



LINA HIDALGO

March 11, 2020

To: Harris County Employees

From: Judge Lina Hidalgo

Subject: COVID-19

Harris County is closely monitoring all new developments associated with Coronavirus (COVID-19) and we want to ensure that our employees are educated on the known risk(s) of exposure to the virus and the proper protocol. There is an abundance of information circulating about the virus with new information emerging each day. Although COVID-19 initially originated overseas, the virus now continues to spread person-to-person within the United States.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

Priorities for employees exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19

- Your health and the health of your co-workers is of the utmost importance. If you are exhibiting symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or meet any of the potential exposure scenarios listed below, you are hereby instructed to stay home and contact your immediate supervisor, as well as the Public Health Task Force Employee Hotline number at (713) 274-3880 or by email PHTaskForce@eng.hctx.net to obtain additional information related to self-quarantine procedures, including protocol(s) and verification.
- You will not be authorized to return to work until you are released by a healthcare professional, cleared by the Public Health Task Force, or have completed the mandatory quarantine period of 14 calendar days.

- On March 10, 2020, Harris County Commissioners Court approved an Order granting protection to all employees in the event that they do not have adequate paid time off and risk being docked pay for absences directly related to COVID-19, including sickness, quarantine, or to care for immediate family members that are sick or quarantined. The Order allows employees to accrue a maximum of 80 hours negative comp time with the stipulation that the employee will make up the lost hours at a later time but before the pay period ending December 18, 2020. A copy of the Order is attached.
- Your supervisors are aware of the COVID-19 situation and will practice compassion and understanding for all proper absences.

As this disease is considered highly contagious, please stay home if you feel sick with symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

1. Symptoms

- COVID-19 symptoms can appear 2-14 days after exposure and include:
 - ✓ Fever (Temperature of 100.4° or higher)
 - ✓ Cough
 - ✓ Shortness of breath

2. Transmission

- Virus spreads through both direct and indirect contact. Direct transmission occurs when there is physical contact with an infected person. Indirect transmission occurs when there is no direct person-to-person contact, but instead with contaminated surfaces or objects. At this time, science has not yet determined how long the virus can survive on surfaces and objects.

3. Preventative Measures

- Recommended guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) include:
 - ✓ Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - ✓ If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol to cover all surfaces of your hands.
 - ✓ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - ✓ Avoid contact with individuals that may have been exposed to the virus.

4. *Potential Exposure*

- We highly recommend that employees and their families limit all nonessential travel (air, land, and sea) to locations with established widespread community spread. This currently includes China, South Korea, Italy, and Iran; the CDC updates this list frequently.
- If you and/or someone you reside with have traveled or intend to travel to high-risk locations as identified by the CDC, or have been in contact with someone that has traveled to these locations, please contact the Public Health Task Force Employee Hotline number at (713) 274-3880 or by email PHTaskForce@eng.hctx.net to obtain additional information related to self-quarantine procedures, including protocol(s) for verification.
- If you and/or someone you reside with are exhibiting any of the symptoms of COVID-19, please contact the Public Health Task Force Employee Hotline number at (713) 274-3880 or by email PHTaskForce@eng.hctx.net to obtain additional information related to self-quarantine procedures, including protocol(s) for verification.

It is critical that we exercise preventative measures and take the necessary steps to decrease the risk of spreading infection. For updates regarding COVID-19, please visit www.readyharris.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lina Hidalgo", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Judge Lina Hidalgo