Pandemic Planning

# HOW THE CORONAVIRUS CAN EFFECT YOUR BUSINESS

2020

# Business Continuity Plans and COVID-19: How to Prepare

As of today, the World Health Organization confirmed the total number of global COVID-19, or coronavirus, cases surpassed 110,000. (March 8th, 2020)

Estimates as to when the outbreak will subside are fuzzy at best, and a vaccine is likely months off. Meanwhile, the economic toll continues to mount. Whether it's canceled business travel, disrupted supply chains, or  social distancing , the situation is forcing organizations of every size and description to dust off their emergency response and business continuity playbooks.

Besides encouraging employees to work from home and stocking up on office hand sanitizer, what is an executive to do? In this post, we take a look at some sound tactics that will help keep your people safe and your doors open.

## BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING: A REFRESHER

Business continuity refers to maintaining business functions or quickly resuming them in the event of a major disruption. A Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is a plan-of-action a company puts in place that can be relied upon in the event of an emergency, when tension and stakes run high. It outlines the policies, procedures, and instructions an organization must follow in the face of such disasters, covering items such as business processes, assets, human resources, business partners, and more. While the final product will be different for every company, a typical BCP might include evacuation plans, communication protocols, contact lists, key asset inventories, and anything else that would be important for employees in a crisis.
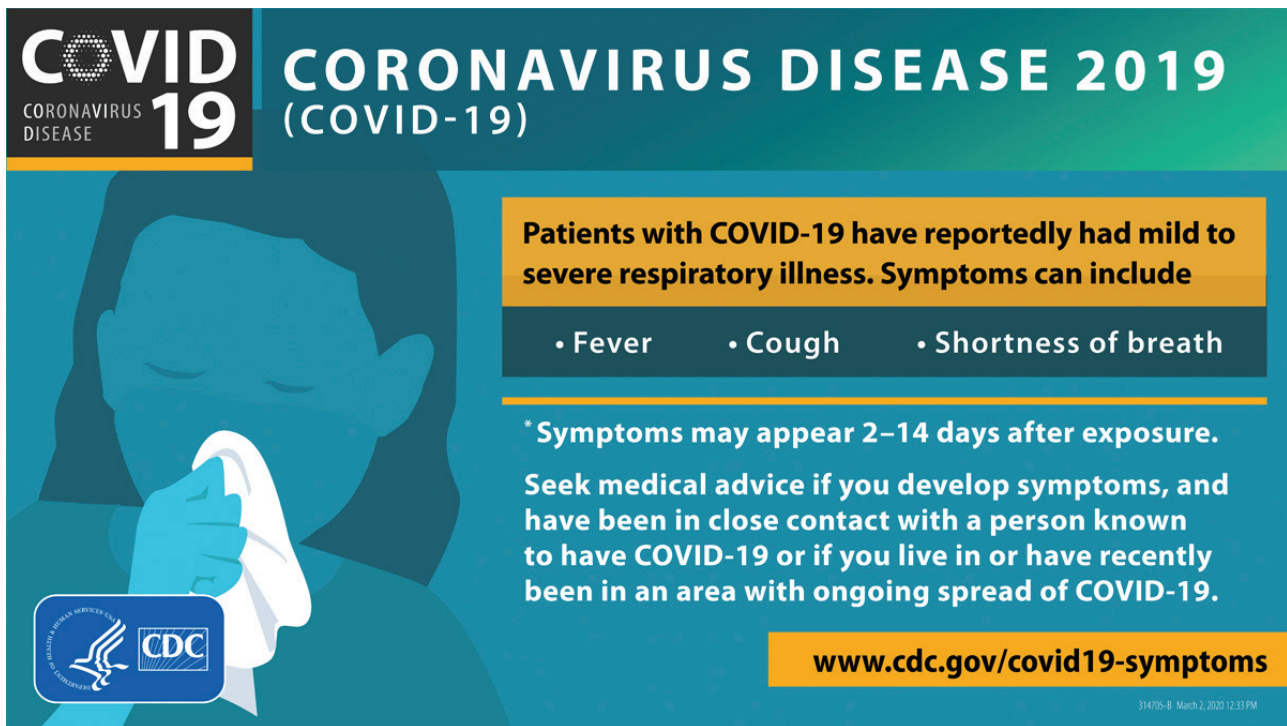
## KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER

