As you know, there is an ongoing and developing situation regarding the outbreak of COVID-19, commonly known as the Coronavirus. The Coronavirus was recently declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. The most common symptoms of Coronavirus are: Fever, Cough, and Shortness of Breath. The CDC believes at this time that symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. The CDC is still determining exactly how the virus is spread but it is believed to spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets also land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. The CDC recommends that we stay as much as 6 feet from others; “social distancing”. It is possible to catch the virus from someone even before they have symptoms, but little is known about this aspect of the virus at this time.

It is not yet clear what the impact will be on employers and businesses as Coronavirus spreads; however, employers are encouraged to take the following reasonable steps recommended by OSHA and the CDC to prevent community spread in their workforces. This is important, not only to protect employees, but to protect the public at large and to prevent further disruption to operations. In this regard, it is important to remember that, while the below actions taken out of an abundance of caution may cause minor disruptions in the workplace, they are there to prevent even larger workplace disruptions.

Supervisors and foremen should be trained to calmly follow the CDC and OSHA guidelines and not overreact to create panic at the worksite. These guidelines are summarized in this bulletin and links for additional information are provided. Employees who are exhibiting symptoms may be asked to go home and seek medical attention. For these reasons, it is important to follow the reasonable guidance of OSHA and the CDC.

**OSHA GUIDANCE (SUMMARY)**

OSHA recommends that employers emphasize basic infection prevention measures. OSHA’s complete guidance on preparing workplaces for COVID-19 is available at: [https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf](https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf)

As appropriate, all employers should implement good hygiene and infection control practices, including:

- Promote frequent and thorough hand washing, including by providing workers, customers, and worksite visitors with a place to wash their hands. If soap and running water are not immediately available, provide alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol.

- Encourage workers to stay home if they are sick.
• Encourage respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes.

• Provide customers and the public with tissues and trash receptacles.

• Employers should explore whether they can establish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others if state and local health authorities recommend the use of social distancing strategies.

• Discourage workers from using other workers’ phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible.

• Maintain regular housekeeping practices, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, equipment, and other elements of the work environment. When choosing cleaning chemicals, employers should consult information on Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved disinfectant labels with claims against emerging viral pathogens. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for use of all cleaning and disinfection products.

**CDC GUIDANCE (SUMMARY)**

The CDC’s interim guidance for businesses and employers is available at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html

The CDC recommends that employers actively encourage sick employees to stay home if they have symptoms of acute respiratory illness and not to come to work until they are free of fever and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or any other symptom-altering medicines. The CDC also recommends that employers be flexible and not mandate employees with acute respiratory illness to bring in a doctor’s note following their illness because doctor’s offices are overwhelmed and may not be able to provide a note as quickly as they would normally be able to. The 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 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). The CDC also recommends the following guidelines for employers:

- Employers are recommended to put up posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand-washing hygiene. Employers are also encouraged to provide tissues and no-touch garbage cans as well as hand sanitizers that contain at least 60% alcohol and/or a place for employees to wash their hands.

- Employers are recommended to routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning materials that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.

- Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of acute respiratory illness before starting travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.

- Ensure 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.

- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.

- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.