

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Employee Responsibilities During a Pandemic

There are two overriding rules that all employees should remember:

1. **Think safety first.** Employees who are infected or at risk of infection should stay home to ensure the safety of the rest of the workforce. This is priority number one.
2. **Think about how you can help keep your department operational and accomplish critical functions during the pandemic.** The City is not going to completely shut down during this coronavirus emergency.

I. When should employees stay home?

It is extremely important the City maintains a safe work environment for all employees. It is critically important that any employee experiencing the following symptoms, or affected by one of the following factors, stay at home and not return to work until they are free of these symptoms for at least **72 hours** without the use of fever-reducing medications. All directors and supervisors are instructed to send home any employee that exhibits **ONE** of the following symptoms:

Symptoms

- fever over 100.4;
- respiratory symptoms such as sore throat, cough, runny nose, shortness of breath;
- body aches, chills, sweats, headache;
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea; and
- New loss of taste or smell.

Factors

- If the employee has had close contact with a person with laboratory confirmed COVID-19 within the last 14 days;
- Have been in a health care facility, congregate living facility, or around an individual with identified infections suspected to be due to COVID-19 but still awaiting confirmation;
- Travel to affected area within the last 14 days (see here as it is ever-changing): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>; and
- Travel on a cruise ship within the last 14 days.

The Nurse Practitioner is recommending employees self-monitor their temperature daily and keep a log. If an employee is consistently 97.6 degrees over several days and begins seeing their temperature trend upward in conjunction with symptoms, the employee can identify that they may be beginning to get an infectious illness. The Nurse Practitioner asks that employees self-identify, let their director or supervisor know, and stay home until they have been fever and symptom free for 72 hours.

*The Nurse Practitioner is asking that employees err on the conservative side and, if possible, voluntarily make the personal choice to stay home with any cold symptoms even if they are not listed above within the infectious symptom's bullets.

Employees who are sick and have respiratory symptoms, such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath, should remain home unless in need of medical attention. These individuals can be around others **AFTER** they have stayed home for at least 3 days with no fever **AND** symptoms improved **AND** it has been 10 days since symptoms first appeared.

If an employee is sent home for any of the above reasons, they cannot return to work until they are free of the offending symptoms and the fever for at least 72 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. An appointment will need to be scheduled with the Wellness Center to confirm resolution of the symptoms and fever and will be required by an employee prior to returning to work.

Directors and supervisors will be closely monitoring the workforce for signs of infection and may send home any employee exhibiting physical signs of having an infectious illness.

II. Employee Responsibilities While At Work

For all employees who are working on the City of Rock Island's premises, the City will strictly enforce the following safety precautions and procedures:

- a. If you begin to feel sick or exhibit symptoms while at work, you must immediately leave the workplace and notify Human Resources (732-2050);
- b. Regularly wash your hands while at work or carry appropriate hand sanitizer if a water source is not readily available;
- c. Refrain from touching your face;
- d. Employees should maintain a distance of six (6) feet from one another;
- e. Limit face-to-face contact as much as possible;
- f. Limit hand-delivery and/or sharing of information or documents and utilize email, teleconferencing or other electronic sharing/submission options as a safe alternative;
- g. Limit printing and/or the use of hard copy documents for sharing/disseminating information;
- h. Keep your work area clean and sanitary. Keep desktops clutter free so it can be sanitized by the cleaning company;
- i. Conference calls, video messaging or other electronic means should be prioritized over in-person meetings or interactions;
- j. Refrain from sharing office supplies and/or equipment to the greatest extent possible (example, do not offer your pen to another employee); and
- k. Any employee concerned about a specific area and/or object needing disinfectant or additional sanitation measures should contact Human Resources (732-2050).

I. Limit travel. Employees are asked to refrain from non-essential or personal travel. Employees should pay close attention to travel restrictions imposed by the federal government:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/ea/covid-19-information.html>

and also consult the CDC site: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

Employees traveling commercially may be asked to self-quarantine for up to 14 days and required to visit the Nurse Practitioner prior to being returned to work. Employees will be required to use paid sick leave or other leave banks during the quarantine period.

