

## HEALTH AND SAFETY AT THE ASSURED GROUP OF COMPANIES

### Infectious Diseases Policy

#### Introduction

The Company attaches the greatest importance to the health, safety and welfare of its customers, employees, workers, contractors, subcontractors and others who may be affected by its work activities.

The following policy explains how the Company will control and manage the risks of any infectious diseases in the workplace. It also gives specific guidance on the condition commonly known as Coronavirus and officially known as COVID-19, which has been designated as a global emergency by the World Health Organization.

Regardless of this, most people can continue to go to work, school and other public places.

People only need to stay away from public places (self-isolate) if advised to by the 111 online coronavirus service (see below) or a medical professional.

As with all Health and Safety matters, responsibility is a joint one, with the Assured Group of Companies, its managers, employees workers, subcontractors and contractors all co-operating and playing their part to prevent the spread of the virus as far as is reasonably practical and to manage it effectively.

#### Infectious Diseases

In order to restrict and reduce the risk of infectious diseases in the workplace, the Company:

- has systems in place that assess the risks of and prevents, detects and controls the risk of infection
- has a designated lead for infection prevention and control – namely the Group Health & Safety Manager
- ensures that sufficient resources are available to secure effective prevention and control of infection
- ensures employees, contractors and other persons who directly or indirectly provide work are provided with suitable information, instruction, training and supervision in the precautions to follow
- will ensure that information is obtained from and shared with its customers and other businesses, as necessary
- where there is supposed risk, ensures a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is carried out with respect to prevention and control of infection
- ensures an appropriate standard of cleanliness and hygiene is maintained throughout its own premises and that the premises are maintained in good physical repair and condition
- ensures appropriate standards of cleanliness and hygiene are maintained in relation to equipment
- ensures that a suitable cleaning schedule is in place and followed
- ensures suitable information on infections is provided to visitors, including the importance of hand washing
- ensures information regarding infection is passed on to any other person, as necessary
- ensures individuals who develop an infection are identified promptly and that they receive the appropriate treatment and care
- will inform the local health protection unit of any outbreaks or serious incidents relating to infection.

## Procedure

The Company will apply the following procedure to control the risk of infectious diseases in the workplace:

- encourage employees, workers, contractors, subcontractors to report symptoms of infectious diseases
- ensure those who have infectious disease symptoms do not come to work and, in the case of diarrhoea and vomiting, they stay away for at least 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped
- where required, ensure notifiable outbreaks are reported to the relevant authority e.g. the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- co-operate with any investigation by relevant authorities and comply with any investigation findings
- keep the number of personnel dealing with affected persons to a minimum and not allow any such personnel to be involved with food handling
- prioritise cleaning, paying particular attention to the cleaning and disinfecting of toilets, handles, support handrails, taps and wash basins
- ensure that employees, workers, contractors, subcontractors and all relevant personnel, pay strict attention to infection control procedures, in particular to the thorough washing of hands and the wearing of protective clothing if required
- inform customers / visitors of the outbreak and discourage unnecessary visits
- receive and follow external advice, if necessary.

## The COVID-19 Virus

### Prevention and Preparation

The causes of infection of the COVID-19 virus seem to be similar to that of seasonal influenza, i.e. via droplets that are expelled by speaking, sneezing or coughing.

Therefore to reduce the risk of catching or spreading the virus, everyone should:

- use the facilities and equipment provided at any place of work, such as antibacterial soap, cleaning materials, etc.
- avoid close contact with people who show influenza-like symptoms
- always carry tissues - catching the germs in a tissue could help limit the spread of the virus
- cover their mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, using a tissue
- throw the tissue away quickly and carefully
- avoid touching their mouth and nose;
- clean hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds each time, or cleanse them with an alcohol-based hand rub on a regular basis (especially if touching the mouth and nose, or surfaces that are potentially contaminated);
- clean hard surfaces (like door handles and remote controls) frequently with an antibacterial or normal cleaning product
- improve airflow in their living or working space by opening windows;

- practise good health habits including adequate sleep, eating healthily, and keeping physically active.
- in case they need to contact the authorities, locate and know their NHS number (this will be detailed on any NHS letters or prescriptions)
- keep up to date with the latest help and advice available through radio, TV and the internet – see the ‘Further Information’ Section below
- confirm who their support network would be – that is family, friends or neighbours who could help them if they become ill; those people who could get medication and food on their behalf, so they wouldn’t need to leave their home. This will be important in helping to stop the virus from spreading.

