



City of Newport News

Department of Human Resources

Memorandum

To: All City Employees

CC: Constitutional Officers, Appointed Officials

From: Karen Witherspoon, Director Human Resources

Subject: Pandemic Coronavirus Policy

Date: March 13, 2020

Purpose:

The City of Newport News is committed to the health and safety of all employees, citizens, and visitors. The goal of this policy is to minimize the risk of exposure and transmission of any disease, particularly the Coronavirus, and to make every reasonable effort to provide essential services to residents on an uninterrupted basis during a potential outbreak. This policy will help to prepare the City of Newport News and outline Human Resources' role in this endeavor while collaborating with Emergency Management to properly handle infection control, establish communication and provide needed support during an outbreak.

Should there be a widespread outbreak, existing City policies and regulations will continue to be applied in most cases. However, Human Resources will also work closely with the City Manager to recommend any changes to policies or procedures as they are needed, and will keep you informed of any modifications. Please reference PAM Section 611, Emergency Status for further information the continuation of essential city services.

For your information, the following is a summary of several temporary provisions and existing policies you may want to consider as you develop your contingency plans.

Definitions:

- A. **Coronaviruses** are a family of viruses that cause mild illnesses like a cold, to more serious illnesses like pneumonia. Infections with this new virus have been reported in many countries, including the U.S. The virus is likely to be spread from person to person, but it is currently unclear how easily it spreads.

Commonly reported symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Most people (80%) with COVID-19 will feel like they have a bad cold or the flu. Some people will require hospitalization. People who are at most risk for severe illness are elderly or have other health conditions.

- B. Supervisor** refers to an individual having authority, on behalf of the city, to assign, direct, and discipline other assigned employees.
- C. Employees** include full-time, part-time, temporary and seasonal employees working for the City of Newport News.
- D. Essential Services** are those services in the City of Newport News that are critical to the protection of life and property. The loss of any of these services would be intolerable in that they could affect the basics of life or safety and the community could not function without such services. Essential services shall be identified in each department and shall be distinguished from services that are determined to be merely desirable or valued services.
- E. Essential Personnel** are generally defined as those positions needed to continue critical services regardless of, or pursuant to, an emergency situation. (See Section 611 Emergency Status for further reference). Department Directors should define essential personnel in accordance with essential services during the pandemic period.

Responsibilities:

Department Directors will have the ultimate responsibility to provide essential services within their departments to the best of their ability to do so and should ensure that all supervisors and employees in their departments under their control adhere to the responsibilities and procedures as identified in this policy.

Operational Changes

Regularly scheduled meetings, trainings, events:

The decision has been made to suspend non mission-essential meetings, trainings, and events until further notice. This includes Self-Service trainings, staff meetings, or other gatherings. Every effort should be made to conduct business via phone or conference call. The City Manager's office will revisit this weekly and provide updates as needed to the Directors. Department Directors will be informed of mission-essential meetings or gatherings dedicated to pandemic preparation and continuity of operations.

Business Related Travel:

As indicated by the Business Related Travel memo dated March 12, 2020, the decision has been made to suspend non mission-essential travel until further notice. The City Manager's office will revisit this bi-weekly and provide updates as needed to the Directors.

Personal Travel:

Personal travel, both international and domestic is highly discouraged. If you travel, please let your supervisor know. You may be asked to self-quarantine when you return based on the destination and mode of travel.

Cleanliness, Hygiene, and Social Distancing:

Janitorial staff have increased sanitation protocol. We recommend all employees and departments sanitize desk surfaces, conference tables, countertops, door handles twice daily utilizing a disinfectant cleaner.

Employees should wash hands frequently, washing for at least 20 seconds and utilize hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content frequently. Adhere to guidelines and suggestions as published by the CDC or Virginia Department of Health.

Social distancing describes the practice of not shaking hands, hugging, or touching in the workplace. Instead, elbow or toe-bumps are recommended should you feel the need to greet someone personally. Keep distance between you and others a minimum of two feet. Coughing and sneezing should be covered by arm and not hands. It bears repeating to wash hands frequently.

