The following guidance may help prevent workplace exposures to acute respiratory illnesses, including the Coronavirus, in non-healthcare settings. The guidance also provides planning considerations if there are more widespread, community outbreaks of the Coronavirus from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This guidance is based on what is currently known about the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

All employers should be ready to implement strategies to protect their workforce from the Coronavirus while ensuring continuity of operations. As with all illnesses, sick employees should stay home and away from the workplace, use cough and sneeze etiquette, frequently clean hands with soap and water, and routinely clean commonly touched surfaces.

What steps can be taken in advance of employees getting sick?

Explore flex working options
- Determine policies and practices, such as telecommuting and flexible work hours.
- Supervisors should educate employees that if they become sick they should telework instead of coming into the workplace until symptoms are completely resolved.

Develop an employee communications plan
- Establish a process to communicate the latest Coronavirus information to employees and business partners (ex. CDC Coronavirus Workplace Tips For Employees).
- Anticipate employee fear, anxiety, rumors, and misinformation, and plan communications accordingly.

Decide how to handle an increase in absenteeism
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.

Coordinate with state and local health officials
- Coordination with state and local health officials is strongly encouraged for all businesses to ensure timely and accurate information to guide appropriate responses in each location where their operations reside.
- Outbreak intensity may differ according to geographic location. Local health officials will be issuing guidance specific to their communities.
- Employers should take the time to research plans in place in each community where they have a business by contacting their local public health department.

Make a business continuity plan
Be prepared to change your business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, consider digital meetings, or temporarily suspend some of your operations if needed).

Symptoms
Symptoms include mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. and may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

Transmission
People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus or by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Preventative Measures
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick and 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.

Teleconference in lieu of meeting in person if available.
- Educate your employees about COVID-19, its symptoms, and the potential health concerns associated with any travel at this time.
- Follow updates from the CDC and the World Health Organization (WHO) regarding additional precautions.

What should employers do if employees become sick?

- **Ensure flexible sick leave policies:** Consistent with public health guidance, permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member, and that employees are aware of these policies. Actively encourage sick employees to notify their supervisor and stay home.

- **Local decision making:** Employers with more than one business location are encouraged to provide local managers with the authority to take appropriate actions based on the conditions in each locality.

- **Employee travel:** Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand to notify their supervisor and call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.

- **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 sent home immediately.

- **Social distancing:** Plan to minimize exposure between healthy employees and also between those employees and the public, if public health officials call for social distancing.

- **Workplace hygiene:** Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down by employees before each use.

Are there additional measures in affect in response to the Coronavirus?

- **CDC's Traveler's Health Notices:** Check the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you plan to travel.

- **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. 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.

- **Health confidentiality:** If an employee is confirmed to have the Coronavirus infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to the Coronavirus in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed Coronavirus should refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.