## **Diagnosis**

Most people will not be able to tell the difference between seasonal flu and COVID-19 without medical assistance. The most typical symptoms are a cough, high temperature or shortness of breath, whilst others may include:

- headache
- tiredness
- sore throat
- runny nose
- sneezing.

Anyone who lives in England and displays two or more such symptoms, should in the first instance check the NHS 111 online service at <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>. This is a coronavirus service which will advise if medical help is needed, and can give appropriate advice.

This service should be used if:

- anyone thinks they might have coronavirus
- in the last 14 days they have been to a country or area with a high risk of coronavirus – see below for travellers information
- they have been in close contact with someone with coronavirus.

Anyone should contact their doctor directly rather than using the Coronavirus Service if:

- they have a serious underlying illness
- they are pregnant
- they have a sick child under one year old
- their condition suddenly gets much worse
- their condition is still getting worse after 7 days (5 for a child)

## Travellers

People may need to get medical advice if they have recently travelled to the UK from somewhere with a higher risk of coronavirus. These places are:

- Cambodia
- China
- Hong Kong
- Iran
- Italy – only northern Italy (anywhere north of Pisa, Florence and Rimini)
- Japan
- Laos
- Macau
- Malaysia
- Myanmar (Burma)
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Taiwan
- Tenerife – only the H10 Costa Adeje Palace Hotel
- Thailand
- Vietnam

If they have been to one of these places in the last 14 days, they should find out what to do, using the [NHS 111 online coronavirus service](#).

If, after having checked the NHS Coronavirus service they believe that they could be at risk of being infected, they should contact the following immediately:

If they live in [Scotland](#): they should call their GP surgery, or 111 if their surgery is not open.

If they live in [Wales](#) or Northern Ireland: call 111.

If they live in the [Republic of Ireland](#) they should call their GP surgery or 112.

In all suspected cases, if they have the symptoms described - regardless of how well or unwell they feel:

- stay at home and keep away from work or crowds. Whether they have COVID-19 or a seasonal influenza, they should stay at home and away from work for 2 weeks. This is a precaution that will protect work colleagues and others that either they could come into contact with.

- report the absence and the reason for it to the Assured Human Resources Department, by email at [hr@assuredgroup.org](mailto:hr@assuredgroup.org) or by telephone on +44 01926 887 988
- rest and take plenty of fluids;
- cover their nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing using tissues, then make sure they dispose of them carefully. Clean their hands immediately after with soap and water or cleanse them with an alcohol-based/antibacterial hand rub;
- if they do not have a tissue close by when they cough or sneeze, cover their mouth as much as possible with the crook of their elbow;
- they should not travel, but if they have absolutely no alternative but to be around others, then use a mask to help they contain the spread of droplets
- inform family and friends about their illness and try to avoid contact with other people;
- If possible, contact a health professional, such as their GP before travelling to a health facility to discuss whether a medical examination is necessary.

Supportive care at home - resting, drinking plenty of fluids and using a pain reliever for aches - is adequate for recovery in most cases. They should only seek medical care (i.e. contact their GP) if they experience shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, or if a fever continues for more than three days.

#### **Use of face masks**

The number of people in public places who are displaying symptoms is likely to be limited. Therefore it should not be necessary for workers to wear facemasks routinely when in contact with the general public.

As general guidance, if someone is not sick they do not have to wear a mask. If someone is caring for a sick person, they can wear a mask when they are in close contact with the ill person and dispose of it immediately after contact, and cleanse their hands thoroughly afterwards.

There may be some situations when it would be advisable for a worker to wear a mask. Such a situation will depend on the nature of the work, where it is to be carried out, taking into consideration:

- whether workers may come into close contact (typically about a metre) with symptomatic members of the public during the course of their work;
- the duration and frequency of contact with members of the public.

