

# **COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR CITY OF SPRINGFIELD EMPLOYEES**

## **1. What is a coronavirus?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that usually cause mild respiratory illnesses such as the common cold. COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus that was not identified in humans before December 2019.

## **2. What should I do if I suspect that I may have COVID-19?**

If you have symptoms like a cough, fever, or breathing problems and you might have been exposed to COVID-19, please contact your health care provider and/or the Wellness Center (541) 242-2816. Your provider will ask you about your symptoms and will decide whether you should be seen in the office.

If the doctor asks you to come in to the office, they will likely create a plan for you to enter the facility in a way that avoids being around others, to prevent the spread of illness.

## **3. Social Distancing**

The services we provide to our community are critical. At this time, we encourage social distancing behaviors. You know your own situation best. If you are in one of the high risk populations (over age 60 or who have serious chronic medical conditions) please take extra precautions. City Leadership values our employees and our community. We want to acknowledge the impact of the virus on those who are most vulnerable in our communities, and do our part in preventing, slowing, and limiting its reach.

To the extent possible, avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places such as elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, handshaking with people, etc.

If you are sick, you should not be at work.

### **A. Internal Meetings**

The idea of social distancing is to reduce opportunities to spread COVID-19 by simply reducing contact with others who might be sick. At this time, managers and supervisors are evaluating existing meetings to determine whether and where it makes sense to provide alternate options. Some meetings may be cancelled as a precaution; others may be conducted via alternate methods, and this may change over time, so please check in with your supervisor.

B. External Meetings

C. **On March 12, 2020, Governor Brown enacted an Executive Order canceling gatherings of over 250 people throughout the state until April 8. A “gathering” is defined as any event in a space in which appropriate social distancing of a minimum of six feet cannot be maintained. If you are responsible for other meetings that involve multiple jurisdictions and or the general public, please limit non-essential meetings.** Travel & Conferences

At this time, there are no city-wide restrictions on travel. Please follow your department’s protocol for any new work related travel inquiries. Please review travel options to ensure that your purchases can be refunded in the event of a cancelled conference and or travel restrictions.

If you have not yet booked travel expenses for an upcoming trip, please wait to do so and talk through it with your supervisor.

Prior to travel, please review if you have any symptoms of acute respiratory illness before starting travel and notify your supervisor and stay home if you are sick. If you become sick while traveling please notify your supervisor and promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.

If you are in a risk group as defined by the CDC (over age 60 or who have serious chronic medical conditions) you may want consider limiting your travel, especially to locations with confirmed cases.

If you have already booked a trip, but now have concerns about travel, please work directly with your supervisor and stay up-to-date by visiting the County Public Health COVID-19 Coronavirus website: [www.lanecountyor.gov/coronavirus](http://www.lanecountyor.gov/coronavirus). Many airlines and hotels have been crediting customers due to cancelled conferences and other business related events.

For personal travel, please know that there could be travel restrictions with little or no advance notice. [The CDC has an updated list of international travel health notices.](#)

D. Remote Project Work

We've had a lot of people ask about working from home. If you are sick or need to care for family members who are sick, we want to ensure you are able to properly rest in order to get well. If there is a situation where we need an employee to work from home, those may be approved on a case by case basis. Many positions are not suitable to work from home; however, we are currently evaluating what types of positions could possibly work remotely for a short duration due to COVID-19. This is all dependent on the infrastructure (equipment, staffing to set it up) available at the time.

#### **4. Commitment to Equity**

As new information emerges, please remind your community that the risk of COVID-19 is not at all connected with race, ethnicity, or nationality. Stigma will not help to fight the illness. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed COVID-19 infection. Sharing accurate information during a time of heightened concern is one of the best things we can do to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading. The [CDC website](#) is an excellent source of information.

#### **5. Leave Usage**

The City is closely monitoring COVID-19 as the situation develops and is taking precautionary measures in our operations – recognizing that this is a quickly evolving situation, which could lead to changes in policies and practices as facts develop. Based on evolving COVID-19 potential health impacts, we have tried to address some of the more commonly asked leave questions and any temporary changes to City specific leave processes and policies.

If you are sick, do not come to work. Illness in the workplace creates a risk to your co-workers, your co-workers' families, and can impact the operations of the entire organization. City leadership wants you to take care of yourself and be well.

As a reminder, the City offers several types of leave to eligible employees. If you expect to be out of work for 3 or more days please refer to the [City's Leave Benefits website](#) . You may be eligible for FMLA, OFLA, Oregon Sick Time, or Short Term Disability depending on your specific situation.

