of fever (below 100.4° F), signs of fever (such as chills), and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (such as cough suppressants).
- Ensure 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 respiratory illness to validate their illness or return to work, as healthcare offices and 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.

Separate sick employees:

- Employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (such as cough or 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, not hands). This is known as cough and sneeze etiquette.

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 (such as in bathroom stalls, break areas, and around the copy machine).
- Provide tissues and no touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
- Instruct employees to clean their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol, if soap and water are not available. Soap and water should be used preferentially.
- 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.

Perform routine environmental cleaning:

- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, drinking fountains, light switches and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are normally used in these areas and follow directions on the label.
- No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (such as doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, telephones, conferencing phones and desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps

- Check the CDC Traveler's Health Notices for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to be visited. Specific information for travelers going to and returning from China, including information for air crews, can be found on the CDC website.
- Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of acute respiratory illness before starting travel and to notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick before traveling.
- Ensure that 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 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.