If they feel that a mask may be necessary, contact the Group Health and Safety Manager, who will carry out a risk assessment. If masks are required, the Company will provide them as necessary.

## Sickness Absence

For employees and workers any instances of absence due to COVID-19 will be treated as normal sickness absence and reported in the normal way. It will be paid for in accordance with their Contract of Employment or Key Time Worker Agreement. Where infection with COVID-19 is confirmed by a medical practitioner (proof will be required) and they qualify, they may receive payment of Statutory Sick pay from day 1, rather than day 4 of the illness as is usually the case. If in doubt, queries should be addressed to the Human Resources Department.

If they are a contractor or subcontractor, please notify the Company immediately, so that it can carry out the necessary risk assessments. Any payment queries should in the first instance be referred to their Service Level or Subcontractor agreement. If in doubt, queries should be addressed to the Payments Department.

## Managers

In the first instance if any employee, worker, subcontractor or contractor is displaying flu-like symptoms, then send them home immediately. Next inform the Human Resources Manager.

If they are directly notified by customers, employees, workers, contractors, subcontractors that they are absent with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, then they must immediately notify the Human Resources Manager, having noted the following details:

- Their name
- Their usual work location
- The date of their first day of absence
- Whether this is suspected COVID-19 or a confirmed medical diagnosis
- On their return to work, the employee will Self-Certify either via SelectHR or a Self-Certification / Return to Work form (obtained from the HR Department). Their line Manager will then arrange a return to work meeting.

Immediately inform the members of their department/team and where necessary customers, giving brief details to the team who work in the immediate area, ensuring they respect the individual's confidentiality as much as is reasonably practicable. The brief need be no more than to say that an employee / subcontractor (etc.,) is off sick with Coronavirus, and that everyone is reminded that they should ensure that they follow personal hygiene protocols such as washing hands with soap, thoroughly for at least 20 seconds, and disposing of tissues correctly.

If employees or workers have a specific health queries or concerns then they should raise them with the Human Resources department in confidence so that advice or further support, such as Occupational Health can be sought if necessary.

## Human Resources

For members of the HR department, if they are directly notified by anyone that they are absent with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 then note the following details:

- Their name
- Their usual work location
- The date of their first day of absence
- Whether this is suspected COVID-19 or a confirmed medical diagnosis
- Explain that the normal Sickness Absence Procedure will apply, i.e. that they will have to Self-Certify on their return to work for days 1-7 of their absence and either provide a Fitness to Work Note from a medical practitioner for days 8 onwards. On their returning to work, A 'Return to Work interview would then be conducted with their Line Manager.
- Report all instances to the Group Health and Safety Manager.

## Health & Safety

The Group Health & Safety Manager holds the organisational responsibility for practical Health and Safety issues such as purchasing appropriate protective equipment and carrying out risk assessments.

Where an instance or suspected instance of COVID-19 is reported, the department will be responsible for carrying out or delegating a risk assessment of the situation, designed to safeguard the health and safety of the individual affected and also mitigate the risks of infecting further personnel. A Risk Assessment will be completed accordingly and any measures detailed in the assessment acted on accordingly.

## Further Information

If they have any questions or need further information about any health, safety and environmental issue, please contact the Group Health & Safety Manager or Human Resources Department.

The latest public health information with regard to Coronavirus can be found on the following websites:

National Health Service (NHS):

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

World Health Organisation (WHO):

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

HSE Ireland:

[https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html?gclid=Cj0KCQiAs67yBRC7ARIsAF49CdWLZaOnSCwoSFmPiB6i24nLbYPvlxSnRKNfLpzwvzXIKEIaAqKbEALw\\_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html?gclid=Cj0KCQiAs67yBRC7ARIsAF49CdWLZaOnSCwoSFmPiB6i24nLbYPvlxSnRKNfLpzwvzXIKEIaAqKbEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds)

**Related Policies, Procedures and Resources**

Please refer as appropriate to:

- Health & Safety Policy
- Sickness Absence Policy