III. What about employees who worked with ill or infected employees?

The Employer will facilitate environmental cleanup of the affected employee's workspace and any potentially contaminated areas.

To ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, CDC advises that critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community.

A potential exposure means being a household contact or having a close contact within 6 feet of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. The timeframe for having contact with an individual includes the period of time 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic.

Critical infrastructure workers who have had an exposure but remain asymptomatic should adhere to the following practices prior to and during their work shift:

- Pre-Screen: Employers should measure the employee's temperature and assess symptoms prior to them starting work. Ideally, temperature checks should happen before the individual enters the facility;
- Regular Monitoring: As long as the employee doesn't have a temperature or symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program (Wellness Center);
- Wear a Mask: The employee should wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure. Employers can issue facemasks or can approve employees' supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages;
- Social Distance: The employee should maintain 6 feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit in the workplace; and
- Disinfect and Clean work spaces: Clean and disinfect areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment routinely.

If the employee becomes sick during the day, they should be sent home immediately. Surfaces in their workspace should be cleaned and disinfected. Information on persons who had contact with the ill employee during the time the employee had symptoms and 2 days prior to symptoms should be compiled. Others at the facility with close contact within 6 feet of the employee during this time would be considered exposed.

Employees should consult the CDC website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html>

IV. What should employers do about employees who face increased risk of infection?

The Employer will permit flexible work arrangements and make plans for them. This is an effective strategy for infection control.

Employees will be permitted flexible use of their paid leave benefits. For example, employees will be allowed to use sick leave to care for children at home due to school closings. Other examples include probationary employees will be allowed use of all paid leave benefits. Finance (Payroll) will permit employees to run a deficit of up to 80 hours of sick leave. Leave flexibility will be done on a non-precedent setting basis due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Telecommuting policy (signed agreement) is available for employee's use and it posted on the City's intranet. Director approval is required for any employee seeking to work remotely.

Employers should also implement and enforce personal hygiene protocols, including hand washing and use of hand sanitizers, asking symptomatic employees to seek medical attention and allowing work from home.

V. Can employees refuse to come to work?

Directors and supervisors will address employee refusal to come to work on a case-by-case basis. Directors and supervisors will seek to understand the basis of the employee's refusal and what the employee is asking before requiring them to work.

If an employee is concerned from a health or safety perspective, he/she can take time off as paid leave. Time off used during the COVID-19 pandemic will not be considered for performance evaluation purposes. Employee can further take advantage of FMLA, if applicable.

VI. Will Directors allow telecommuting?

Yes. In this situation, the Employer will consider flexible work arrangements as a possibility for all employees and, in particular, immune-compromised employees. In the event of a worsening outbreak, directors and supervisors will contemplate flexible work hours for employees who (e.g., delayed start times, separate shifts).

Directors and supervisors must be aware that they will need to pay nonexempt employees for all hours worked including overtime. Employers should have a system in place to verify work hours.

Hours worked in excess of those scheduled per day and per week required the advance approval of the telecommuter's department director or supervisor. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the immediate termination of the telecommuting agreement and disciplinary action.

VII. Does the Employer have to pay an employee who is quarantined or ill?

The answer depends on certain factors including, employee classification, whether the employee is sick or well and whether or not they are working remotely while out.

Any COVID-19 illnesses will be treated in similar fashion as the seasonal flu. Employees will be required to use their sick leave or other leave bank for such an illness. However, employee exposures due to a person with a laboratory confirmed COVID-19 test may be eligible for Workers' Compensation or Public Employee Disability Act coverage.

VIII. What immediate steps is the Employer undertaking to protect employees and keep them informed?

Departments are attempting to reduce public contact as significantly as possible but still maintain service. Departments are planning for scaled-back operations if any new federal/state or governor mandates are executed. Department directors are evaluating how they can keep their departments operational and accomplish critical functions during the pandemic.