### 1. PUT PEOPLE FIRST

The health and well-being of your employees is your top concern. It's possible that COVID-19 will sicken some employees and force others into quarantine. Address their immediate needs first, and then begin to think about operations with a remote workforce. It is critical to establish a strategy that enables employees to continue to function without endangering them. You'll want to verify that you have the tools, technology, capacity, and security measures in place to support a large remote workforce. It may also be necessary to offer greater flexibility to normal working expectations.

### 2. ASSEMBLE YOUR TIGER TEAM

A BCP is only as effective as the people who put it into action. Thus it's critically important to be specific about who will be directly involved, from the plan's owner to those it affects. Getting these people on board during the planning stages can help with creating a stronger, clearer plan and a consistent message. Appoint at least one Point Person or selected team members to devise a response strategy and coordinate pandemic readiness activities. It may also be necessary to identify backup personnel.

A note of caution: while others may be involved

in the plan's execution, it's imperative that the most senior leadership is involved—and seen as involved—in the company's decision-making. This will help to quell any fear and misinformation that can arise in such scenarios.

### 3. COMMUNICATE

When faced with a catastrophe, people want clear, straightforward steps that they can follow and know they've covered their bases. It's best to leave as little to interpretation as possible, and considering diverse perspectives will help make the plan as detailed and clear as needs warrant. Create a communications plan that includes providing employees and customers with regular situation updates as well as actions taken. Take care to ground your communications in verifiable news sources, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO).

### 4. REVIEW EXISTING PLANS

Before taking any action, pause to review your existing Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Plans. If they're sufficiently thorough, they should address a variety of contingencies that could

disrupt the firm's businesses, including potential pandemics. It's likely that a playbook for viral outbreak scenarios is already in place, but it should be sufficiently flexible and reflect the firm's size, complexity, and business activities. It will ensure the firm's process and controls are identified and followed during a pandemic event.

### 5. PRIORITIZE KEY BUSINESS FUNCTIONS

Next you'll want to assess your business processes, determine which areas are vulnerable, map dependencies, and estimate the potential losses if those processes go down for a given amount of time—from hours to weeks or more. You can start by identifying the critical products and services your company delivers and the customers or clients they are delivered to. This will help with prioritizing those parts of the BCP that pertain to the business's most high-value assets, functions, and relationships. Understanding the financial impact of down time due to COVID-19.

Source: Matt Kunkel – https://www.logicgate. com/2020/03/09/business-continuity-plans-and- covid-19-a-primer/

**SafetyNow ILT**

# COVID 19: Pandemic Preparedness for Business

In addition to the work of the health care industry when a pandemic hits, businesses play a critical role in protecting the health and safety of employees, and limiting the negative impact on the economy and communities. They also need to have business continuity plans that will minimize the impact on the business itself and facilitate a speedy resumption of activities if the business has been forced to scale back or close during the pandemic. Preparedness, not panic, is the best way to mitigate the risks posed by a COVID-19 pandemic to the North American economy and our citizens.

Should COVID-19 escalate in US & Canada, some of the things businesses need to plan for include:

- Staff absences due to a number of reasons (personal illness, ill family members, looking after children if schools close, feeling of safety being at home etc.). In some cases employees may themselves elect to stay home; in other circumstances the government may authorize or require them to do so.

- Disruption to essential services like information, telecommunications, financial services, energy supply, and logistics;

- Disruption to supply of necessary materials or contractors;

- A major increase or decrease in demand for products and services;

- Cancellation or disruption of travel and cross-border movement of people and goods;

- Cancellation of public meetings or gatherings like sports events, concerts or religious services;

- Impact on the trade status, or of our trading partners; and

- Increased public fear that causes citizens to avoid public places, including front line retail and tourist – related, restaurants and leisure businesses.

