



HR Updates

by Fairview Insurance Agency

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Employers Must Do What They Can to Maintain a Safe and Healthy Work Environment

As the number of reported cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to rise, employers are increasingly confronted with the possibility of an outbreak in the workplace.

Employers are obligated to maintain a safe and healthy work environment for their employees, but they are also subject to a number of legal requirements protecting workers from discrimination. Compliance issues to consider include:

- The general duty to provide employees with safe workplace conditions imposed by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act;
- Protection against disability discrimination (including disability-related inquiries and medical examinations) under the Americans with Disabilities Act;
- Requirements set by federal and state employee leave laws; and
- The compensation of individuals who miss work due to COVID-19.

Resources

Federal and state governments are actively publishing information on this development. Reliable resources include the materials listed below:

- **U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC):** [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Situation Summary](#)
- **World Health Organization (WHO):** [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) advice for the public](#)
- **Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA):** [Safety and Health Topics: COVID-19](#)

Additional resources and information can be found on [this page](#).

Action Steps for Employers

To address the impact of COVID-19 in the workplace, employers should:

- Closely monitor the CDC, WHO, and state and local public health department websites for information on the status of COVID-19;
- Proactively educate their employees on what is known about the virus, including its transmission and prevention;
- Establish a written communicable illness policy and response plan that covers communicable diseases readily transmitted in the workplace; and
- Consider measures that can help prevent the spread of illness, such as allowing employees flexible work options like working from home.