



## State of Utah

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Dear Utah Employer:

The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is actively monitoring the ongoing outbreak of novel (new) coronavirus that began in China and has subsequently spread to several other countries, including the United States. The UDOH is coordinating closely with public health partners and medical care providers throughout the state, and also with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Though the CDC considers novel coronavirus to be a serious public health concern based on current information, the immediate health risk to the general U.S. public is considered low.

While there are currently no confirmed cases of novel coronavirus in Utah, we have investigated – and ruled out – several potential cases. This is not to say we won't see confirmed cases in the future. In fact, I expect Utah will eventually have confirmed cases, and I am confident we are prepared to handle those cases.

I recognize Utah employers may be concerned about the current situation, especially if you conduct business in mainland China or have employees or clients who have recently visited the area. To help address your concerns, I would like to share the following information about what you can do to protect your workplace from novel coronavirus.

The symptoms of novel coronavirus are similar to seasonal illnesses that are routinely spread in the community around this time of year – namely a fever, cough, or shortness of breath. On their own, these symptoms are not worrisome and should not cause alarm.

However, it is important for you to know if employees or clients may be at risk for contracting novel coronavirus. Public health identifies people at-risk for novel coronavirus if:

- They have returned from travel to mainland China in the past 14 days, **OR**
- They had close contact with a person who has been confirmed positive with novel coronavirus. Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan are not considered part of mainland China.

The UDOH receives daily reports from the CDC regarding residents who are returning to Utah from travel to mainland China. Utah public health agencies work to contact these individuals within 24 hours of their

arrival in the state and provide them with detailed information about steps they should take to protect themselves and others.

This system is not perfect, and you may learn about an at-risk employee or client before we do. If this occurs, contact your local health department or the UDOH at 1-888-EPI-UTAH (374-8824) and we will provide guidance on your specific situation.

Public health may take any, or all, of the following steps to protect at-risk people and the general population:

- Quarantine or isolation of at-risk persons for 14 days after their last possible exposure to the virus (usually determined by the date they left mainland China).
- Guidance for self-assessment of symptoms, and information on what to do if the at-risk person needs to seek medical care.
- Instructions to limit their exposure to public gathering places such as events, stores, churches, schools, etc.
- Public health officials will maintain contact with at-risk persons to assess the individual's likelihood of developing novel coronavirus.

We suggest you consider the following measures in the event one of your employees needs to be isolated or quarantined and monitored by public health due to their exposure to novel coronavirus:

- Provide options for social distancing in the workplace. If you can keep at-risk individuals six feet away from other employees, it is safe for them to return to work.
- Provide options for at-risk employees to telecommute during their quarantine or isolation period.
- If telecommuting options are not available, consider offering paid administrative leave. Employees will be less likely to follow quarantine and isolation recommendations if they are required to use their own paid time off benefits.

Employees and clients should always be reminded of good hygiene practices such as regularly washing their hands, and covering their coughs and sneezes with their elbow or a tissue. Employees who are sick should always be encouraged to stay home from work.

While the origin of this particular outbreak can be traced back to China, it would be grossly inappropriate, not to mention medically ineffective, to ostracize anyone from our communities or exclude anyone from our places of public gathering based on their race, nationality, or ethnicity.

More information about novel coronavirus can be found at [health.utah.gov/coronavirus](https://health.utah.gov/coronavirus) or at [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus). I have also enclosed a flyer you can print or copy and display in your workplace.

We can all contribute to a healthy community, and we appreciate your willingness to help protect the public health in Utah. If you have concerns or questions, please call the Bureau of Epidemiology at 801-538-6191 or 1-888-EPI-UTAH (374-8824).

Sincerely,

*Angela C. Dunn*

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