

The coronavirus has most companies concerned about the impact it will have on absenteeism and supply chain. While it is true that the coronavirus is spreading, importantly there are almost extremely few cases in the United States right now. Of the 326 million people living in the United States, only 60 confirmed cases of people being diagnosed in the U.S. with coronavirus, and only 11 of them were not related to travel by that person or their domestic partner. While the coronavirus is new and much is not known, here is what experts from the World Health Organization, the Center for Disease Control, and other experts have learned:

- The virus is moderately infectious, mainly through sneezing and coughing, but possibly also contact with surfaces that have been contaminated with sneezes and coughs.
- More than 80% of the confirmed coronavirus cases are not severe and people generally make a full recovery.
- The mild cases may resemble having the common cold. The ones that are worse mostly resemble having the flu.

A greater threat to absenteeism is the flu and influenza-like illnesses (ILI), which have stormed through the United States this year, with 43 states reporting high activity right now, with more than 140,000 new cases each week so far this year.

The same behaviors used to ward off the flu can ward off the coronavirus:

- Frequent hand washing - particularly after touching items used by many people (i.e.: handles on drawers, refrigerators, etc.)
- Don't touch your face - this will keep the virus away from your mouth and nose, because we can't be washing our hands all day every day.
- Stay home when you feel sick.
- Wear a mask if you believe you are sick or are around sick people, if masks are available.
- Use antibacterial wipes to clean counters and tables in common areas every day.
- Cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow to cover any "spray".
- Every time you cough or sneeze, wash your hands immediately for at least 20 seconds.
- If you can get masks, then distribute them to employees who request them.
- Throw tissues away in lined trash cans.

If employees have run out of paid sick time, follow the same protocols that your company has always used if an employee has used up their PTO. Similarly, if an employee does have a long-term illness that requires extended leave, follow the standard Family & Medical Leave Act policies. The reality is that the coronavirus is not currently an absenteeism threat to United States companies. At this time, there is no reason to close the company or otherwise take dramatic action.

Companies may experience supply chain issues due to slow delivery of materials or parts from China, primarily, and some European countries as well. Unless domestic suppliers can be found, the supply chain issue has no immediate solution. However, the spread of the disease within China is slowing, and manufacturing facilities hope to be back to normal within three weeks barring a worsening of the spread of the coronavirus.

Read only trusted sources for actual facts, such as the Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization. We will also keep the [HR page](#) updated.