



COVID-19 EMPLOYEE GUIDELINES

(Updated March 23, 2020)

This handbook was created by the Austin Chamber of Commerce using information from various sources. This content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice; it is intended for information purposes only.

In an abundance of caution for the health and wellness of our employees, the Chamber has developed the following guidelines to keep our workplace safe and encourage the following:

Practice good hygiene

- Stop handshaking – use other noncontact methods of greeting
- Clean hands at the door and schedule regular hand washing reminders by email
- Create habits and reminders to avoid touching their faces and cover coughs and sneezes
- Disinfect surfaces like doorknobs, tables, desks, and handrails regularly
- Increase ventilation by opening windows or adjusting air conditioning

Be careful with meetings

- Use videoconferencing for meetings when possible
- When not possible, hold meetings in open well-ventilated spaces
- Consider adjusting or postponing large meetings or gatherings

Limit Travel

- International business travel is suspended at this time
- Domestic business travel is restricted to essential business travel only. Questions as to whether the travel is essential should be relayed to your Senior Vice President or CEO. Generally, essential travel is that which is necessary to maintain our business or to meet legal/regulatory obligations.

Handle food carefully

- Limit food sharing
- Ensure all staff that handle food practice strict hygiene

Stay Home if

- They are feeling sick
- They have a sick family member in their home

Below is additional information for employees as well as Q&A related to COVID-19.



Please refer to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) or the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) for most current information about COVID-19.

Key Questions / Answers for Employees

Business Travel

In an abundance of caution for the health and wellness of our employees, the Chamber has developed the following guidelines on business travel and business-related group events until further notice.

Chamber leadership is monitoring the situation and will continue to outline actions to support the safety of our employees, members, and providers. We will share additional information or guidance as necessary, including location-specific information to help address employee inquiries.

Guidelines for Business Travel

- International business travel is suspended at this time.
- Domestic business travel is restricted to essential business needs only. Questions as to whether the travel is "essential" should be relayed to your Senior Vice President or Chamber CEO. Generally, "essential" travel is that which is necessary to maintain our business or to meet legal/regulatory obligations.
- Please maximize the use of video conferencing (Zoom/Skype) in place of non-essential business travel.
- Any upcoming travel in which a ticket has been purchased should also be canceled, unless determined essential by your leadership.
- If you have questions regarding your timesheets during this period of time, contact your immediate supervisor or human resources.

Personal Travel

- In line with the guidance of the CDC, the Chamber recommends that all employees defer cruise ship travel at this time, regardless of starting point, ports of call, or destination. Employees who choose to engage in cruise ship travel will be asked to remain out of the office for 14 days after their return. If the Chamber determines that the employee's role can be performed at home, the employee will be permitted to work from home during that period. If the Chamber determines that the employee's role cannot be performed from home, the employee will be expected to use their available paid time off during this period.
- The CDC also advises that older adults and travelers with underlying health issues should avoid situations that put them at increased risk for more severe disease. This



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entails avoiding crowded places, avoiding non-essential travel such as long plane trips, and especially avoiding embarking on cruise ships.

- The Chamber relies on employees to make their own informed decisions on personal travel in the best interest of themselves, their families, and their communities.
- Employees are encouraged to consider their personal travel plans carefully considering the most current information on coronavirus and how it may impact your mode of transportation and destinations.
- CDC guidance on best practices to avoid transmission of communicable illness, such as thorough handwashing and avoiding touching your face, should always be observed, with thought given to how these can be best accomplished during travel.
- Employees are strongly encouraged to avoid travel to any country/area designated by the CDC as an Alert Level 1 or above. The [CDC website](#) is a great tool to use when making personal travel decisions.
- Extra precautions should be taken when traveling by plane, cruise ships, or other modes of transportation that involve a closed environment that may include infected persons.
- Employees traveling back from CDC alert level 1, 2 or 3 countries or regions where there have been significant and/or widespread outbreaks of coronavirus will be required to work from home for 14 calendar days following their return.
- Employees are asked to educate themselves prior to international travel and understand any delays and/or changes in process that they may face upon their return. For example, incoming flights from certain regions are being directed to specific airports and the US government is directing people to self-isolate when returning from certain areas.

