This guidance is based on current information known about the Novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Anne Arundel County Department of Health (AACDOH) will provide updated guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available. Please continue to check the CDC website and the AACDOH website – aahealth.org – routinely for updated guidance.

This guidance is for businesses and employers in Anne Arundel County to assist in prevention, preparedness and considerations regarding community-level spread of COVID-19.

**Preparedness Recommendations for Businesses**

Preparedness for possible community-level spread is of utmost importance at this time for businesses and their customers, contractors, employees and their families. Businesses should take the following steps to stop or slow the spread of COVID-19:

- Use CDC, state and local and health department sites to stay informed with the most current and accurate information regarding the development of COVID-19 news.
- Review, update and share COOP (Continuity of Operations) plan with staff.
  - Consider implementing the plan if absenteeism increases.
  - Cross-train personnel to perform essential functions so that the workplace is able to operate even if key employees are absent.
  - Consider teleworking option with employees whose job functions may be performed offsite or at home. Begin having select employees telework ahead of implementation to assess any needs or issues (IT, supplies, and communication).
- Establish a communication plan.
  - Keep the most updated contact information for all staff.
  - Identify key contacts with back-ups.
  - Identify a method to rapidly contact and communicate with staff during off-hours.
  - Identify chain of communications (including suppliers and customers)
  - Identify processes for tracking and communicating business and employee status
- Review policies you have in place for sick employees.
  - Encourage employees that are sick with cold and flu symptoms to stay home. This also applies to employees who are managing their symptoms through the use of over-the-counter medications.
  - Communicate to employees flexible policies that permit employees to stay home if they or their family member is sick.
Do not require a healthcare provider’s note from employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or return to work. Health provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.

Review policies for paid sick leave to ensure that employees will not have to return to work before they are well to prevent community spread of disease.

Employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e., cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and sent home immediately.

Strategize how to increase personal space or limit contact between staff (if possible) by utilizing:

- Teleworking
- Flexible work hours
- Use of conference calling in lieu of face to face meetings

Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees.

Follow the “cover your cough” rule when coughing and sneezing:
https://www.ucsc.edu/flu/files/cover-your-cough-poster.pdf

Instruct employees to clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette and hand hygiene at the entrance to your workplace, in breakroom areas, hallways, and bathrooms.

Perform routine environmental cleaning:

Designate a supply area for disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer and tissues.

Assign one employee to monitor supply levels and replenish as needed.

Instruct employees to wipe down daily with disinfectant wipes all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, telephones and doorknobs and public areas.

Provide hand sanitizer and tissues in all employee, public and conference room areas. Replace/refill as needed.

Ensure sinks are stocked with paper towels and soap at all times.

**Recommendations for Businesses in Communities with Confirmed COVID-19 Cases**

Once confirmed cases are made public to the community, businesses may need to take further steps in response to prevent spread of COVID. **The first step should always be to speak to local public health officials.**

- Employers should plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace.
  - Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher than usual absenteeism.
  - Encourage sick employees to stay home.
Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products.

- Be prepared to change your business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, or temporarily suspend some of our operations if needed).

Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and contact their local health department.

If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, local health department will inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should contact their local health department.

Considering canceling non-essential business travel to additional countries per travel guidance on the CDC website

- Travel restrictions may be enacted by other countries which may limit the ability of employees to return home if they become sick while on travel status.
- Consider canceling large work-related meetings or events.

Additional Information:

**CDC Resources**