

From: [Broadcast, DOC](#)
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Subject: Employee Update and Guidance for Those Returning from China
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Distribution: All DOC Employees (Except USPTO)

Employee Update and Guidance for Those Returning from China

The novel coronavirus, 2019-nCoV, first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China remains a concern. The risk of infection for Americans, however, remains low and all Federal agencies are doing their part to monitor this evolving situation and to keep the public, employees, and contractors informed.

Starting 2 Feb 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) instituted public health measures for arrivals to the United States from certain parts of China. This includes quarantine of some individuals during the 14-day incubation period after departure. [CDC Interim Guidance](#) has been issued and was used in the development of Department of Commerce guidance, and additional updates may be forthcoming. The Department's goal is to protect our employees and their families.

After careful consideration of the health risks, both actual and perceived, the Department has made the following additional recommendations to the CDC guidance:

All Department employees and contractors who have returned from China since 26 January and until this guidance is lifted should not report to a Federal facility or attend training until they have completed 14 days outside of China. This does NOT currently include travelers from Taiwan or Macau.

Employees with telework plans in place are expected to telework during their 14-day period of self-monitoring. Those without approved telework plans will be placed in a non-duty paid status (administrative leave). Contractors should follow the time and attendance guidance of their employers.

Although guidance has been issued by the CDC for travelers returning from China, the Department is encouraging those employees and contractors who have returned from China and are within the 14-day incubation period for the novel coronavirus to self-identify. This is to both ensure you have access to medical staff who can answer your questions regarding respiratory symptoms and follow up with any additional guidance that may be helpful regarding leave and telework.

To that end, each bureau will identify a single point of contact for tracking possible exposure. The Department of Commerce requests that you provide your bureau's POC with information about when and where you were in China.

Additional Guidance for Those Returning from China:

If you:

- **Departed China 14 or more days ago:** In accordance with CDC guidance, suspicion for 2019-nCoV infection ends. You should resume work and training activities without restrictions at an appropriate location.
- **Departed China prior to 25 January:** You may continue work and training activities as normal. Per CDC guidelines, you are beyond the incubation period for 2019-nCoV and you should not be excluded from any work or training.
- **Departed China from 25 January to Present:** You are still potentially in the incubation period for 2019-nCoV and are in Administrative Leave Status for 14 days after departing China. You should not come to work or training sites, however, you may work or continue training offsite if able. Children should NOT attend Department managed daycare facilities. You should additionally follow CDC recommendations and are encouraged register with the Department by notifying your bureau POC. You are NOT quarantined and may continue other activities during this period. After the 14-day period is complete you may resume regular work activities at your duty station.
- **Departed China Less than 14 Days Ago:** You are on CDC mandated quarantine for 14 days after leaving China. You should follow CDC recommendations and notify your bureau POC. After the 14-day period is complete you may resume regular work activities.

We ask you to call or email Paula Patrick if you have any symptoms that you are concerned about: ppatrick@doc.gov

[Definitions from CDC:](#)

Quarantine is the separation of a person or group of people reasonably believed to have been *exposed to a communicable disease but not yet symptomatic*, from others who have not been so exposed, to prevent the possible spread of the communicable disease.

Self-observation: People should remain alert for subjective fever, cough, or difficulty breathing. If they feel feverish or develop cough or difficulty breathing during the self-observation period, they should take their temperature, limit contact with others, and seek health advice to determine whether medical evaluation is needed.

Self-monitoring: People should monitor themselves for fever by taking their temperatures twice daily and remain alert for cough or difficulty breathing. Anyone on self-monitoring should be provided a plan for whom to contact if they develop fever, cough, or difficulty breathing during the self-monitoring period to determine whether medical evaluation is needed.

Active monitoring: State or local public health officials may assume responsibility for establishing regular communication with potentially exposed people to assess for the presence of fever, cough, or difficulty breathing. For people with high-risk exposures, CDC recommends this communication occurs at least once each day.

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