

CLIENT ALERT

OSHA Issues Guidance to Employers on Preventing Worker Exposure to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

March 11, 2020

On March 10, 2020, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued [Guidance](#) for employers to prevent occupational exposures to the coronavirus. In doing so, OSHA reminds employers that while no specific standard governs occupational exposure to the coronavirus, the Occupational Safety and Health Act's General Duty Clause, 29 U.S.C. § 654 (a)(1), requires employers to provide their employees with a workplace free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm.

The Guidance contains recommendations and describes safety and health standards that, if followed, could help employers reduce potential enforcement actions for employees who may be exposed to COVID-19 in the workplace. While recognizing it may not be possible to eliminate a COVID-19 outbreak hazard, the Guidance lists what OSHA believes to be effective protective measures (from most to least effective): engineering controls, administrative controls, safe work practices (a type of administrative control), and personal protective equipment (PPE).

The Guidance directs employers to “plan now for COVID-19” and states that “[e]mployers who have not prepared for pandemic events should prepare themselves and their workers.” OSHA is advising employers to:

- Recommend employees take personal measures to prevent exposure, such as frequent hand washing.
- Assess the hazards to which workers may be exposed.
- Evaluate the risk of exposure.
- Develop an infectious disease preparedness and response plan, and policies and procedures for prompt identification and isolation of sick employees.
- Select, implement, and ensure employees use controls to prevent exposure, including physical barriers to control the spread of the virus; social distancing; and appropriate PPE, hygiene, and cleaning supplies.

The Guidance also advises that employers with workers living or traveling abroad plan appropriately for travel restrictions and consult OSHA's [“Business Travelers” COVID-19 webpage](#).

For more information, please contact the professional(s) listed below, or your regular Crowell & Moring contact.

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