## DEVELOP/UPDATE BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND CRISIS PLANS

**Things to consider:**

- What is the process for decision-making during times of crisis?

- How are you identifying and safeguarding your company's essential corporate records and documents?

- What are the critical services, positions and skills required to keep your business running?

- How and when are you communicating to internal and external stakeholders and managing the flow of information?

- What is your plan for recovery?

## PLAN FOR THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON YOUR BUSINESS.

**Things to consider:**

- What is the risk of the pandemic to your employees, partners, suppliers and customers?

- Who are the members of the pandemic response team and what are their roles and responsibilities?

# COVID 19
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

# CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019
(COVID-19)

**You can help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses with these actions:**

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose & mouth.
- Wash hands often with soap & water for at least 20 seconds.

CDC

**www.cdc.gov/COVID19**

314705-A February 13, 2020 12:00 PM

---

- What are the triggers and procedures for activating and terminating the pandemic response plan?

- What is the decision-making process related to the pandemic and the execution of the business continuity plan?

- Who are your most essential employees and what are the other critical inputs (e.g. raw materials, suppliers, sub-contractor services/ products, and logistics) required to maintain business operations by location and function during a pandemic?

- How are you planning for significant staff absences?

- Do you have the tools and technology in place to enable staff to work remotely?

- Have you trained and prepared your workforce and your back- up resources?

- If you were forced to close your doors for two weeks or more, do you have access to a line of credit that will cover ongoing expenses until you can reopen and your cash flow resumes?

- What is your plan for scenarios that are likely to result in an increase or decrease in demand for your products and/or services during a pandemic (e.g. effect of restriction on mass gatherings, need for hygiene supplies)?

- How are you assessing and managing the potential impact of a pandemic on your financials using multiple possible scenarios?

- What is the impact of the pandemic on domestic and international business travel?

- What are your sources of relevant, credible up-to-date, pandemic information from federal, provincial, and local public health, emergency management, and other sources?

- Is your emergency communications plan up to date and are key roles and responsibilities outlined and communicated? This plan should include identification of key contacts (with back-ups), chain of communications (including suppliers and customers), and processes for tracking and communicating business and employee status.

- What is your current travel policy and does it

**SafetyNow ILT**

need to be updated?

- Has your plan been tested?

**PLAN FOR THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON YOUR PEOPLE.**

**Things to consider:**

- What steps can you be taking to protect the health and safety of your staff and visitors to your workplace?

- What are the infection control practices in your workplace?

- What protective and preventative equipment and tools do you need to put in place to prevent the spread of infection?

- How and how often are you communicating with employees, customers and suppliers?

- How are you monitoring and managing employee fear, anxiety, rumours and misinformation?

- Do you have platforms (e.g. hotlines, website etc.) in place for communicating pandemic status and actions to employees, vendors, customers, etc. and responding to their questions?

- Are there guidelines and practices you can modify or put in place to curtail direct contact with the public if necessary?

- Do your employee leave policies need to updated to reflect the unique circumstances of a pandemic? Are they compliant with your provincial labour regulations?

- Do you have a policy in place for flexible work sites and work hours?

## Corona vs. Cold vs. Flu

| Symptoms | Coronavirus Symptoms range from mild to severe | Cold Gradual onset of symptoms | Flu Abrupt onset of symptoms |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fever | Common | Rare | Common |
| Fatigue | Sometimes | Sometimes | Common |
| Cough | Common* (usually dry) | Mild | Common* (usually dry) |
| Sneezing | No | Common | No |
| Aches and pains | Sometimes | Common | Common |
| Runny or stuffy nose | Rare | Common | Sometimes |
| Sore throat | Sometimes | Common | Sometimes |
| Diarrhea | Rare | No | Sometimes for children |
| Headaches | Sometimes | Rare | Common |
| Shortness of breath | Sometimes | No | No |

- Do you have a policy in place for employees who may, or think they may have been exposed to the virus?