##### **A. What if an immediate family member is ill, can I use sick leave?**

**Answer:** Employees who are unable to report to work due to their own illness or are caring for someone due to illness may accrued sick leave to make up any hours remaining on their normal work schedule.

**B. Can staff take leave preemptively to avoid becoming ill or take care of family members? If so, how would they be paid?**

**Answer:** As always, staff may request time off for any reason following their normal leave request procedures. Managers are encouraged to carefully consider the request, especially if an employee or family member has an underlying health condition which may cause them to be at higher risk. Approvals are subject to regular business and staffing requirements. Employees are eligible to use accrued leave, compensatory, or floating holidays. An employee out of leave accruals may request to borrow against future accruals or take it as unpaid leave.

Employees at higher risk for complications from COVID-19 are encouraged to contact their health care provider at the first signs of illness for advice.

**C. I'm afraid of catching COVID-19 and don't want to come to work. What are my leave options?**

**Answer:** Employees are expected to make every effort to come to work to serve the public, unless they have an approved leave. In times of high absenteeism, leave requests may not be granted. Employees are encouraged to manage their leave requests so as to not be without paid leave in the event of a future leave need. This would not be an approved leave without pay situation. However, know that the City is responding to concerns about addressing the spread of the virus by implementing additional cleaning efforts for high touch surfaces as outlined by the CDC.

**D. Can I get time off work to care for my child while schools or daycare centers are closed due to outbreak?**

**Answer:** In some cases, employees may be entitled to use leave due to closure of the school or childcare facility attended by the employee's child as outlined under the Oregon Sick Time Law. Please work with Human Resources and your supervisor for specific guidance regarding the use of leave to care for a child impacted by public health closure of a school or childcare facility.

Employees are encouraged to pre-plan as much as possible for care of children in the event of school or childcare closures. Make this a part of your family emergency plan so all family members know what to do. However, in the event of an emergent situation, please discuss your options with your supervisor.

**E. What happens if I run out of accrued leave?**

**Answer:** For this current COVID-19 situation, employees may take unpaid leave or may request to borrow against future leave accruals. Please communicate with your immediate supervisor.

**F. If I run out of leave can I request leave donations?**

**Answer:** The rules for leave donations are set by IRS tax law. Voluntary leave donation may be requested for a medical emergency of an employee or a spouse or child living in the same home that require a prolonged absence of the employee from duty and will result in a substantial loss of income to the employee because the employee has exhausted all available accrued paid leaves. A prolonged absence can include intermittent absence so long as it's related to the same condition. To be eligible to receive a leave donation, an employee must be employed by the City for at least 90 days and must be eligible to accrue paid leave time.

**6. Other Questions:**

**A. Will I be asked to perform other duties within my department or outside of my department?**

**Answer:** It could happen that you might be asked to help provide essential services due to high absenteeism. In that case, you will receive the necessary training.

**B. Would a COVID-19 infection be considered a work related injury?**

**Answer:** A work claim requires a clear and obvious connection between the employees' duties and an exposure. The employee will be required to provide the date, time and source of the exposure.

**C. Is testing for COVID-19 covered by our health insurance?**

**Answer:** Yes, for 60 days from March 13<sup>th</sup>, the plan will provide the following services:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) testing and diagnosis related to visits will be covered at no cost.
- This plan will allow a one-time early refill for prescriptions drugs, all applicable deductibles, co-pays and/or co-insurance will apply.

**D. Can employees wear a mask at work?**

**Answer:** If an employee wants to wear their own face mask they can, unless it is inconsistent with their job duties. The City will not pay for personal facemasks.

## 7. Where can I get additional information?

Please be careful where you receive information regarding COVID-19. There is a lot of misinformation online and we have had a spike in malicious phishing emails to City of Springfield email addresses. If you receive an email from an outside source, please consider carefully before clicking on any links or attachments.

We encourage you to visit:

- [www.lanecountyor.gov/coronavirus](http://www.lanecountyor.gov/coronavirus). They have local information in English and Spanish.
- [www.healthoregon.org/coronavirus](http://www.healthoregon.org/coronavirus) Oregon Health Authority
- [www.211info.org/corona-virus](http://www.211info.org/corona-virus)

The Lane County Public Health non-emergency call center is open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday–Friday at 541-682-1380. Questions can also be submitted via email to [hr@springfield-or.gov](mailto:hr@springfield-or.gov).