

COVID-19 Update

Message from the General Manager's Office

March 27, 2020

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold, we are fortunate that the employees who were placed on 14-day administrative leave are starting to clear and return to the workplace. These are folks who have been quarantining for 14 days from their last known contact with a person who was suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19. We are relieved that these employees, our original "quarantined", did not become ill.

The process for bringing employees back to work is pretty straight forward. Remember, these are staff who were considered to be at greater risk for contracting the virus because of exposure to someone else. They may be friends or family of a person who has tested positive, had direct contact at work, had lunch together, shared an office, or simply been in the same meeting or close quarters.

Being exposed does not mean you will contract the Coronavirus, and while testing (if available) can be done with results available in 2 - 7 days, the public health guideline is to wait 14 days to see if a person shows symptoms of upper respiratory illness, fever, or cold-like symptoms. During this long incubation period, someone who has potentially been exposed to the virus either becomes symptomatic, or they do not have COVID-19.

The few employees who have tested positive and/or had symptoms that caused us to quarantine other employees will remain out of the workplace until they are symptom free, have been evaluated by a medical professional, and are approved to return to work in accordance with public health guidelines.

Next week, we are launching a new group whose function will be to coordinate the Department's HR response to COVID-19. The few instances that have resulted in putting employees on precautionary 14-day leave have shown us the difficult and time-consuming effort it takes to determine the extent of potential employee exposure and also maintain privacy for the employee who has or might have COVID-19. Certainly, the reduction in the number of people at the workplace, the emphasis on social distancing, and the focus on hygiene and handwashing greatly reduce the risk of exposure. But as cases increase in our communities, so does the likelihood that other employees may be impacted. This group's function will be to quickly discern the extent of potential new exposures to employees within the Department so we can get those employees notified and home as a precaution for themselves and others who work around them.

We will beat this by being vigilant and protecting ourselves, both at work and at home. As a reminder, maintain a 6-foot space from other people at all times. Wash your hands often, and avoid touching your face, which I know is easier said than done! Use a sleeve or towel when pushing an elevator button or opening a door. Wear gloves in the field and don't wipe your face with them. These are important practices that we all need to try to develop into good, natural habits.

Thank you for your continuing dedication to your work and each other. Be smart - stay safe!
And remember...STAY HOME IF YOU ARE SICK!



Martin L. Adams

General Manager and Chief Engineer