Employee Communication on Coronavirus 19 (COVID-19)

(Date)

(City)

With recent outbreaks of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the YOUR CITY Health Department is actively working with its health partners in the area, as well as those at state and federal levels to monitor this illness in our community. Currently, there is not a confirmed case of COVID-19 in YOUR CITY {fill this in as appropriate for your city}. As you know, this situation of COVID-19 is evolving and is subject to change. We will keep you informed of any status changes that occur in our area.

To help you understand what you should do to protect yourself and your co-workers from the potential spread of the new coronavirus (COVID-19), we've put together some tips.

How does the new coronavirus spread? Although health experts are still learning the details about how it spreads, the virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may also be possible to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

How can you protect yourself at work? The best way to protect yourself is to avoid exposure and use simple prevention methods used for other viruses like colds and flu:

- Wash your hands! Wash them often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or about the time it takes to sing the ABCs. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid close contact with co-workers; utilize alternative methods to in-person meetings when feasible, such as emails, phone calls or webinars.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, then throw your tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect your office surfaces regularly.
- Avoid touching high-touch surfaces in your work area such as elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, and bathroom fixtures/toilets.
- Avoid sharing common workplace tools such as ink pens, laptops, keyboards, or phones.
- Avoid traveling to crowded conferences and meetings if possible. Check to see if meeting could be recorded or perhaps a webinar will be offered. As this progresses, organizers may cancel or postpone events and meetings for the same reasons we are discussing.

Who is at risk? The risk to the general public is low. Data shows that children and young adults are likely to not show symptoms or have mild ones, much like you would have with a cold or mild flu.

At this time, transmission risks are primarily associated with the higher-risk populations including:
People who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members.

Older adults and those with serious health conditions (heart disease, diabetes, lung disease and any condition that affects the immune system).

People who have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. Learn more about places with ongoing spread at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html#geographic

What are the symptoms? Most people will have mild effects from the virus, but it can cause severe illness and pneumonia in others. People diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus reported symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure. Symptoms include:

- Fever (100.4 or greater)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

What should you do if you have symptoms?* If you have symptoms, please stay home! Most people will experience symptoms of a mild cold or flu and should recover just fine. If the symptoms progress where you have difficulties in breathing, then call your doctor to get instruction on what to do.

Please do NOT just walk into your dr. office or emergency room – please call them first. If you have mild cold or flu-like symptoms, you really do not need to get tested because there is no specific treatment for COVID-19, (just like when you have the flu – there is no treatment.) So, if you have mild symptoms, you will probably be told to just treat symptoms at home until you feel better. This will be more common than not since we are still in the flu and cold season and are also getting into the allergy season.

If you have been in direct contact with someone who has been confirmed with the COVID-19 virus and you develop symptoms, notify your healthcare provider. Supply them with information regarding your symptoms and that you have had contact with a confirmed case. Please do not go to your healthcare provider or an emergency room without contacting your provider or the emergency room first so they may take precautions to protect you and others.

*If you are sick, please notify your supervisor as you would normally do.

What are the treatments? There are no specific treatments for illnesses caused by human coronaviruses. Although most people will recover on their own, you can do some things to help relieve your symptoms, including:

- Take medications to relieve pain and fever
- Use a room humidifier or take a hot shower to help ease a sore throat and cough
- If you are mildly sick, drink plenty of fluids, stay home, and get plenty of rest

For more information, go to:

**Additional Information for our Employees:**

The City is going to temporarily relax the following employee rules when or if an employee develops COVID-19 symptoms or may need to stay home with an ill child or other dependent family member. These include:

Dropping the requirement for an "off-work" slip from a family doctor if gone for more than three days. If it is necessary to be off work, please communicate this need to your supervisor as you would normally do.

Due to an absence with COVID-19, it may be impractical to complete required FMLA paperwork until a later date. When you are back to work, Human Resources staff will work with you on this. We do not want you coming to work when you are sick.

If you need to miss work due to COVID-19 and don't have adequate sick/vacation leave accrual to cover need, you may apply to the Care Leave Program for possible assistance.

Please remember you are part of the City of YOUR CITY employee group and we want to help you with any questions you may have about this recent outbreak of coronavirus-19. Please use the websites noted above for information or contact the YOUR CITY Health Department at PHONE NUMBER. Thank you.