



Coronavirus: How Employers Around the Globe Are Responding

By Kathy Gurchiek

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Companies are scrambling to respond as the coronavirus, which causes the respiratory illness COVID-19, spreads around the world. During a Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) webcast March 10, an official with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention asked employers to do all they can to slow the coronavirus (www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hr-topics/employee-relations/Pages/CDC-Official-Asks-Employers-to-Do-All-They-Can-to-Slow-Coronavirus.aspx).

SHRM Online has collected the following news reports that reflect the different ways in which organizations are reacting to protect their employees and their businesses.

SHRM RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Managing Communicable Diseases in the Workplace (www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/Pages/communicable-diseases.aspx)

Emergency Leave

Walmart to Allow Any Worker Concerned about Coronavirus to Stay Home 'Without Penalty'

Walmart is enacting an emergency leave policy for its 1.4 million hourly US workers that allows them to take time off without penalty if they fear the spread of a new virus. The nation's largest private employer said Tuesday that a worker at its store in Cynthiana, Ken., tested positive for the COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus.

(*New York Post* (<https://nypost.com/2020/03/10/walmart-to-allow-any-worker-concerned-about-coronavirus-to-stay-home-without-penalty/>))

Colorado Will Require Paid Sick Leave for Certain Workers in Response to Coronavirus

The state of Colorado will soon require employers to offer paid sick days to hundreds of thousands of service and hospitality workers in response to the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus. Gov. Jared Polis announced the

new policy on Tuesday morning as he declared a state of emergency.

(Colorado Public Radio (<https://www.cpr.org/2020/03/10/colorado-will-require-paid-sick-leave-for-15-of-workers-in-response-to-coronavirus/>))

Employee Relief Fund

Amazon Launches \$25 Million Relief Fund for Delivery Drivers, Seasonal Employees Amid Coronavirus Outbreak

Amazon is launching a \$25 million relief fund for delivery drivers and seasonal workers amid the coronavirus outbreak, it announced March 11. The aim is to help employees "that are under financial distress during this challenging time," the company said. This includes Amazon Flex drivers and its network of delivery service partners, who handle last-mile package deliveries, as well as seasonal employees, who help the company manage variation in customer demand during peak periods and holidays. Amazon will allow these employees to apply for grants that are equal to up to two weeks of pay if they're diagnosed with the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19.

(CNBC (<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/11/coronavirus-amazon-launches-25-million-fund-for-drivers-seasonal-employees.html>))

Starbucks Will Offer 'Catastrophe Pay' to Baristas Exposed to Coronavirus

Starbucks said this week that it is offering "catastrophe pay" to U.S. baristas who have been exposed to the coronavirus. It will pay employees for up to 14 days if they have been diagnosed with, exposed to or been in close contact with someone with the coronavirus. Workers who may be considered higher risk because of underlying health conditions also are eligible with a doctor's note. The company has implemented similar measures in China.

(CNBC (<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/11/starbucks-will-offer-catastrophe-pay-to-baristas-exposed-to-the-coronavirus.html>))

Coronavirus Testing

NYC's Hotel Workers Union to Offer Members Coronavirus Testing

The health insurance plan run by the city's powerful hotel workers union will soon offer more than 90,000 people tests for the coronavirus. About 40,000 workers and 50,000 of their relatives and union retirees are covered by the plan run by the New York Hotel Trades Council.

(*New York Daily News* (<https://www.nydailynews.com/coronavirus/ny-coronavirus-htc-hotel-workers-testing-peter-ward-20200310-ljuppok2g5ctffx72tdtzmjggy-story.html>))

[*SHRM members-only form: Notice of Workplace Exposure to a Communicable Disease*

(www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/hr-forms/Pages/Notice-of-Workplace-Exposure-to-a-Communicable-Disease.aspx)]

Closures and Quarantines

Starbucks Closed a Seattle Store after 1st Case of Employee Diagnosed with Coronavirus

Starbucks temporarily closed a Reserve store location in downtown Seattle after an employee was diagnosed with COVID-19 and was quarantined March 6. This is the first case of coronavirus contracted by a Starbucks in-store employee. The company immediately closed the affected store, initiated a deep-clean procedure and sent home employees that had direct contact with the infected partner.

(*Nation's Restaurant News* (<https://www.nrn.com/news/starbucks-closed-seattle-store-after-first-case-employee-diagnosed-coronavirus>))

'No-Contact' Food Delivery Offered**Gig Economy Companies from Uber to Lyft Take Action as Coronavirus Cases Grow**

Uber and Lyft are planning to compensate drivers affected by the coronavirus for up to 14 days. Postmates and Instacart have unveiled "no-contact" food delivery. DoorDash is letting customers leave in-app instructions if they prefer orders left at the door. Amazon Flex, which taps independent contractors to make deliveries, doesn't have a policy to compensate drivers and is instead supporting on an "individual, case-by-case basis."

(CNBC (<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/09/uber-lyft-door-dash-react-to-coronavirus-workers-say-its-not-enough.html>))

Teleworking Promoted, Office Visits Restricted**Twitter Tells Employees to Work from Home as Tech Firms React to Coronavirus**

Twitter on March 2 became the first major U.S. corporation to strongly encourage its employees to work from home to avoid spreading coronavirus.

(*Los Angeles Times* (<https://www.latimes.com/business/technology/story/2020-03-02/twitter-tells-employees-to-work-from-home-amid-coronavirus-fears>))

How IBM, Goldman Sachs, PwC and Others Are Responding to the Coronavirus Threat

IBM, which nearly three years ago ended remote work for some U.S. employees, (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/ibm-a-pioneer-of-remote-work-calls-workers-back-to-the-office-1495108802>) said Feb. 27 it had asked workers in coronavirus-affected areas to work from home "wherever possible." The guidance was issued for IBM workers in China, Japan, South Korea and Italy. The company also restricted travel to some locations and canceled its in-person participation in the RSA Conference on cybersecurity in San Francisco.

