



COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions March 20, 2020

The following guidance will remain in effect through April 13, 2020 and is continuing to be reassessed.

General COVID-19 & Public Health Guidance

What is Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-2019)?

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus strain that can spread from person-to-person. Reported cases range from mild illness (like a common cold) to severe pneumonia that requires hospitalization. Symptoms can include fever, coughing and shortness of breath. View the Public Health – Seattle & King County [backgrounder on COVID-19](#) for more information, which includes an extensive FAQ as well as recommendations for preparedness for the general public, schools, workplaces and health care workers.

What can be done to prevent the spread of the virus?

There are steps you can take to minimize your exposure to illness:

- Stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others.
- Wash hands often and vigorously with soap and water for 20 seconds. If not available, use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your mouth/nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Immediately throw away the tissue and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Should I wear a mask?

The CDC does not recommend that healthy people wear masks.

The CDC does recommend symptomatic people wear masks. You can continue to find updated guidance from the CDC [here](#).

Are there confirmed cases in the City of Seattle?

Yes. The first cases in King County were announced on February 28, 2020. Public Health - Seattle & King County is the local public health agency leading on the COVID-19 response. Check their [website](#) for regular updates on the number of cases or Department of Health's [website](#) for the number of cases statewide.

How is the City responding?

The City of Seattle has been working round-the-clock to keep our workforce and community safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic. For up-to-date guidance on how City employees can prepare for and respond to COVID-19, [please visit our SharePoint page](#).

For up-to-date information on how the City's initiatives to combat the spread of COVID-19, please visit www.seattle.gov/mayor/covid-19.

I am feeling stressed about COVID-19, what can I do?

You can get accurate information from the [CDC website](#), the [Public Health – Seattle & King County website](#), and the [Washington State Department of Health website](#).

Remember that the Employee Assistance Program is always available to you for counseling, health, wellness and other resources. For more information, please contact Resources for Living by phone at 1-888-272-7252 or 1-888-879-8274 (TTY). You can also visit their website at <https://www.resourcesforliving.com/login>. The login for employees is: city of seattle. The password is: city of seattle.

Cleaning & Hygiene Guidance

What is the City doing to keep a clean workplace?

The City has increased the number of hand sanitizer stations in high-traffic City buildings, including Seattle Municipal Tower, City Hall and the Seattle Justice Center. These stations were deployed in early February.

The City and its cleaning contractors will continue routine cleaning. Janitorial staff and contractors have also been instructed to increase the frequency of cleaning commonly touched surfaces, such as elevator buttons and door handles. The City is also placing [hand washing reminders](#) from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) in all City-cleaned or contracted buildings.

Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) has also developed enhanced cleaning protocols. If you would like to learn more about FAS' enhanced cleaning protocols, [please click here](#).

What can you do to keep your workplace clean?

Now more than ever it's crucial to develop and practice good health habits that prevent the spread of germs. Employees are advised to keep their individual workspaces clean. Please consider regular cleaning of your keyboards, phones and individual desks. If you have questions, please contact your supervisor.

For more guidance, and to follow the latest health information, please visit Public Health – Seattle & King County at www.kingcounty.gov/covid.

How should City employees prepare?

As the Department of Health and CDC have noted, you generally need to be in close contact with a sick person to get infected, which includes living in the same household as a sick person or being within six feet of a sick person with COVID-19 for about 10 minutes. If you have not been in close contact with a sick person with COVID-19, you are at low risk for infection.

The levels of risk, as it applies to your job at the City, range from Low to Very High. They are:

- **Very High** – Medical staff doing direct patient care with high risk procedures
- **High** – First responders, including Police Officers, Fire Department Personnel, Medics, Navigation Team members

- **Medium** – Those with regular contact with the public, e.g., FAS, HSD, Parks, SPU, SCL employees
- **Low** – Office workers with limited public contact

Actions to reduce exposure include:

- The City has programs in place such as Job Hazard Analysis, Physical Job Demands Assessment, Respiratory Protection, Skin Protection, as well as safety hazard training, that are appropriate to your level of risk.
- Contacting your team’s safety representative or manager if you have any resource needs such as cleaning products, questions about personal protective equipment, or questions about your ability to do your job safely.
- Each department has guidance specific for their teams and functions on actions employees can take to reduce risk of exposure.

