



February 14, 2020

Letter to Businesses and Employers in Nevada:

As you may know, there is an expanding outbreak of a severe acute respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus (COVID-19) that is currently centered in and is actively spreading from person-to-person in China. At this time, about 2% of those who contracted this novel virus have died, with almost all associated deaths occurring in the mainland of China. This virus is gradually spreading worldwide, and a growing number of countries are reporting cases among travelers from China, and some limited person-to-person transmission has been reported.

The Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH) is sharing this information in an attempt to address growing concerns and to make businesses aware of guidance released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

DPBH is continuously updating the website <http://dph.nv.gov/coronavirus/> and we encourage you to reference this page for information and links to the CDC and other valuable resources. Additionally, guidance and information for businesses and employers can be found directly through the CDC at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/guidance-business-response.html>. This guidance also includes planning considerations.

In Nevada, DPBH has activated the Operations Center utilizing a modified Incident Command System structure to coordinate our public health response. The health of our communities is our top priority and the plan of our ongoing public health response is to early-detect and rapidly contain introductions of this virus in Nevada, with the goal of delaying and ultimately preventing sustained spread of coronavirus.

While this situation poses a serious public health threat, right now the CDC and the DPBH believe the immediate risk of the virus to the public in Nevada, and nationwide, continues to be low. The virus is not currently spreading in communities within the U.S., and the vast majority of Americans have a low risk of exposure.

Outbreaks caused by newly emerging viruses that can infect people are always concerning, and the potential for a global pandemic posed by this virus is high. The greatest risk is mostly for individuals who have recently traveled to China or their close contacts.

The coming days are likely to bring more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. and globally. However, national, state and local strategies are in place to reduce the number of travelers from China and screen remaining returning travelers for respiratory illnesses, with the potential for requiring a 14-day quarantine. These measures may cause disruption for some businesses. While it is unclear how this outbreak will evolve, Nevada and the rest of the nation are actively preparing to face this ongoing serious public health threat.

Strong public health measures such as timely detection of cases, prompt isolation of patients and proper implementation of quarantine for contacts, with close observation and monitoring of those who could have been exposed to COVID-19 patients, may blunt the impact and slow the spread of the virus until such time when effective treatment and vaccination can be developed.

It seems that the COVID-19 is spreading via droplets and direct contact with contaminated surfaces in a manner that is similar to seasonal influenza. Main symptoms of COVID-19 infection (fever, cough and shortness of breath) are also similar

to severe influenza infections. Currently, there is no approved treatment or a vaccine for this novel virus, and regular use of masks is not recommended by CDC. However, avoiding crowded areas and practicing individual hygiene including proper hand washing and not touching the face, nose, mouth and eyes with unwashed hands can reduce the risk for contracting this infection.

Individual risk depends on exposure, as those exposed to ill persons are at greater risk of contracting the infection. Additionally, the risk for contracting the virus is higher among health care workers and family members caring for patients with COVID-19. We are still in the midst of the flu season, and as long as influenza viruses are circulating, vaccination should continue, even into February or later. Taking everyday preventive actions will certainly help stop the spread of germs.

Regardless of the infections cause, it is strongly advisable for symptomatic patients to self-isolate at home and seek medical care as needed. Patients should consider appropriate measures to prevent transmitting the infection to their household members. Those who just traveled from China or have had close contact with someone who was infected with COVID-19, should contact health care providers and/or local/state health departments without delay and describe the symptoms (if any) and any possible exposure to a COVID-19 patient.

Extensive work has been done over the past 20 years to prepare for an influenza pandemic. Please take the time to review CDC Action Steps to Keep Your Business and Employees Healthy: <https://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/business/toolkit/pdf/actionsteps.pdf>

Additionally, resources for the travel industry can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>.

To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, please use CDC guidance to determine risk of COVID-19 infection. Regardless of the size or type of your business, planning and taking actions now can help protect your business and employees from the COVID-19. However, please do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed coronavirus infection. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features of COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing.

While the immediate risk of this new virus to the public continues to be low in Nevada and nationwide, everyone can do their part to respond to this serious public health threat. Our public health goal continues to be protecting the health of Nevada residents and visitors by preventing community spread of this novel virus.

If you have questions, we encourage you to contact the State Office of Public Health Investigations and Epidemiology (OPHIE), and for the most recent information on COVID-19 please visit <http://dpbh.nv.gov/coronavirus/>

Sincere regards,



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