

## **Memo: Coronavirus and Flu Prevention**

Date: 3/11/2020

To: All employees

From: John Connet, City Manager

The world health community continues to monitor closely the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the disease it causes, named "coronavirus disease 2019" (COVID-19). At this time, no one knows how severe this outbreak will be. Given this uncertainty, and the fact that the seasonal influenza (flu) virus is also widespread, we are taking proactive steps to address a number of business concerns. First and foremost, we want to maintain a safe workplace and encourage and/or adopt practices protecting the health of employees, customers, visitors or others. We also want to ensure the continuity of business operations in the event of a localized outbreak.

We ask all employees to cooperate in taking steps to reduce the transmission of communicable diseases in the workplace. Employees are reminded of the following:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Wash your hands frequently with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your mouth with tissues whenever you sneeze, and discard used tissues in the trash.
- Avoid people who are sick with respiratory symptoms.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces.

The City of Hendersonville will provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers throughout the workplace and in common areas. Cleaning sprays and wipes will also be provided to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as telephones and keyboards. These items will be dependent on availability.

Employees are encouraged to use telephone and video conferencing instead of face-to-face meetings as much as possible during this outbreak. IT support services are available to employees who need assistance with this technology.

It is critical that employees do not report to work while they are experiencing respiratory symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills or fatigue. Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that employees remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 degrees F or 37.8 degrees C) or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. Many times, with the best of intentions, employees report to work even though they feel ill. We provide paid sick time and other benefits to compensate employees who are unable to work due to illness. Employees who report to work ill will be sent home in accordance with these health guidelines.

We will be following existing sick leave, family medical leave and workers compensation policies during the COVID-19 outbreak. Employees with little or no sick leave may be granted paid leave when continuing work might jeopardize the health of others. If you have little or no sick leave and become sick, please stay home and contact your supervisor immediately. I have asked our department heads to suspend the requiring of doctor's certifications (notes) during

this outbreak to make it easier for our employees to take the necessary steps to recover from any illness.

While we currently do not offer formal telework arrangements, The City of Hendersonville will consider, on a case-by-case basis, requests from employees to work from home during this time. While not all positions are conducive to telework, those positions with primary job duties that can be effectively performed remotely will be given consideration. All telework arrangements will require prior approval from your department head and City Manager.

The City will be establishing a continuity of operations workgroup immediately to monitor the COVID-19 outbreak and develop plans and policies to protect our employees, residents and maintain essential operations. This workgroup will consist of representatives from each department and major operational division. We will meet weekly or more often if needed. We will be organizing this group by the end of the week and hold our first meeting next week.

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