


**CITY OF LOS ANGELES**  
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: March 20, 2020

To: All City Employees  
City of Los Angeles

From: Wendy Macy, General Manager  
Personnel Department 

Subject: **CORONAVIRUS FAQs FOR CITY EMPLOYEES**

The health and well-being of our employees is of paramount importance to our City leaders. Every employee deserves a safe and supportive workplace. Due to the rapidly evolving nature of the coronavirus, the following information is being provided to ensure you and your families remain safe and informed.

Most of these guidelines apply to **non-essential employees**. Essential and non-essential employees are determined by each department; please contact your department HR for guidance. Each Department will determine which employees have critical functions that cannot be handled through telecommuting. ***This is an emergency situation and none of these guidelines should be construed as a permanent change to policy and can and will be revisited and updated as the COVID-19 emergency unfolds.***

**Background**

A new virus first identified in Wuhan, China in late 2019 has been spreading across the globe and is now in the United States. The new coronavirus, COVID-19, is not a flu but a pneumonia-like infection. [The virus symptoms manifest as a mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.](#) The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) believes at this time that symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. The CDC recommends staying at least 3 meters or 6 feet away from a person who is sick or possibly infected with the virus. It may also be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. Therefore, it is important for everyone to wash their hands and avoid touching their face.

**WORKPLACE ISSUES**

**What should I do if I recently traveled to an affected area, took a cruise, or otherwise may have been exposed to the COVID-19 coronavirus?**

If you recently traveled to an area that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has deemed as high risk or have otherwise been exposed to COVID-19, you must notify your supervisor immediately prior to returning to work. Following notification, your supervisor will notify Human Resources. As of the date of this memo, areas currently identified by the CDC as high risk include

China, South Korea, Iran, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and most of Europe, as well as cruise ship travel (all at Level 3 - see CDC links below for specific countries), and Japan (Level 2). Information on travel health and notices related to travel destinations is rapidly evolving each day, and more information can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html> and <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel> (click on the Destinations tab and enter the country).

After travel to high risk areas, cruise ship travel, or other exposure, you should remain out of the workplace for at least a 14-day period of time to ensure any potential infection does not spread. For options to cover your quarantine time off, please contact your HR Section.

**If I exhibit signs of an upper respiratory infection while at work, can I be asked to stay home or leave work, regardless of recent travel history and/or destination?**

Yes. If you appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms upon arrival to work or become sick during the day, you may be sent home. If you are directed to go home or asked to stay home, options to cover your time off may include telecommuting (if available), or if telecommuting is not feasible, paid administrative leave; please contact your supervisor and HR Section for a final determination regarding your pay status. You may be asked limited questions regarding your travel or potential exposure to determine your work status.

**If I am exhibiting signs of an upper respiratory infection and am directed to go home, can I refuse to go home? Will I be paid, if sent home?**

No, you may not refuse to go home. If you are sent home, options to cover your time off may include telecommuting (if available) or if telecommuting is not feasible, paid administrative leave; please contact your supervisor and HR Section for a final determination regarding your pay status.

**Can I refuse to come to work?**

If you have been identified as being particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 (age 65+ or with an underlying medical condition) you will be approved to telecommute (if available), or be allowed paid administrative leave. Employees placed on paid administrative leave are still required to be available during their normally scheduled work hours. The following CDC link provides further guidance for determining risk: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

**Can I choose to use my sick time because of fear of infection?**

No. Employees cannot use sick time because of fear of infection. If you are healthy, and not from a vulnerable population (see CDC guidelines), your General Manager will direct you to telecommute or, if your work cannot be done remotely, come to work as usual.

**What if COVID-19-related City closures prevent me from working at my normal work location or result in a reduction in my regular hours?**

You will be assigned to telecommute (if available for your position) during your normal work hours, or placed on call during your normally scheduled work hours and receive paid administrative leave. On March 18, 2020, the Mayor activated the Disaster Service Worker (DSW) program. All public employees in the State of California are considered Disaster Service Workers. You may be called upon to respond during an emergency or disaster and the City may ask you to perform work outside the normal scope of your duties as a DSW. <https://emergency.lacity.org/dsw>

**What if I have a lack of work based on my job status (i.e., part time employee)? Will my benefits continue to be paid?**

The City will provide for salary continuation for part-time employees and for employees who cannot work due to closure of their work site, such as libraries, the Zoo, etc. Those who have benefits will not

have them interrupted while salary continuance is implemented. You may be called upon to respond during an emergency or disaster and the City may ask you to perform work outside the normal scope of your duties as a DSW. <https://emergency.lacity.org/dsw>

**If I am placed on paid leave, may I use my time to grocery shop and perform other tasks outside my home?**

No. Employees who are placed on paid leave because their position/duties do not allow telecommuting must remain at home and available for contact and work assignments. The purpose of assigning employees to home during this critical period is to reduce personal interactions and increase social distancing. Also, keep in mind you may also be called upon to respond to an emergency as a DSW.

