



2019 Novel Coronavirus Q&A for USAREUR U.S. Civilian Employees

This document will continue to be updated as information changes due to further U.S. and Foreign Government guidance or as the situation evolves.

Q1: What should employees do if they show symptoms of Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)?

A: Employees who show signs of fever, cough, or difficulty breathing are directed to 1) seek medical care right away. Before going to a doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about any recent travel and symptoms; 2) avoid contact with others; 3) inform supervisors and keep them abreast of any ongoing developments; 4) not travel while sick; 5) cover the mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not hands) when coughing or sneezing; and 6) wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading the virus to others.

Q2: If reporting to a health care professional, is there anywhere specific I should go?

A: Employees should report to their regular primary care provider unless otherwise directed or during an emergency. There is no requirement to utilize any particular health care system (i.e. military providers or doctors from the local economy). In most cases military hospitals will not be equipped to test for coronavirus and health care professionals will likely refer potential 2019-nCoV patients to local specialist for further testing.

Q3: Where can I get more information about 2019-nCoV?

A: The Army Public Health Center is providing up to date information on the nature and spread of the virus, local and global responses from countries, agencies, and communities and guidance for everyone from travelers to healthcare professionals. Information on the 2019 Novel Coronavirus can be found on their website at:

<https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/discond/diseases/Pages/2019-nCoVChina.aspx>

Q4: What do employees do if their command has closed their facility?

A: Employees should contact their supervisors as they may be required to report to an alternate duty location. Telework eligible employees will be required to telework during closures in accordance with their telework agreement. If no work is available and the employee is not telework eligible the employee may be granted Administrative Leave until the facility re-opens.

Q5: What precautions is Army taking?

A: The Army is taking a proactive approach to curtailing the coronavirus, including certain closures for on base facilities and limiting congregation for employees and their families. These precautionary measures are location specific and employees are encouraged to monitor email activity and check the official Army website specific to their post for any announcements.

Q6: What is the status of an employee who is unable to report to work due to being isolated or quarantined?

A: Employees may be excused from work without charge to leave or loss of pay when put under isolation or quarantine by a health authority. This excused period will last for the duration of the seclusion. Where an employee is telework eligible and not ill they are required to telework during their isolation barring exigent circumstances.

Q7: What is the status of an employee who is unable to report to work due to contracting 2019-nCoV?

A: Employees unable to report to work due to actual contraction of the 2019-nCoV will follow standard leave procedures for sick leave.

Q8: What can employees do if a family member contracts 2019-nCoV?

A: In addition to regular annual, sick, and advanced sick leave; employees may also invoke their right to unpaid Family Medical Leave to a maximum of 12 workweeks. An employee may substitute accrued annual and/or sick leave for unpaid leave under this provision.

Q9: Can a manager mandate that an employee be sent home/tested if they show symptoms of infection?

A: Employees are encouraged to exercise caution and report to their physician as soon as they suspect they might be infected. Managers may not order testing for employees showing symptoms but may send employees home if they reasonably believe the employee to be a direct threat to the health of other employees based upon the public health advice of local authorities.

Q10: Can employees telework even if they can report to duty normally?

A: Effective use of telework can help to mitigate the risk of transmission among employees and managers and employees are strongly encouraged to maintain a viable telework-ready workforce. This requires encouraging members to enter into telework agreements, communicating expectations, and practicing and testing equipment and procedures regularly well before an emergency situation occurs.

Q11: What else can managers and employees do to prevent the spread of 2019-nCoV? A:

Managers and employees are encouraged to practice “social distancing” by limiting the amount of direct contact employees have with each other and the public at large. Canceling or postponing social gatherings, conducting meetings electronically instead of in person, planning for liberal work leave policies, and encouraging good personal hygiene can all help to limit the amount of physical contact and the spread of infection.

Q12: What should employees and managers do if given instructions by local authorities? A:

Employees and managers are directed to follow the instructions of local health and safety authorities as applicable and to keep their supervisors up to date on any change in circumstances. Many host nations may impose heightened restrictions in response to public health emergencies, violations of which can result in civil and criminal penalties. The Army is working in close conjunction with local health authorities to tailor local actions in accordance with best practices.

Q13: What should supervisors do to prepare to implement social distancing strategies which increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others?

A: To mitigate community transmission and protect vulnerable populations, supervisors may be advised to implement social distancing strategies. Such strategies include the use of telework, teleconferences and flexible work schedules (e.g., schedules that provide for flexible work days and/or work hours). To prepare to implement such strategies, supervisors should review their continuity of operation plans. In addition, supervisors may want to encourage employees eligible to telework but who are not current telework program participants to participate.