Of course, one of the most important things City employees can do to prepare is to practice good hygiene and stay home when sick.

COVID-19 Symptoms Guidance

What are symptoms of COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness, and symptoms include a fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

What should I do if I show symptoms of COVID-19?

If an employee is showing symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath), the employee should immediately inform their manager that they need to leave the workplace. The employee and/or manager should also notify the SDHR by emailing SDHRCOVID@seattle.gov.

The employee should immediately contact the King County Novel Coronavirus Call Center at 206-477-3977 AND their health care provider to get public health guidance on next steps.

The employee should immediately begin at-home isolation, and next steps should be made in accordance with guidance from PHSKC and the employee’s health care provider.

The employee should remain under at-home isolation for [72 hours](#) after their symptoms resolve before returning to work.

What should I do if a colleague exhibits symptoms of COVID-19?

The City is committed to its values of equity and inclusion. We are equally committed to workplace safety. We rely on our City employees to monitor their health and make wise choices to stay home if they feel ill. If you have concerns about the health of your colleague, please talk to your manager.

What should I do if a customer I am serving exhibits symptoms of illness?

As above, the City is committed to its values of equity and inclusion in serving the public. We are equally committed to workplace safety. If you have concerns, please talk to your manager.

As of March 15, 2020, many public-facing City facilities are closed to prevent the further spread of COVID-19, and to help protect City employee’s health.

Does ancestry determine who is more likely to be affected by COVID-19?

No. Ancestry does not make a person more vulnerable to this illness, nor does wearing a face mask mean that someone is ill. You can learn more from Public Health – Seattle & King County [here](#).

What is the City’s protocol for potential exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace?

The City has developed COVID-19 Workplace Protocol for the following situations:

1. An employee has been in close contact with someone who was exposed to COVID-19, but neither individual is showing symptoms.
2. An employee has been in close contact with someone who was later diagnosed with COVID-19 but was asymptomatic at the time of contact with the employee.
3. An employee has been exposed to a diagnosed person with COVID-19 but the employee does not show symptoms.
4. An employee is showing symptoms of COVID-19.
5. An employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

[You can read those here.](#)

Who can I contact for more information?

For questions about leave, please contact your HR team. For questions about workplace safety and sanitation, please contact your team’s safety representative. For questions about the City of Seattle’s COVID-19 Workplace Protocols, please contact SDHRCOVID@seattle.gov.

The Washington State Department of Health has established a call center to address questions from the public. If you have questions about what is happening in Washington state, how the virus is spread, and what to do if you have symptoms, please call 1-800-525-0127.

COVID-19 Telework Guidance

Should employees telework?

During the COVID-19 pandemic we are encouraging employees to maximize the use of telework on a full-time basis. Therefore, all employees who can telework should. On March 13, Mayor Durkan issued a Mayoral Directive strongly encouraging all department directors to approve telework arrangements for all eligible employees.

[Please see the AWA Pilot Program Guidelines for more information.](#)

May I telework if I have a child at home?

Yes. Employees who are permitted to telework may have children or other dependents at home with them.

Can I bring home equipment that will help me more effectively telework?

Employees may be allowed to take home certain City-issued equipment (i.e. computer keyboards, mice, and monitors) with approval from your supervisor. Employees may not remove City-issued desktop computers. All equipment must be inventoried by the employee’s department prior to removal. The following conditions apply to the removal of computer monitors from City buildings:

- a. The employee is responsible for disconnecting, transporting, and setting up the monitor in a new location, and for returning it and re-installing it in its original location when ordered to do.
- b. Seattle IT cannot provide assistance in relocating monitors in this manner. IT does not maintain a supply of extra stands for monitors that are attached to pivot arms.

c. Employees would need to assume responsibility for acquiring any additional cables to provide connectivity to home devices or laptops.