Considerations for Employee Work Alternatives and Paid Leave

Liberal Leave:

Should there be a pandemic, a liberal leave policy may be put into place for employees who are deemed to be in non-essential positions. Liberal leave means that employees will use their judgment to determine if they should report to work and managers are encouraged to be as generous as possible with approving leave. For employees in

essential positions, adequate, excused leave should be granted if the employee is sick or if leave is otherwise covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

All PPL or PML leave taken under a liberal leave policy is charged in accordance with existing leave policies. See Section 700 Employee Benefits for further reference. If there is a declared state of emergency and City offices are closed, guidance will be issued by the City Manager's office.

Public Health Emergency Leave:

In order to protect the health of employees, their families, and the public and to provide continuity of services to the citizens of the City of Newport News during times of pandemic illness, the city has adopted Public Health Emergency Leave.

This policy permits or requires eligible employees to attend to their own medical needs and those of their immediate family by providing up to 80 hours of paid leave when conditions have been declared pandemic by the State Health Commissioner and the Governor and the employee or immediate family have been diagnosed with the pandemic illness.

Employees who are symptomatic of the coronavirus may be asked to leave work and go home. It is recommended that symptomatic employees see their primary care physician to determine a diagnosis. The employee's supervisor AND Department director or Assistant Director must consult with Human Resources prior to sending the employee home.

Employees who have traveled to an identified hot spot, according to the CDC, may be asked to self-quarantine (stay home) for 3-14 days. The employee's supervisor AND Department Director or Assistant Director must consult with Human Resources prior to sending the employee home. Individuals must follow leave request procedures and may be responsible for providing written confirmation of a diagnosis and/or isolation requirement according to the clinical recommendations published by the Virginia Department of Health.

- The employee's primary care provider, a public health official, or authorized medical authority (such as MDLive physician or laboratory technician) may be required to confirm the diagnosis of the employee or immediate family member.
- All employees must provide a return to work notification from a primary care provider, a public health official, or authorized medical authority prior to returning to work.

- Public Health Emergency leaves that extend beyond 80 hours must use existing leave and/or disability policies to cover the remainder of leave.
- This policy covers all Full-time, Part-time and Temporary employees. Applicable Part-time and Temporary employees will receive pro-rated leave that will not exceed the number of work hours normally scheduled per week.

Emergency Closure of City of Newport New Offices:

If there is a declared state of emergency and City offices are closed, guidance will be issued by the City Manager's office to Department Directors who will communicate with all employees. This policy covers all Full-time, Part-time and Temporary employees. Applicable Part-time and Temporary employees will receive pro-rated leave that will not exceed the number of work hours normally scheduled per week.

Alternative Work Schedules:

If a state of emergency is declared by the City Manager, regular work schedules may be superseded by alternative schedules.

If a state of emergency is not declared, but alternative or flexible work schedules are a consideration, see Section 609, City Work Schedules and Schedule Changes. Current policy allows for work schedules to be changed at any time on a temporary or extended basis. However, if an overtime eligible employee's schedule deviates from a standard 8-hour day or allows flexibility within a 40-hour week for more than 12 weeks, the Director of Human Resources should be notified in writing prior to implementation (due to overtime considerations).

Telecommuting:

Telecommuting involves working from an alternative location, such as from a home office. The city does not have a formal telecommuting policy, however, in order to sustain operations during a pandemic, employees in certain jobs who meet eligibility requirements may be allowed to telecommute on a temporary basis. Department Directors should consult with the Department of Human Resources prior to making arrangements for telecommuting.


Exposure Compensability:

Under the Virginia Workers' Compensation Act, an ordinary disease of life is not a covered condition.

Overtime:

If it appears that a large quantity of overtime may be involved to continue operations during a pandemic, supervisors should be aware that there is no specific limit on the amount of overtime that an employee may work. However, the employee's safety or the safety of others must be a controlling factor. Overtime may only be worked upon the approval of the supervisor. Refer to Section 610, Pay Computation and Overtime Policies and Procedures.

The Department of Human Resources is very sensitive to your needs and will strive to support you as efficiently and effectively as we can; the safety and health of our employees is our number one concern. Should you have questions on any of this information, please do not hesitate to contact me or anyone in the department.



Karen L. Witherspoon