Additional information on work schedules can be found at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/work-schedules/>.

Q14: What options are available if schools and child care facilities that an employee's children attend are closed but the employee is healthy and the workplace is open?

A: Employees in these circumstances are not eligible for weather and safety leave. DoD has authorized telework participants to telework when there are young children or persons requiring care and supervision in the case of an emergency. Employees under these circumstances must still account for work and non-work hours during their tour of duty and take appropriate leave (paid or unpaid) to account for time spent away from normal work-related duties (e.g., to care for a child or dependent). Employees who are not telework program participants may use annual leave or other paid time off, such as accrued compensatory time or credit hours.

Q15: What happens if an employee does not have sufficient amount of work to perform to cover the entire telework day during incidences of 2019n-CoV?

A: An employee must always have a sufficient amount of work to perform throughout the workday when he or she teleworks. An employee performing telework who does not have enough work must notify his or her supervisor and receive additional work or discuss leave options such as annual leave, advanced annual leave, other paid time off (e.g., earned compensatory time off, earned credit hours), or leave without pay.

Q16: Can a supervisor order an employee to telework during a COOP event?

A: Yes. The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 states that "each executive agency shall incorporate telework into the continuity of operations plan of that agency." Employees participating in an agency telework program can be leveraged during a COOP activation. If an agency COOP plan is in operation, that plan "shall supersede any telework policy," (see 5 U.S.C. 6504(d)(2)) and allow greater flexibility to expand telework to a larger segment of agency operations so that as many employees as possible are working during COOP activation.

Q17: Since the WHO declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic, can an agency order one or more employees to evacuate their worksite and work from home?

A: Yes. 5 CFR 550.409(a) allows an agency to order its employees to evacuate their regular worksites and work from home (or an alternative location mutually agreeable to the agency and the employee) during a pandemic health crisis.

Q18: During a pandemic health crisis, can an agency order an employee to work from home (or an alternative location mutually agreeable to the agency and the employee) if the employee does not have a telework agreement?

A: Yes. An agency may order an employee to work from home (or an alternative location mutually agreeable to the agency and the employee) without regard to whether the agency and the employee have a telework agreement in place at the time the order to

evacuate is issued. Agencies should consult with offices of human resources and general counsel to determine appropriate collective bargaining obligations where bargaining unit employees are impacted.

Q19: What type of work may an agency assign to an evacuated employee?

Under OPM regulations, an agency may assign any work considered necessary without regard to the employee's grade or title. However, an agency may not assign work to an employee unless the agency knows the employee has the necessary knowledge and skills to perform the assigned work.

Q20: What options are available for educational (student) travel when travel to a post is prohibited?

A: IAW DSSR 283.4, a) Reimbursement for any leg of educational travel may never exceed the cost of travel between the post and the school; b) As determined by the authorizing officer, when travel to post is prohibited or otherwise impractical, travel may be allowed to/from an alternate location to meet the employee/parent who resides at post. Restrictions on annual round trip eligibility and cost constructive reimbursement apply (see DSSR 283.1 and 283.4a, respectively).

Q21: What are the allowable expenses for educational (student) travel?

A: Actual expenses for the child's transportation, travel per diem within prescribed maximum rates when authorized by law, and expenses for transportation of unaccompanied personal baggage (UAB) may be included in payment or reimbursement for educational travel. Student transportation rates, if available, must be authorized. If student rates are not available, but other transportation is available at lower than first class fares, these lower rates must be authorized. Travel to or from an alternate location may be authorized if cost-constructed so as not to exceed the contract fares (if available) between school and post. (Section 283.4b). Should travel to an alternate destination cost more than the constructive Government costs between school and post, the employee must pay the difference. Allowable UAB shipments can also be made on a cost constructed basis to the alternate location, but any required customs clearance/fees are the employee's personal responsibility. No items such as household effects, automobiles, nor foodstuffs may be shipped to or from any school at Government expense. At the election of the employee, in lieu of the transportation of the child's UAB from the child's school, the costs incurred to store the baggage at or in the vicinity of the school during the child's annual trip between the school and the employee's duty station may be paid or reimbursed to the employee, except that the amount of the payment or reimbursement may not exceed the cost that the Government would incur to transport the unaccompanied personal baggage in connection with the trip.