Office Guidelines

- All office visits by non-essential visitors (including external vendors and contractors) should be avoided whenever possible.
- Our teams are working with our members, contractors, and vendors to determine what, if any, changes are appropriate with regard to in-person contact with members/clients while continuing to support their needs.
- Please maximize the use of video conferencing (Zoom/Skype) in place of non-essential meetings and office visits.

Working Remotely

- As with any illness, your health comes first. If you are sick, please take advantage of your paid sick time to rest and recover. After all, you can't care for others if you aren't feeling your best.
- During this time of enhanced precaution, if you aren't feeling well or have mild symptoms that could put others at risk, please work with your manager/colleagues to make arrangements for working from home as needed.

Cleaning/Disinfecting

- The Chamber makes every effort, as we always do, to provide a healthy working environment for all employees.
- As noted in this guide, the practices of individuals have the largest impact on our ability to control the spread of any communicable disease such as coronavirus. With this in



mind, the operations manager has engaged with our cleaning service providers to plan for enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of touch surfaces throughout our offices, including doorknobs, refrigerators/microwaves, stairway railings, and common-area locations such as elevator panels and restrooms.

- Normal practice dictates daily disinfecting of restrooms, and we are reinforcing the expectation that this practice must be followed using appropriate disinfecting agents and following appropriate handling procedures.
- To support the conscientious practices of our individual employees in protecting themselves and their colleagues, the operations manager has placed orders for additional hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes to be distributed throughout our office.

Steps to decrease the spread of a virus

- Common sense measures are essential to controlling the spread of the disease. These steps are helpful to reduce the spread of any communicable virus, such as:
 - Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
 - While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
 - If you are running a fever, you should not be in close contact with other people.
 - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using a tissue, throw it in the trash and wash your hands.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water. This simple measure is the most effective method to control the spread of many viral illnesses. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
 - Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs thoroughly and often.

COVID-19 Q&A

Considerations

- **Is the coronavirus (COVID-19) a risk in the United States and why are people so worried about it?**
 - This is a new virus, and it is creating great concern in the community. There is not a vaccine yet for this novel virus, and we do not have a specific medicine to treat it. An effective vaccine is most likely 12-18 months away.
 - Also, the coronavirus is contagious – similar to the flu. Most people who become infected with the coronavirus have a mild illness or may not even have any symptoms.
 - According to the CDC, the risk of infection in the US is currently very low for the general American public who are unlikely to be exposed.
- **How do I know if this is the flu or coronavirus?**



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- Both are respiratory illnesses. Fever, cough, shortness of breath can be seen with both illnesses, and both can start very quickly with lots of aches and fatigue. People who become ill with coronavirus will develop severe respiratory symptoms. There are lab tests to confirm the diagnosis of flu and coronavirus, but the tests are not available in every state yet. Exposure to individuals who have traveled to an infected area is also important information for a doctor to tell the difference.
- If you have symptoms, contact your healthcare provider.
- **How much more dangerous is coronavirus versus other outbreaks?**
 - Seasonal flu has about a ~0.1% mortality. This means that one person dies for every 1,000 infected. The coronavirus has a ~2% mortality or two people die for every 100 infected. In contrast, the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) outbreak in 2003 had a 10% mortality rate, meaning 1 in 10 people died.
- **If you are healthy and you get coronavirus, should you worry?**
 - If you are low risk (healthy, not elderly or without chronic diseases), most likely the illness will run the course similar to a mild case of the flu. You treat the fever, dry cough and fatigue with hydration and rest. Studies have shown that the infection tends to be less severe in children.
 - Some people develop a more severe case with shortness of breath and even respiratory failure. Those people need to seek immediate medical attention.
 - People who think they may have been exposed to COVID-19 should contact their healthcare provider immediately.

General Information

- **How did the outbreak begin?**
 - In December 2019, there was a cluster of cases of pneumonia and respiratory diseases, first identified in the Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. Early on, many of the patients in the outbreak in Wuhan, China, had some link to a large seafood and live animal market.
- **What is causing the outbreak?**
 - A previously unknown virus is responsible for the infections. The virus was originally named the "2019-novel coronavirus." The virus was later renamed "SARS-CoV-2", and the related disease is now called "coronavirus disease 2019" (or "COVID-19").
- **What is a coronavirus?**
 - Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats. Other examples of coronaviruses include SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV.
 - SARS-CoV causes severe acute respiratory syndrome that had a global outbreak in 2003.
 - MERS-CoV is causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, a respiratory illness that had global impact in 2012.



