

**INTERNAL MESSAGE IN ANTICIPATION OF
POSSIBLE LOCAL EMERGENCE OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

The following is being issued in conjunction with claims that the “coronavirus” (COVID-19) is now being reported in our region and in anticipation that it may spread to our City.

First, let it be known that the health of our employees and citizens is our priority. That stated, and in an effort to be proactive with respect to reports of a possible local outbreak or emergence of cases of COVID-19 (coronavirus), please note the following.

No employee with the City of Gulfport has at this point tested positive for coronavirus, nor are we aware of anyone at this point exhibiting symptoms consistent with this virus. The U. S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that symptoms for coronavirus may range from mild to severe and may appear 2-14 days after exposure and include fever (temp of 100.4° or higher), cough, and shortness of breath. More information about this virus, including ways to prevent the illness, can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html>.

What to do if you are sick (according to the CDC):

CALL AHEAD to a healthcare professional if you develop fever, cough or shortness of breath **AND** you have recently traveled to an area of ongoing spread **OR** you have been in close contact with a person **known (laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient)** to have COVID-19. Your healthcare professional will determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19. Stay home and self-isolate except to get medical care under such circumstances.

Just as in the case of the “flu,” if an employee is sick, they should seek medical attention and stay home and can use their sick leave options associated with their absence. If an employee has traveled to an area of ongoing spread of coronavirus or they have been in close contact with a person known (laboratory-confirmed) to have coronavirus, they should similarly seek medical attention and stay home and can also use sick leave with respect to their absence. The CDC and State Department of Health advise people in such situations to remain at home for 14 days. All notices associated with your absences and intended/anticipated absences relating to sick leave must be in compliance with existing Department and City policies and protocols. At a minimum, you are expected to provide proper notice to your supervisor of any absence due to illness or for which you will be seeking sick leave. Depending upon circumstances, such notice should be provided as soon as you are aware you will be out from work (prior to when you will be absent). One reason for this is that an employee’s absence from work creates a void and can adversely affect the adequate provision of governmental services. Supervisors need time to adjust scheduling and services in response to such absences.

If an employee tests positive for the virus, they will remain absent from work in accordance with treating physicians’ requirements that are intended to limit exposure to others. In such situations, employees can use sick leave with respect to their absences.

This notice will be updated and revised as the need arises, and this could be done at any time since new information concerning the virus and other related facts and effects seem to be changing and issued daily and often hourly.

In the meantime, please exercise good common sense concerning personal sanitization at your work place and during your daily routines. And also continue to monitor the City’s Human Resources web-linked page.

March 12, 2020

#####