City Hall is currently restricted to citizens being in the vestibule. A phone is available. Citizens can still schedule appointments with city staff.

Business will be primarily conducted via phone and electronic means. Greater reliance will be placed on teleconferencing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Quad City government-wide agreement will address local government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Local governments will have similar facility closings, employee policies and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employee meetings and professional development conferences are cancelled.

The Nurse Practitioner will provide regular public health announcements to employees regarding the status COVID-19 and the Wellness Center.

Department Directors are determining a schedule so employees can rotate between being home and working to support critical city services. While at home, employees will continue to be paid their full wages and benefits without having to use their banked leave. When directed to work from home/go home, employees will be on call and will report to work if needed. (If employees are sick, they will be required to use their sick leave or other leave bank for their illness.) A rough goal will be to reduce onsite staff in half.

IX. Guidelines for Phase 3 Reopening

All regions in the State of Illinois can move to Phase 3 of the Restore Illinois plan on May 29, 2020. Effective June 1, 2020, the Employer is recalling employees to work at most City facilities.

Employees are expected at work and will no longer be able to use “unpaid” leave without the manager’s advanced approval.

- General Health and Safety Guidelines for all Departments
 - Employees should wear face coverings over their nose and mouth when within 6-ft. of others (cloth masks preferred). Exceptions may be made where accommodations are appropriate – see IDHR’s guidance.
 - Refer to CDC guidance on cleaning cloth face coverings at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wash-cloth-face-coverings.html>
 - Social distance of at least 6-ft. should be maintained between non-household individuals unless participating in activities permitted under Phase III guidelines.
 - Managers should evaluate workflow patterns and make changes necessary to the office design. For example, move desks and office equipment if there is a bottleneck or natural congregation of employees. Mark floor areas typically used by the public or where a bottleneck occurs to visually demarcate six-foot distancing (e.g. place floor dots).
 - Frequent hand washing by employees, and an adequate supply of soap/ paper towels and/or disinfectant/ hand sanitizer should be available.
 - Employees are encouraged to clean high touch areas in their work spaces during the day and clear their work surfaces (clean desk policy) at the end of the shift to aid cleaning staff in nightly cleaning.
 - Hand sanitizer should be made available to customers.

- General Guidelines for Facilities
 - Display signage at entrances with face covering requirements, social distancing guidelines, and cleaning protocols (cite the Governor’s executive order)
 - Signage can be downloaded and printed from the DCEO website at <https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/pages/restoreLP3.aspx>
 - Display visual markers 6-ft. apart at any customer queue points (e.g., elevators, building entrances).
 - Limit elevator capacity to allow for 6-ft. social distance.
 - Water fountains, except for touchless water bottle refill stations, should be made unavailable for use (e.g. turned off, covered, area blocked) and signage posted.
 - Provide hand sanitizer at building entrances, elevators, and common areas.
 - Ensure impermeable barrier between employee and customer at service counters.
 - Keep incoming items separate from finished items if possible.

- Remove shared items (e.g., magazines) from waiting areas and configure any seating to be 6-ft apart to allow for social distancing.
 - Any surfaces (e.g., seats) in waiting area touched by customers should be disinfected after use.
- Where building management practices allow, increase air turnover rates in occupied spaces and increase outside make-up air to the maximum extent practical
- The City Hall and other departments will re-open its doors to the public on June 1, 2020 with certain changes in place to protect employees and visitors. Some of these changes include:
 - The inside vestibule doors of City Hall will be propped open in order to limit touch points. The front doors will be kept shut to eliminate insects, vermin, and to maintain air quality and temperature consistency within the building.
 - City Council chambers should not be used for gatherings of more than 10 persons. Other meeting rooms are available as long as social distancing is maintained between individuals. However, the continuation of virtual meetings is encouraged.
 - Departments are requested to review their access to the public and visitors and adjust as necessary.