



The CDC and other public health agencies are monitoring a respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus, known officially as COVID-19. The new coronavirus was first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China and has caused thousands of illnesses in China and a growing number of illnesses internationally, including in the United States.

We wanted to take this opportunity to remind you about best practices and share actions to take in order to minimize the risk of exposure to your employees and products and continue to assure the safety and quality of products we sell. These best practices and include:

Food Safety Programs

We request that you verify that the food safety programs that you have in place are effective and are working as intended. Moreover, please ensure employees are washing hands properly, practicing good personal hygiene, avoiding bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods, controlling all food safety hazards, and are following cleaning and sanitation procedures.

Employee health

As part of your employee health policy, it should be emphasized to employees, especially those handling foods, to report certain symptoms to a manager. If a food employee is suspected of having a respiratory illness such as coronavirus, they should be restricted from working around food. If an employee has been diagnosed with coronavirus, they should be excluded from working in the food facility until they are symptom free. Per CDC guidance specific to COVID-19, a doctor's note or clearance from the local regulatory authority is not required for employees to return to work at this time. Furthermore, employee health policies should be extended for family members or caregivers of employees who are exhibiting symptoms.

General precautions should be taken to prevent the spread of infection among employees. Employees should be reminded to properly wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, cover their mouth/nose with a tissue or shirt sleeve when sneezing or coughing, follow proper food safety practices, and avoid contact with anyone experiencing respiratory illness symptoms such as coughing and sneezing.

Employee travel

Although, in China there has been sustained human-to-human transmission of the coronavirus, within the United States, most coronavirus cases have been associated with individuals who traveled to China or who have come in close contact with people who have traveled to China. Please ensure that employees are aware of this risk when traveling and encourage employees to report any travel to/from China and report if they have had close contact with anyone who recently traveled to/from China.

CDC and the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) are conducting enhanced screening of passengers to monitor passengers with symptoms associated with the 2019-nCoV and travel connections to China. On January 31, 2020, the White House 2019 Novel Coronavirus Task Force announced the implementation of [new travel policy to combat the spread of the virus](#). For the first time in 50 years, the U.S. has issued a [mandatory quarantine order](#) for U.S. citizens returning to the U.S. who have been in the Hubei province of China within 14 days of their return. These individuals will be subject to a mandatory, 14-day quarantine to ensure that they receive the proper medical care. Additionally, U.S. citizens who have been in other areas of China within 14 days of their return must undergo proactive entry health screening and up to 14 days of self-quarantine with appropriate health monitoring to ensure they have not contracted the virus and are not a public health threat.

Supply Chain

While there are still many unknowns with the 2019 novel coronavirus and how it spreads, it is believed that the new coronavirus behaves similarly to other coronaviruses (i.e., SARS and MERS) and thus has poor survivability on surfaces and packages. Therefore, products and packages shipped to the U.S. from China pose a very low risk of spreading the virus. Coronavirus is most likely to be spread via respiratory droplets. Although suppliers may currently pose a low risk, we strongly encourage you to evaluate all suppliers, ensure that they have strong food safety programs in place and are meeting all food safety specifications that have been established.

As this outbreak is rapidly changing, we will continue to monitor the situation and update information as it is necessary. Our primary goal is to maintain the health and safety of our customers and uphold the highest standard in order to protect our products and the overarching food supply.