Will the City buy me a computer if I do not have one?

No. Your department may provide a laptop for your use when teleworking. If your department cannot provide a laptop, you may use your personal computer and the Office 365 suite of software to conduct your work remotely. Departments are not required to provide laptops to teleworking employees.

For additional information about available technologies to facilitate teleworking see the following:

- [COVID-19 Employee Resource Site](#)
- [Telework Technology Guide](#)
- [Daily Skype for Business Online Education sessions](#) offered three times a day
- [Digital Workplace Learning Hub](#): Employees can access the City’s education and training materials for a wide range of applications including:
 - [OneDrive for Business](#)
 - [Skype for Business](#)
 - [SharePoint Online](#) (team sites and InWeb sites)
 - [Office 365](#)
 - [Outlook](#) (email)
- Training materials include [Quick Help Videos](#), [Information Sheets](#), [Quick Start Cards](#), and more.

COVID-19 Leave Protocol

Definition: The City of Seattle utilizes Public Health - Seattle King County’s (PHSKC’s) guidance for defining “high risk.” According to PHSKC, people at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness include people:

- Over 60 years of age
- With underlying health conditions including include heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes
- With weakened immune systems
- Who are pregnant

What should I do if I’m deemed “high risk”?

Employees who identify as “high risk” category should [follow CDC and State of Washington guidelines](#) to keep themselves healthy, and should work with their manager on the following three steps (in order):

1. If the high-risk employee is eligible to telework, they should.
 - Payroll Code: AA
2. If the high-risk employee is unable to telework, the department will seek to reassign the employee to available work that can be performed by teleworking.
 - Payroll Code: AA or CA, contact HR Representative for further direction
3. If the high-risk employee is unable to telework or be reassigned to work that can be performed by teleworking, then they will be fully compensated using COVID-19 pay (up to April 13 as per Mayoral Directive #2).
 - Payroll Code: AS

What should I do if I'm deemed "high risk" and I'm considered an "essential" employee?

Employees should follow the same three steps (in order):

1. If the high-risk employee is eligible to telework, they should.
 - Payroll Code: AA

2. If the high-risk employee is unable to telework, the department will seek to reassign the employee to available work that can be performed in accordance [with CDC and State of Washington guidelines for high-risk groups](#).
 - Payroll Code: AA or CA, contact HR Representative for further direction

3. If the high-risk employee is unable to telework or be reassigned, then they will be fully compensated using COVID-19 pay.
 - Payroll Code: AS

Will I be paid if my facility closes due to COVID-19?

Yes. If your facility closes, work with your manager on the following three steps (in order):

1. If you can telework for the duration of your facility closure, you should.
 - Payroll Code: AA

2. If you cannot telework, your manager will reassign you to available work.
 - Payroll Code: AA or CA, contact HR Representative for further direction

3. If you are unable to telework or be reassigned, then you will be fully compensated COVID-19 pay.
 - Payroll Code: AS

If I'm "high risk" and my department has allowed for me to telework or be reassigned, may I access COVID-19 pay?

No. If the employee is able to telecommute, they should. If the employee has been reassigned to available work that can be performed in accordance with CDC guidelines for high-risk groups, they should work. If an employee chooses not to telecommute or perform the reassigned work, the employee will be required to use their sick leave or other type of leave. If the employee exhausts their accrued leave, they may take unpaid leave.

What if my facility closes due to COVID-19 and my department has allowed for me to telework or be reassigned, may I access COVID-19 pay?

No. If the employee is able to telecommute, they should. If the employee has been reassigned to available work, they should work. If an employee chooses not to telecommute or perform the reassigned work, the employee will be required to use their sick leave or other type of leave. If the employee exhausts their accrued leave, they may take unpaid leave.