- **Is SARS-CoV-2 the same virus that causes the common cold?**
 - There are other species of coronaviruses that commonly infect humans can cause mild illness, like the common cold. These are different from SARS-CoV-2 and its related disease, coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

- **How does SARS-CoV-2 spread to humans?**
 - The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person. Examples of person to person transmission include:
 - Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
 - Via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
 - Droplets landing in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly that could be inhaled into the lungs.
 - In addition, other destinations have seemingly community spread because some people have been infected who are not sure how or where they became infected.
 - It may 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, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

- **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**
 - Patients with COVID-19 have reported mild to severe respiratory symptoms. Symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

- **When do symptoms of COVID-19 occur?**
 - Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

- **Is there a test to diagnose COVID-19?**
 - Yes. The CDC has developed a new laboratory test to evaluate patient samples for the presence of SARS-CoV-2. The CDC performs initial and confirmatory testing, as well as laboratories the CDC has designated as qualified, including U.S. state and local public health laboratories, Department of Defense (DOD) laboratories and select international laboratories. The test will not be available in U.S. hospitals or other primary care settings, at this time.

- **Is there a specific treatment available for COVID-19?**
 - There are currently no antiviral drugs licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to treat patients with 2019-nCoV infection, nor a vaccine to prevent onset of COVID-19. Many companies are working with the CDC to develop treatments at this time. Vaccine development is not a quick process, but many are working with CDC and the federal officials to support vaccine development as fast as possible.

- **What determines risk for COVID-19?**
 - Individual risk depends on exposure to the SARS-CoV-2.



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- At this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low for the general American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus.
- Specific individuals will have an increased risk of infection, such as healthcare workers caring for patients with COVID-19 and other close contacts of persons with COVID-19.
- Assessment of this risk could change as in time if the spread of the virus increases.

Take Action

- **If I am concerned about exposure or my symptoms, what steps should I take?**
 - According to the CDC, the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Stay home except to get medical care and separate yourself from other people and animals in your home.
 - According to the CDC, if you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after travel from China or other infected areas, you should call ahead to a healthcare professional and mention your recent travel or close contact.
 - According to the CDC, if you have had close contact with someone showing these symptoms who has recently traveled from infected areas, you should call ahead to a healthcare professional and mention your close contact and their recent travel. Your healthcare professional will work with your state's public health department and CDC to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19.
 - People who think they may have been exposed to COVID-19 should contact their healthcare provider immediately.
- **What other communicable diseases could cause similar symptoms and what should I do?**
 - Influenza, a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza viruses (Type A and Type B), has high activity in the United States at this time. Young children, older adults, pregnant women, and those with certain health conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, cancer, or HIV/AIDS, are at higher risk for influenza.
 - Everyone 6 months and older should receive an influenza vaccine.
 - Contact your healthcare provider for suspected flu infection. Treatment for influenza includes:
 - Antiviral drugs can treat flu illness.
 - Antiviral drugs are different from antibiotics. Flu antivirals are prescription medicines (pills, liquid, intravenous solution, or an inhaled powder) and are not available over the counter. Antiviral drugs can make illness milder and shorten the time you are sick. They also can prevent serious flu complications, like pneumonia.

Other Relevant Information

- [Austin Chamber of Commerce COVID-19 Resources for Businesses](#)



