

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Workplace Guidance

Frequently Asked Questions



March 12, 2020

Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) is providing these resources specific to management of employees who have returned to Hawaii from travel in areas with known transmission of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). **For general information about COVID-19, read our [COVID-19 FAQ](#), and visit our [website](#) for updated information.** Many employers and businesses in Hawaii are concerned about the current outbreak of COVID-19 and the potential impacts to their business communities and wish to take appropriate steps to mitigate any risks.

Can employees that have traveled recently go to work?

Employees that have recently returned from a region with a [Level 3 Travel Health Notice](#) (countries with widespread sustained ongoing transmission of COVID-19) are expected to stay home and avoid contact with others (e.g., not go to work or school) for a period of 14 days from the time they left the country with widespread sustained ongoing community transmission. These persons will need to inform their employers that they will remain at home and self-monitor for 14 days.

Can employees that have family members that recently traveled to a region with COVID-19 transmission go to work?

Employees that are household contacts of returned **asymptomatic** travelers from a country with a [Level 3 Travel Health Notice](#) (countries with widespread sustained ongoing transmission of COVID-19) may attend work.

If an employee has had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 or a person under investigation for COVID-19 (PUI), they should **NOT** be allowed to return to work. When a case or PUI is identified in Hawaii, HDOH will advise close contacts of the case not to attend work.

Do business events need to be canceled?

In order to minimize close contact with large groups of people, consider postponing or cancelling any event for which a distance of 2 arms lengths or 6 ft (whichever is longer) between persons cannot be maintained. For events where it would be feasible, such as large meetings or conferences, consider alternatives to meeting in-person, such as holding them via telephone or video conference.

Employees that are scheduled to travel, can they still go?

In accordance with the U.S. Department of State Level 4 Travel Advisories (issued February 2, 2020 – China, and February 26, 2020 – Iran), employees should NOT travel to the People’s Republic of China and Iran.

Otherwise, employees should reconsider travel to any area where CDC has recognized ongoing community transmission of COVID-19. This situation is rapidly evolving. Employees who are planning to travel should stay up to date with information related to COVID-19 by visiting the following websites:

- **U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories:**
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel:**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>
- **CDC’s Travel: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers:**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/faqs.html>

Will wearing a mask protect me from COVID-19?

For healthy people, wearing a face mask is not recommended to prevent infection. The best preventive measures are to wash your hands (especially before touching your face, nose or mouth), cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, limit your contact with sick people, and stay home if sick.

Mask usage in healthcare settings is for specific types of patient contact and masks are worn together with additional types of personal protective equipment.

Is there any specific guidance for janitorial or environmental services staff regarding COVID-19?

For janitorial staff, standard policies regarding protective equipment should be followed; there are no recommendations specific to COVID-19.

Do hospitality industry or airport workers have a higher risk of COVID-19 infection?

Other than healthcare workers or people providing healthcare services, there are no classes of workers or industries that are at higher risk than others for COVID-19 infection.

How should employers prepare for the potential of COVID-19 in their business community?

- Employees who are sick should not come to work. Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance. Develop other flexible leave policies to allow employees to stay home to care for sick family members or for children if schools dismiss students or early childhood programs close. Ensure employees are aware of these policies.
- Emphasize hand hygiene for all employees. Instruct employees to clean their hands often

with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.

- Consider telecommuting options for employees when feasible.
- Consider canceling or reducing large in-person meetings and conferences, or hold them via telephone or video conference.
- Remain abreast of current recommendations from CDC, HDOH and your local health department.

What preventive measures should be taken to help reduce the spread of respiratory viruses?

HDOH recommends that employers increase education on respiratory hygiene. The best way to prevent transmission of any respiratory illness (including flu) is to follow everyday preventive actions:

- Get vaccinated against the flu. With current seasonal influenza activity, it is likely there will be confusion as persons with influenza will exhibit similar signs and symptoms such as fever and cough. We strongly recommend residents ages 6 months and older protect themselves against flu by receiving the seasonal influenza vaccination.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, before eating, and after going to the bathroom. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay home when sick
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

Cleaning Procedures

Special sanitizing processes beyond routine cleaning are not necessary or recommended to slow the spread of respiratory illness. Businesses should follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product. Typically, this means daily sanitizing of surfaces and objects that are frequently touched.

Other Guidance Documents

- Laboratories
 - [Interim Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines for Handling and Processing Specimens Associated with 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\)](#) (CDC)
- Airlines
 - [Interim Recommendations for Airlines and Airline Crew: Novel Coronavirus in China](#) (CDC)
 - [Interim Health Guidance for Air Carriers and Crews with a Nexus of Operations to China](#) (FAA, CDC)

If you have any questions regarding HDOH’s recommendations for work exclusions related to COVID-19, please contact HDOH at one of the numbers below.

- Oahu (Disease Reporting Line).....(808) 586-4586
- Maui District Health Office..... (808) 984-8213
- Kauai District Health Office.....(808) 241-3563
- Big Island District Health Office (Hilo).....(808) 933-0912
- Big Island District Health Office (Kona).....(808) 322-4877
- After hours on Oahu..... (808) 600-3625
- After hours on neighbor islands..... (800) 360-2575 (toll free)

For more information, please visit HDOH’s Coronavirus Disease 2019 webpage at:
<https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/advisories/novel-coronavirus-2019/>

or the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s Coronavirus Disease 2019 website at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.



For up-to-date and reliable information on the COVID-19 outbreak and what you can do to protect yourself and your family, contact our partners at Aloha United Way 2-1-1.

There are multiple ways to reach them from 7:00 AM to 10:00 PM:

CALL 2-1-1

TEXT at 877-275-6569 (include your ZIP code)

CHAT at www.auw211.org

EMAIL at info211@auw.org

Or **SEARCH** their online database 24/7 at auw211.org/Search.aspx