

Coronavirus and Employee Travel

March 13, 2020

As employers continue to monitor the evolving situation with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), they should offer employees information and guidance about domestic and international travel. The United States and countries worldwide have continued to expand the scope of their travel restrictions and, at present, all non-essential travel should be discouraged until further notice by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). During this COVID-19 outbreak, meetings, conferences, and other business communications should be conducted remotely whenever possible, using telephone, electronic messaging, or video conference technologies.

International Travel

If employees are traveling to or returning from any “Level 3” areas on the travel advisory list published by the CDC, including China, South Korea, Iran, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and 26 countries in the European Schengen Area, or going on a cruise ship, then they should be required to inform their supervisors. Generally, if employees, household members, or any other individuals that employees have been in contact with travel to any of these countries or take a cruise, then they should be required, upon either their return or their contact with those individuals, to stay away from the workplace for two weeks before returning to work. During that time, if employees experience any symptoms associated with COVID-19, they should seek immediate medical attention.

Domestic Travel

In recent guidance, the CDC notes that travelers may be at a higher risk of exposure when traveling to areas within the United States that have a high number of COVID-19 cases. The CDC also warns that the risk of COVID-19 exposure may increase in crowded settings, including conferences, public events, public transportation, and public spaces.

On March 16, 2020, the White House announced enhanced guidelines for all Americans, including avoiding gatherings of more than ten people, avoiding all discretionary travel, and avoiding bars, restaurants and food courts. Currently, these guidelines are in place for the next 15 days.

Precautions

Employees should avoid all non-essential business and personal travel, whether international or domestic. If employees must travel, they should adhere to the following precautions:

- Continue to check the CDC’s Traveler’s Health Notices and any guidelines issued by the federal government for the latest guidance and recommendations.
- Avoid traveling if they are already sick.

- If viable alternatives exist, avoid busy airports and travel times.
- During travel, employees should: (a) avoid contact with sick people; (b) avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands; and (c) clean their hands often by washing them with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60%–95% alcohol (soap and water should be used if hands are visibly dirty).
- It is especially important for employees to clean their hands after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after coughing, sneezing or blowing their noses.
- Employees should avoid physical contact, including handshakes or hugs, and attempt to maintain safe distances from other individuals when possible.
- Employees should limit the number of visits by hotel cleaning staff and, when possible, consider using room service for meals.
- While traveling, employees should avoid public areas, mass gatherings, or large events with over 50 people.
- If employees become sick while traveling or after returning, they should seek immediate medical attention and notify their supervisors