

Safety Update

CORONAVIRUS: AN UPDATE

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This update is intended to provide information to employers as to the general status of the rapidly developing outbreak of novel coronavirus (nCoV-2019) in central China.

California cases

There are two people in Southern California who have been infected after travelling to Wuhan, China. The outbreak is believed to have started in a large seafood and animal market. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), they believe the virus likely emerged from an animal source and became transmittable between humans. The two persons in Southern California are being treated at local hospitals where the local public health officials have stated they believe there is a low risk of infection from these two cases. There have been no deaths in the U.S., and the CDC has stated that the health risk is considered low at this time.

Other U.S. cases

The coronavirus has been confirmed in three patients in the U.S., including Arizona.

Two immediate concerns

First, the Chinese health minister has stated that people can become infectious while the virus is still incubating which means they can transmit it without exhibiting symptoms. American authorities would like to travel to China to examine the data supporting that assertion.

Second, it is unknown if the virus can “travel” on inanimate objects, which could further spread the virus. According to CDC experts, coronaviruses have poor “survivability” on surfaces. They further suggest that there is a low risk of spread from products or packaging shipped from China to the United States.

How the virus is transmitted

The coronavirus is transmitted between humans through coughing, sneezing or touching. It enters the body through the eyes, nose and mouth. Once in the body, the virus locates a host cell in the respiratory system and infects it. Soon thereafter, the infected host cell bursts infecting other cells. According to medical experts, the incubation period is up to two weeks.

Signs and symptoms

Symptoms include a runny nose, cough, sore throat, and a high temperature. Within two to seven days, patients will develop a dry cough and may experience mild difficulty in breathing. Patients may also experience body aching, gastrointestinal problems and diarrhea.

Patients with severe symptoms may experience a temperature above 100 F degrees, pneumonia, and kidney failure.

Prevention steps

Although there is no preventative treatment for the coronavirus, there are six steps workers should practice:

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 – 30 seconds
- Do not touch the eyes, mouth or nose with unwashed hands
- Steer clear of anyone who appears to be sick
- If an employee is sick, they should stay away from the job site preferably at home
- Cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue and then dispose of it
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and objects

Surgical masks can offer some protection in preventing infection in others if the wearer is ill.

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