

Legislative Update MARCH 2020*

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HELPFUL INFORMATION FROM SHRM CONCERNING CORONAVIRUS COVID-19

- COVID-19 is the disease caused by a new virus from the large family of coronaviruses that cause a range of illnesses, including the common cold. The World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) anticipate some disruption to the workplace as COVID-19 spreads in the U.S. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, workers at greatest risk of COVID-19 exposure are those in health care, death care, laboratories, airline operations, border protection, and solid waste and wastewater management. Developing a vaccine will likely take a year or more.
- COVID-19 is transmitted through close contact with someone who has it. If an infected person sneezes, coughs, or exhales within three to six feet of you, the expelled fluid droplets could land in your mouth or nose and be inhaled. You can also become infected after touching any surface contaminated with the coronavirus and then touching your face. If you wash your hands properly before touching your eyes, nose or mouth, though, you can eliminate that risk. Employees should maintain good hygiene and receive their flu vaccines.
- In 80 percent of cases, COVID-19 symptoms are mild and flu-like, requiring no special treatment for recovery. "Expect up to a two-week absence," said Chad Sanborn, M.D., an infectious disease specialist in Palm Beach County, Fla. People should be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning to work, he says. Older adults and people with underlying medical conditions tend to suffer severe symptoms that may require hospitalization and longer recovery time.
- Employers can also think about staggering shifts and workdays to limit the number of people in the workspace, Sanborn suggested.
- Working in an open office is the biggest fear employees have about their risk of getting sick, according to a survey from PR firm Bospar. But any building without good ventilation recirculates "bad air," so WHO recommends opening windows and doors whenever possible.

Source: SHRM/SHRM Online

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