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CITY OF AUSTIN
EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION – COVID-19
TRAVEL & REMINDERS
6/12/20

As previously indicated, City employees who had traveled by air, were required to self-quarantine for 14-days following their return. With summer upon us and more and more states opening up and loosening their state guidelines, employees may be wondering about their own travel options. This update will hopefully answer employee questions, however, if an employee has a more specific question, they can discuss with their supervisor or contact human resources. This employee notice, and other previous communications, policies and the City's Preparedness Plan, can all be found on the City's Intranet Site.

Is it safe to travel to visit family or friends?

Travel can increase your chances of getting and spreading COVID-19. Before you travel, learn if COVID-19 is spreading in your local area or in any of the places you are traveling too. People at higher risk for severe illness need to take extra precautions.

City's Travel Guidance

City employees are no longer required to automatically self-quarantine upon their return when traveling by air. However, employees should, upon their return home take additional safety precautions – At minimum, upon return, employees should wear a mask when around any other person at all times and avoid any close contact for 72 hours and of course continue with proper hygiene (wash hands, hand sanitizer, etc.). Of course, these safety precautions are guidelines and they rely heavily on the employee's actions while they were traveling – where did the employee travel too and what kind of precautions were taken when they were at their destination.

Travel outside of Minnesota – there are no travel restrictions for employees who are traveling outside the area and outside of Minnesota. As with the air travel guidelines above, employees should continue to protect themselves and engage in on-going safety protocols. This is for the employee's safety as well as the safety of their co-workers after they return to their departments.

Work related travel – at this time, employees should refrain from traveling outside of the area for work if not absolutely necessary or required. Employees should check with their supervisor and/department head prior to any work-related travel is taken.

International travel – employees should refrain from any international travel or taking any type of cruise. However, if employees elect to engage in this type of travel, they will be required to self-quarantine for 14-days upon their return home using their own paid time-off.

If you do travel – Protect yourself and others during your trip

- Clean your hands often.
 - Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, after touching surfaces frequently touched by others, after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, and before touching your face or eating.
 - If soap and water are not available, bring and use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub your hands together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid close contact with others – keep 6 feet of physical distance from others.
- Wear a mask or other cloth face covering in public, including airplanes, buses and train transportation.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.

Is it safe to travel to campgrounds/go camping?

Going camping at a time when much of the United States is experiencing community spread of COVID-19 can pose a risk to you if you come in close contact with others or share public facilities (like restrooms or picnic areas) at campsites or along the trails. Also be aware that many local, state, and national public parks have been temporarily closed due to COVID-19.

Before you travel – Check State and Local Travel Restrictions

Follow state and local travel restrictions. For up-to-date information and travel guidance, check the state or local health department where you are, along your route, and at your planned destination. While you are traveling, it is possible a state or local government may put into place travel restrictions, such as stay-at-home or shelter-in-place orders, mandated quarantines upon arrival, or even state border closures. Plan to keep checking for updates as you travel.

Know somebody who has been exposed or seeking medical care?

Over the past three months, everybody probably knows somebody who has either been exposed, has been tested, doing self-isolation, been quarantined or going through some other COVID-19 related response. If you haven't, you probably will. Before you start 'spreading the word' – STOP, respect an individual's privacy. Think about all of the emotions that individual is already experiencing and don't be a contributing factor. If you work with this person, and there is a need for you to know (contact tracing, etc.) you will be contacted. If you have concerns about the situation, as always, you can contact human resources.

On-going reminders

- The State of Minnesota, through Governor Walz's Executive Orders are starting to open businesses up, including City Hall and other City buildings. Be smart and be safe – both at work and outside of work, practice social distancing. Limit close contact (closer than 6 feet) and prolonged contact with others.

- Both at work and outside of work, practice enhanced sanitary practices. Wash hands frequently and especially after contact with other people or common surfaces (e.g., equipment, tools, furniture, door knobs, etc.). Wipe down equipment before and after use. This includes tools and equipment. Wear gloves and PPE when necessary and recommended.
- Be alert for symptoms, symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19: Fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea
- If you experience symptoms, notify your supervisor and go home. Seek medical care as necessary. Avoid contact with others as much as possible. Communicate with your supervisor so that appropriate determinations can be made about your anticipated return to work. Mayo Clinic COVID-19 Testing Hotline is 507-433-7351.
- If you are feeling anxious or experiencing other uncomfortable emotions, remember that **our confidential employee assistance program (EAP) is available to all employees.** The City of Austin will provide up to two (2) visits of one-hour duration for the employee and immediate family members per calendar year. The City of Austin currently has contracts with both Cedar River Counseling Services, telephone 433-6482 and Mayo Health System – Behavioral Health Services, telephone 434-1856. When calling, please specify EAP. This service is completely confidential.

Finding Reliable Information

For information about COVID-19 you can trust, go to these websites (regularly updated):

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Minnesota Department of Health](#)