**Is there a specific work code I should utilize in D-time for my time spent telecommuting or on paid leave?**

Yes. If you are working at your assigned work location, you will utilize your traditional D-time codes including HW (Hours Worked). However, the following timesheet codes have been setup in PaySR to track time at home associated with the COVID-19 crisis:

- T9 - COVID 19 WORK FROM HOME PAY (Telecommuting)
- 19 - COVID 19 LEAVE WITH PAY (Paid Admin Leave)

These codes, T9 and 19, should be utilized the same way the HW code is used. If your day consists of both work hours and paid leave (on-call hours), D-time should reflect the appropriate number of each.

**CHILDCARE ISSUES**

**What happens if my child's school or care giver location is closed due to COVID-19 and I am unable to find alternative child care?**

If you are unable to find alternative child care you will be allowed to telecommute (if available) or, if there are no telecommuting options available, you will be assigned to remain on call at home and receive paid leave to care for your children. It should be noted that as schools determine longer closure periods (i.e. through the end of the school year) alternative child care may be required. ***This is an emergency situation and none of these guidelines should be construed as a permanent change to policy and can and will be revisited and updated as the COVID-19 emergency unfolds.*** Employees will be kept informed as information becomes available.

**DOCTOR'S NOTES**

**Will I be required to provide a doctor's note when returning to work?**

No. The City will not be requiring a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with respiratory illness or flu-like symptoms to validate their illness or to return to work, due to increased workload on medical professionals. However, if you are sent home because you may have been infected by, or exposed to COVID-19, or you are diagnosed as having the COVID-19 coronavirus, please contact your HR section for guidance, as health guidelines may require a doctor's note before returning to work.

**DOCTOR'S VISITS OR TELEMEDICINE (REMOTE HEALTH CARE)**

**Are there alternative options to visiting a doctor's office in person if an employee is ill?**

LAwell Program health plans Kaiser Permanente and Anthem provide telehealth options allowing employees to visit with a doctor 24/7. Anthem offers a website and mobile application providing online

video visits with a doctor for medical advice, treatment plans, and prescriptions; members can register or log in by visiting <https://livehealthonline.com/>. Kaiser members can call 1-833-574-2273 to schedule an appointment to speak with a licensed care provider 24/7 or have an online video visit with a doctor.

### **FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA)**

#### **Does family and medical leave apply to my absences?**

FMLA continues to apply for personal illness and/or family illness.

### **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)**

#### **What if I'm feeling anxious about being exposed to the virus?**

The City's Employee Assistance Program is available for employees feeling anxious about exposure to the coronavirus. If you need assistance you are encouraged to contact the City's Employee Assistance Provider, Optum at (866) 894-5795.

### **TRAVEL**

#### **Can I be prohibited from traveling on my own personal time?**

No. The City cannot prohibit your personal travel. However, you may be asked to self-quarantine before returning to the workplace, depending on your travel destination and CDC guidelines. In those cases, you may have to use your own compensated time off.

### **REMINDERS**

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid exposure. All employees are reminded to:

- Wash hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Use verbal greetings in lieu of hand shakes or other greeting contact.
- Per the CDC, for those 65 years and older or with chronic conditions (i.e. diabetes, lung or heart disease), it is recommended you limit contact with others.

As a reminder of the importance of planning for an emergency such as this, preparation may include:

- Preparing a child care plan if you or a caregiver are sick or you are affected by a school closure;
- Planning for how you can care for a sick family member without getting sick yourself; and
- Keeping a stock of medication needed for you or your family.

Please know that information about this evolving situation is changing on a daily and sometimes hourly basis. We will continue to provide updated information as practicable in an effort to keep our City workforce safe and healthy. If you have any questions or need additional information specific to your situation, you are encouraged to contact your HR Section.