- What healthcare services are available to employees?

- What mental health services could be provided during a pandemic and possible quarantine?

- Are there employees and customers with special needs that need to be accommodated?

SafetyNow ILT

# Model Short-Term Telecommuting Agreement

## EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

**Name:**

**Hire date:**

**Job title:**

**Department:**

This temporary telecommuting agreement will begin and end on the following dates:

**Start date:**

**End date:**

**Temporary work location:**

**Employee schedule:**

The employee agrees to the following conditions:

- The employee will remain accessible and productive during scheduled work hours.

- Nonexempt employees will record all hours worked and meal periods taken in accordance with regular timekeeping practices.

- Nonexempt employees will obtain supervisor approval prior to working unscheduled overtime hours.

- The employee will report to the employer's work location as necessary upon directive from his or her supervisor.

- The employee will communicate regularly with his or her supervisor and co-workers, which includes a weekly written report of activities.

- The employee will comply with all [Company name] rules, policies, practices and instructions that would apply if the employee were working at the employer's work location.

- The employee will maintain satisfactory performance standards.

- The employee will make arrangements for regular dependent care and understands that telecommuting is not a substitute for dependent care. In pandemic circumstances, exceptions may be made for employees with caregiving responsibilities.

- The employee will maintain a safe and secure work environment at all times.

- The employee will allow the employer to have access to the telecommuting location for purposes of assessing safety and security, upon reasonable notice by the company.

- The employee will report work-related injuries to his or her manager as soon as practicable.

[Company name] will provide the following equipment:

{insert}

The employee will provide the following equipment:

- The employee agrees that [Company name] equipment will not be used by anyone other than the employee and only for business-related work. The employee will not make any changes to security or administrative settings on [Company name] equipment. The employee understands that all tools and resources provided by the company shall remain the property of the company at all times.

SafetyNow ILT

- The employee agrees to protect company tools and resources from theft or damage and to report theft or damage to his or her manager immediately.

- The employee agrees to comply with [Company name]'s policies and expectations regarding information security. The employee will be expected to ensure the protection of proprietary company and customer information accessible from their home offices.

[Company name] will reimburse employee for the following expenses:

- Employee will submit expense reports with attached receipts in accordance with [Company name]'s expense reimbursement policy.

- The employee understands that all terms and conditions of employment with the company remain unchanged, except those specifically addressed in this agreement.

- The employee understands that management retains the right to modify this agreement on a temporary or permanent basis for any reason at any time.

- The employee agrees to return company equipment and documents within five days of termination of employment.

**EMPLOYEE, MANAGER & HR SIGN-OFF**

Source: SHRM

SafetyNow ILT

# Memo: Temporary Suspension of Nonessential Business Travel

Due to [Company Name]'s commitment to employee safety in light of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, effective immediately, all nonessential business travel will be suspended until further notice. [Company Name] will continue to monitor the situation and provide guidance as more information on the extent and severity of the outbreak becomes available.

## TRAVEL CANCELLATION PROCEDURES

If nonessential business travel has already been booked, please work with [your manager/HR/our travel coordinator/etc.] to cancel properly to receive an airfare and hotel  refund or credit if applicable. Set up phone or online conferencing with clients or other business units to replace the in-person meetings, if possible. Please make sure your manager knows the status of all meetings cancelled due to this temporary suspension.

## ESSENTIAL TRAVEL

Essential business travel should be limited to those situations where business cannot reasonably be conducted without face-to-face interaction or visits to specific locations. Your manager must approve all travel (including trips that were previously approved) until further notice.

## PROCEDURES UPON RETURN FROM TRAVEL

Employees who become ill during or upon returning from travel with virus-like symptoms will need to contact a health care provider as well as the HR department for direction as soon as possible.

[Optional, and not CDC recommended at this time due overburdening doctors: Employees may not return to work without obtaining clearance from their health care provider.]

