



THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

MAR 12 2020

Memorandum

To: All Department of the Interior Employees

From: Deputy Secretary *Katharine Sinclair MacGregor*

Subject: Updated Information for Employees Regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Last week, Secretary Bernhardt asked that I coordinate the Department of the Interior's (Department) preparation and response efforts to ensure we are best equipped to respond to COVID-19 and keep our fellow employees healthy and safe. We are committed to keeping you updated on our response efforts while also addressing your concerns.

The Office of Emergency Management has created a [Sharepoint site](#) where you can continue to access and learn about our preparedness efforts and easily access Government-wide guidance. The site includes additional guidance for employees and supervisors, as well as the most recent [OPM FAQs](#) on human resources flexibilities.

This morning, the Secretary and I met with the Department's Chief Medical Officer. We are privileged to have such expertise on staff to help ensure we are taking all the necessary steps to keep you and your loved ones safe as we continue to perform our mission. While medical professionals are still learning about the behavior of COVID-19 and how it spreads, there is useful information that may help alleviate some of the common concerns we have been hearing. So far, here is what we know from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

- COVID-19 is thought to be spread by close contact with infected individuals through respiratory droplets (i.e. coughing, sneezing).
- You are considered to have [low risk of exposure](#) and do not require special restrictions regarding COVID-19, if you have:
 - only briefly shared the same indoor environment as a person who is confirmed to have been infected with COVID-19;
 - walked by an infected individual; and/or
 - briefly been in the same room as an infected individual.
- Individuals who are symptomatic or who may have had close contact with a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 should immediately self-isolate and consult a medical professional.
- Currently, the CDC does not recommend testing, symptom monitoring, or other special management for a person exposed to another asymptomatic person who had a potential exposure to someone else exposed to COVID-19 (i.e. contacts of contacts).

As of now, the Department has no verified case of an employee with a confirmed COVID-19 infection. We are taking great steps to ensure employees have access to the best information from the CDC on all [steps they can take](#) to prevent this illness. The CDC and medical professionals continue to stress that basic hygiene practices are the most effective in staying healthy.

The best and most up-to-date resource to stay informed is the [CDC's COVID-19 website](#).

We are asking all Assistant Secretaries, Heads of Bureaus/Offices, regional leadership, and supervisors to be aware of public health orders within their jurisdictions and refer to all CDC guidance and subsequent Department guidance as they work to assess and mitigate risk in the workplace and continue operations. This includes the implementation of [OPM guidance](#) on telework and leave as schools and localities continue to respond to this pandemic.

It is important that we continue to work through issues based on our public health officials' wisdom rather than speculation or conjecture. America is at its best when we work together; this time will be no different. Let's work together to maintain best practices, use the excellent guidance on the CDC's website, and communicate issues early so we can ensure a healthy and effective work environment.