(*Washington Post* (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/02/28/workplace-coronavirus-work-from-home/>))

Google Tells More than 100,000 North American Employees to Stay Home

Google is telling all of its North American employees to stay home until at least April 10, as the COVID-19 coronavirus spreads, CNBC reported March 10. On March 9, CNBC reported that the company blocked all external visitors from coming into some of its offices, including New York and the San Francisco Bay Area where its Silicon Valley headquarters are located.

(CNBC (<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/10/google-tells-all-north-american-employees-to-stay-home.html>))

UBS Divvying Up Teams in Switzerland, Having Them Switch Off Teleworking

UBS, the Swiss bank headquartered in Zurich, has begun implementing a split-operations policy in Switzerland this week as part of its coronavirus response. The firm has already implemented a similar policy for its employees across the Asia Pacific region.

(News of the Day (<https://news--of-the-day.com/2020/03/06/ubs-is-divvying-up-teams-in-switzerland-and-having-them-switch-off-who-comes-into-the-office-as-part-of-its-coronavirus-response-ubs/>))

Cuomo Asks NY Businesses to Split Employee Shifts to Prevent Coronavirus Spread

The State of New York will ask businesses to consider having employees work two shifts and allowing telework, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in a CNN interview.

(*New York Post* (<https://nypost.com/2020/03/11/cuomo-asks-ny-businesses-to-split-employee-shifts-to-prevent-coronavirus-spread/>))

Domestic and Global Travel Restricted**Ford Bans Employee Travel on Coronavirus Fears**

Ford Motor Company told employees March 3 that it is banning all non-essential air travel until at least March 27 because of concerns about the novel coronavirus. Ford had been restricting travel to and from China but has now extended the ban to all flights, both international and within the United States, out of concern for employees' health and safety. There may be exceptions, a Ford spokesperson said, but they will probably be rare.

(The Motley Fool (<https://www.fool.com/investing/2020/03/04/ford-bans-employee-travel-on-coronavirus-fears.aspx>))

Coronavirus Cancellations, Travel Bans

Google on March 3 called off its flagship developers conference, called I/O, which was scheduled for May in Mountain View, Calif. Last year, the three-day event drew 7,000 attendees. The company said it would look for ways to "evolve" the event, raising the possibility of livestreamed or remote sessions. Several other companies and organizations, including the World Bank and the IMF, said they would replace in-person gatherings and meetings with virtual ones.

(NPR (<https://www.npr.org/2020/03/03/811728989/coronavirus-cancellations-and-travel-bans-google-is-latest>))

Coronavirus Conference Gets Canceled Because of Coronavirus

The Council on Foreign Relations canceled a roundtable called "Doing Business Under Coronavirus" scheduled for Friday in New York due to the spread of the infection itself. CFR has also canceled other in-person conferences that were scheduled from March 11 to April 3.

(Bloomberg (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-03-10/coronavirus-conference-gets-canceled-because-of-coronavirus>))

Airlines Cut More Flights, Execs Take Pay Cuts as Coronavirus Takes Toll on Flying

United CEO Oscar Munoz and president Scott Kirby will forgo their base salaries through at least June 30. United also said it was postponing "non-critical" projects requiring capital expenditures, got a \$2 billion loan from a group of banks and expects to incur a first-quarter loss. Southwest Airlines CEO Gary Kelly said Monday in a message to employees that he would take a 10 percent pay cut and Delta said it is instituting a hiring freeze, taking some planes out of service and retiring older aircraft. (*Herald & Review* (https://herald-review.com/news/state-and-regional/airlines-cut-more-flights-executives-take-pay-cuts-as-coronavirus/article_43e17479-ddb3-5ee9-9e40-8945e7635639.html))

Work Areas Disinfected

How Dallas-Area Restaurants Are Prepping Their Kitchens and Dining Rooms for Coronavirus

Extra hand sanitizer is only part of the effort. Some say food delivery is the next big answer. At one eatery, crews have started sanitizing credit-card pin pads, surface areas and both sides of all door handles more regularly. Like many restaurants, it has put out more hand-sanitizing dispensers and ordered touchless hand sanitizer dispensers to replace manual ones.

(*The Dallas Morning News* (<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/public-health/2020/03/10/how-dallas-area-restaurants-are-preparing-their-kitchens-and-dining-rooms-for-coronavirus/>))

Nike Closed Its Worldwide HQ in Oregon for Deep-Cleaning after 1st U.S. Coronavirus Death

Nike announced March 1 it temporarily closed its corporate headquarters in Beaverton, Ore., in order to deep clean the campus following the first US death from COVID-19 the day prior. "While we have no information indicating any exposure to Nike employees, out of an abundance of caution, we are conducting a deep cleaning of campus," a Nike spokesperson told KGW, the Portland, Ore., NBC-affiliated station. "All WHQ buildings and facilities, including fitness centers, will be closed over the weekend."

(*Business Insider* (<https://www.businessinsider.com/nike-coronavirus-closed-headquarters-in-oregon-after-1st-us-death-2020-3>))

Facebook Shuts London, Singapore Offices for 'Deep Cleaning' After Employee Diagnosed with Coronavirus

Facebook said March 6 it was shutting its London office and part of its Singapore base for "deep cleaning" after an employee in the Asian city state was diagnosed with coronavirus.

(*The Economic Times* (<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/coronavirus-scare-facebook-shuts-london-singapore-offices-for-deep-cleaning/articleshow/74523446.cms?from=mdr>))

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