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- **Human Resource Legal Resources**
 - [COVID-19 Legal Resources](#)
- **[Texas Workforce Commission \(TWC\)](#) – ([@TXWorkforce](#))**
 - [Sign up for updates](#)
 - Employees or workers can contact laborinfo@twc.state.tx.us or (800) 832-2829 for questions in regards to [Unemployment Benefits Services](#).
 - [COVID-19 Resources for Job Seekers](#)
 - Employers or businesses can contact employerinfo@twc.state.tx.us or (800) 832-9394 for questions in regards to [Unemployment Tax Contact Information](#).
 - [COVID-19 Resources for Employers](#)
 - [Employer Unemployment Claims FAQ for COVID-19](#) (including UI benefits, layoffs/layoff aversion & assistance, returning to work, paid leave)
 - [Layoff Assistance/Aversion: Mass Claims](#) and [Shared Work program](#)
 - Local workforce assistance in Central Texas that can help find new work or training/upskilling opportunities or temporary layoffs:
 - [Workforce Solutions Capital Area](#): (512) 485-3792 or (512) 454-9675
 - [Workforce Solutions Capital Area](#) (East): (512) 223-5400
 - [Workforce Solutions Capital Area](#) (South): (512) 381-4200
 - [Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area](#) (Bastrop): (512) 303-3916
 - [Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area](#) (Caldwell): (512) 398-3491
 - [Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area](#) (Hays): (512) 392-1291
 - [Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area](#) (Williamson): (512) 244-2207
- **[Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts](#) – ([@txcomptroller](#))**
 - [COVID-19 State of Emergency](#)
- **Local Health Agencies**
 - [City of Austin](#): (512) 974-2000 ([@austintexasgov](#))
 - [Travis County](#): (512) 854-9020 ([@TravisCountyTX](#))
 - [Williamson County and Cities Health District](#): (512) 943-3600 ([@PreparingWilco](#))
 - [Texas Health and Human Services](#): (800) 570-9779 ([@TravisCountyHHS](#))
 - [Texas Health and Human Services COVID-19 Local Health Entities](#)
 - [Texas Health and Human Services Printable Materials on COVID-19](#)
- **Local COVID-19 Testing Sites**
 - Register [here](#) for an appointment with Baylor Scott and White Health
 - [Baylor Scott and White Health \(5251 W. U.S. Highway 290, Austin, TX 78735\)](#)
 - [Baylor Scott and White Health \(425 University Blvd., Round Rock, TX 78665\)](#)
 - [Remedy Drive-Through Testing and Clinic in South Austin](#)
- **U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) – ([@USDOL](#))**
 - [Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for Coronavirus](#): (202) 693-4676



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- [COVID-19 or Other Public Health Emergencies and the Fair Labor Standards Act Questions and Answers](#)
- [COVID-19 or Other Public Health Emergencies and the Family and Medical Leave Act Questions and Answers](#)
- **U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) – (@SBAgov)**
 - [Disaster Assistance Loans for Small Businesses Impacted by COVID-19: \(202\) 205-7036](#)
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - (@EPA)**
 - [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2, the cause of COVID-19](#)
- **U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (UCCF) - (@USCCFoundation)**
 - [U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Business Guidelines Resources](#)
- **Local School Districts**
 - [Austin ISD](#): (512) 414-1700 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Bastrop ISD](#): (512) 772-7100 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Del Valle ISD](#): (512) 386-3000 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Dripping Springs ISD](#): (512) 858-3000 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Eanes ISD](#): (512) 732-9000 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Elgin ISD](#): (512) 281-3434 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Georgetown ISD](#): (512) 943-5000 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Hays CISD](#): (512) 268-2141 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Hutto ISD](#): (512) 759-3771 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Lago Vista ISD](#): (512) 267-8300 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Lake Travis ISD](#): (512) 533-6000 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Leander ISD](#): (512) 570-0000 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Liberty Hill ISD](#): (512) 260-5580 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Llano ISD](#): (325) 247-4747 (Closed through April 7)
 - [Manor ISD](#): (512) 278-4000 (Closed through March 29)
 - [Marble Falls ISD](#): (830) 693-4357 (Closed through March 29)
 - [Pflugerville ISD](#): (512) 594-0000 (Closed through March 29)
 - [Round Rock ISD](#): (512) 464-5000 (Closed through April 5)
 - [San Marcos CISD](#): (512) 393-6700 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Seguin ISD](#): (830) 401-8600 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Smithville ISD](#): (512) 237-2487 (Closed through April 5)
 - [Taylor ISD](#): (512) 365-1391 (Closed through April 5)
- **Central Texas Food Bank**
 - [29 Locations Serving Hot Meals or Pantry Items](#)
- **Remote Work Tools**
 - [12 Must-Have Remote Work Tools](#)
 - [17 Remote Work Tools for Happy and Productive Employees](#)



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- [27 Tools Every New Remote Worker Needs](#)
- [Emergency Remote-Work Plan](#)
- [The 8 Best Remote Working Tools You Simply Need In 2020](#)
- [WPForms Blog](#)