9 STEPS TO PROTECTING YOUR WORKPLACE AGAINST THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

The World Health Organization has declared a public health emergency in response to the rapidly evolving outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19). Companies are encouraged to implement temporary preventive measures. We have pulled together 9 steps that companies are taking to protect themselves from the threat.

1. MODIFY TRAVEL PLANS

Suspend business-related travel to countries with widespread outbreak (Level 2 and 3 Travel Warnings). Discourage non-critical business travel to international and domestic areas with low threat. Require approval from Executive Team for critical travel. Encourage the use of video conferencing technology in place of travel. If employees have travelled or are travelling for leisure, they should notify their supervisor.

2. UPDATE VISITOR POLICY

Employees need to touch base with all visitors (vendors, candidates, clients) prior to any onsite meetings. They should inquire if the visitor has been to any countries with widespread outbreak, if they've been sick, or if their family has been sick. If the visitor's answer is yes, then the employee should cancel the meeting and/or change to remote.

3. EMPHASIZE PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

Remind people to stay home when sick, get a flu shot, wash their hands, use tissues, cover their mouth, use hand sanitizer, wipe down surfaces, avoid touching their eyes/nose/mouth, and avoid shaking hands. Make sure employees know to self-report and self-quarantine if they've been to impacted areas or have concerns.

4. BE FLEXIBLE WITH SICK TIME & OFFER REMOTE WORK

Employers should be flexible with their absence/sick policies. Do not require medical notes, as healthcare facilities may be too busy. Employers should provide employees with remote access when possible. Employees may need to stay home to care for a sick family member or may not have their regular childcare so being flexible is key.

5. CLEAN & DISINFECT REGULARLY

Wash door handles 2-3 times/day. Wipe down tables, chairs, phones, and computers in conference rooms 2-3 times/day. Encourage employees to regularly clean their work surfaces, phones, and computers. Work with facilities or the cleaning company to perform regular disinfectant cleaning for all common surfaces. Make sure you're stocked on tissues, disinfecting wipes, and hand sanitizer.

6. KEEP IN CONSTANT COMMUNICATION

Place posters throughout the office to remind employees about precautions and updated policies. Send out a companywide email as soon as there is a policy change. Inform employees about CDC updates; acknowledge you are in compliance with the recommendations. Make sure managers are prepared to answer questions and know how to assist employees that self-report or self-quarantine. Remind staff about sick time, short-term disability, and time-off policies.

7. IMPLEMENT A TASK FORCE

Create a task force of team-members from different departments/teams/locations. The group should come up with a plan in the event the CDC determines the severity of the threat has increased. Employers should be prepared to refine their business response plans as needed.

8. CONSULT A SAFETY PROFESSIONAL

Some companies, like those with a research lab, may want to take extra precaution and consult a safety professional. You may also consider bringing on a temporary worker to manage the process.

9. USE COMMON SENSE & DON'T PANIC!

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