Employees returning from travel who do not exhibit virus-like symptoms must still contact the HR department upon return and may be directed to remain away from the workplace for fourteen days to determine whether or not they have been exposed. The returning employee should work with his or her manager to set appropriate telecommuting arrangements or request time off from work.

Please contact the human resources department with any questions or concerns.

Source: SHRM

SafetyNow ILT

# Social Distancing to Avoid the Spread of COVID-19: What Should Your Business be Doing?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines social distancing as "remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible."

Social distancing accepts or acknowledges that the coronavirus is likely widespread, community transmission is already occurring and the number of diagnosed cases is going to rise as more people receive testing. Social distancing, along with other risk reduction methods, attempts to slow the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the speed of new diagnoses, especially severe cases.

COVID-19, according to the CDC, is mainly spread from person to person between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) and through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Containment through border closings, transportation restrictions and quarantining sick or exposed individuals will be increasingly ineffective given the growing number of new cases attributed to community-acquired transmission. Nonetheless, the basics of preventing virus transmission remain the same:

- Frequent handwashing with soap and water (hand sanitizer if soap and water are unavailable)

- Don't touch your face (easier said than done!)

- Catch your cough or sneeze in the crook of your elbow

- Stay home from school or work if you are sick

**COMMUNITY SOCIAL DISTANCING ACTIONS**

The CDC also states, "The virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be spreading easily and sustainably in the community," which is prompting the cancellation or reduction of events and opportunities for people to congregate together. Specifically, those social distancing actions include:

- Closing daycares, schools and college campuses

- Canceling concerts, parades and sporting events

- Canceling conferences or offering a virtual alternative

- Canceling church services

- Ordering employees to work from home

- Changing hours or available services at government buildings, like libraries

When people do need to be together in a workplace, school, church or public venue, experts recommend staying at least six feet apart, not exchanging handshakes or high fives, minimizing contact with any surfaces, as well as the standard precautions of

SafetyNow ILT

handwashing.

## PUBLIC SAFETY SOCIAL DISTANCING ACTIONS

Public safety organizations – fire, EMS, law enforcement – in consultation with their medical director and local public health officials, recommend taking any or all of these actions to reduce opportunities for coronavirus transmission and increase social distancing:

- Restrict building access with locked doors or a secured indoor lobby. Designate most areas of the station for only currently on-duty personnel.

- Cancel station tours by youth and school groups.

- Postpone non-essential in-person continuing education of all types – lecture, hands-on and high-fidelity simulation.

- Deliver company training, roll call or shift briefing virtually with a conference call or web meeting.

- If a group of personnel must gather in a meeting room, ensure that chairs, tables and all training equipment are disinfected before and after the meeting.

- Require any face-to-face meeting attendees to spread out so they are at least six feet apart. Don't pass snacks, training materials or other items from person to person.

- Postpone non-essential station visits for equipment demonstrations or checks. Ask the vendor to provide demonstrations by live or recorded web video.

Many companies, including Facebook and Amazon, have canceled non-essential work travel.

## ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ON COVID-19 PLANNING

Ideally, every company has already begun to plan

for how COVID-19 will impact its personnel, their families and their willingness to report to work. At a minimum, planning should account for:

- Childcare needs if schools and daycares close.

- Regular or additional care personnel provide for elderly parents, especially if those elders are already institutionalized.

Maintaining maximum staffing during this pandemic is going to be an ongoing challenge that will require a combination of:

Personnel using PPE properly and appropriately.

- Updated or dynamic protocols for resource allocation.

- Supporting families of personnel throughout with preparatory information, prevention techniques, open communication channels and potentially food and housing. The workforce is more likely to report for duty if they are confident their family is OK.

- Transparent communication internally about department actions, needs and pandemic impacts.

Source: https://www.ems1.com/coronavirus-covid-19/articles/social-distancing-to-control-covid-19-spread-action-items-for-public-safety-XsUtoUCb2JdKS0IP/

SafetyNow ILT

Contact Info

---

📞 1.800.667.9300

✉️ Info@safetynow.com