

CORONAVIRUS: A GUIDE FOR REALTOR® ASSOCIATIONS

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Why is NAR issuing this guidance?

In response to the growing concerns about COVID-19, commonly referred to as coronavirus, NAR is providing this guidance to help REALTOR® associations respond to the coronavirus's potential impact on the real estate industry. As of March 4, 2020, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued Level 3 Travel Warnings for all of China, South Korea, Italy, and Iran, and a Level 2 Travel Warning for Japan. However, the situation is rapidly evolving. **Be sure to refer to the CDC's website for up-to-date information about travel warnings (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>), as well as information about the coronavirus's current impact in the United States (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>). Daily updates about the coronavirus are also available from the World Health Organization (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>).**

What is Coronavirus?

The CDC is responding to an outbreak of a respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus outbreak. While the outbreak started in Wuhan, China, a growing number of cases have been identified in several other countries, including the United States.

What is the risk of exposure to coronavirus?

The CDC reports that most people in the United States do not have an immediate risk of exposure to the virus. However, the situation is rapidly evolving, and the CDC will update its risk assessment as needed. **For the CDC's latest updates, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>.**

What preventative measures may be taken to reduce the risk of contracting and spreading coronavirus?

The same preventative measures recommended to prevent influenza are also effective in reducing the risk of contracting or spreading coronavirus. These measures include:

- Staying home if you have a fever, cough, shortness of breath or any other cold or flu-like symptom.
- Washing your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoiding close contact with anyone who is sick.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough or sneeze into your sleeve.



How should associations address staff travel?

Consider whether employee business travel should be restricted, and whether such restrictions should apply to countries where the CDC has issued travel warnings or whether the restriction should cover all non-essential international and domestic business travel. Once these determinations are made, communicate the association's policy to staff, and appoint a contact to whom your staff can direct travel-related questions. Also, consider how to address staff's personal travel plans. For example, you may consider adopting a policy that requires all staff who have recently traveled to a country or location with reported outbreaks, or who have been in close contact with someone who has traveled to such a location, to work remotely for a specified period. Before returning to work, employees should confirm they are asymptomatic. If the employee shows symptoms of illness, consider extending the remote work period without penalty to the employee.

Should association events be cancelled?

Possibly. In deciding whether to cancel association events, be sure to consider all relevant factors, such as your geographic location, how other businesses and schools in your area are responding to the issue, the ease of rescheduling the event, and whether the event involves travel. Continue to monitor updates from the CDC, as well as your state and local health authorities for the most up-to-date additional information and guidance on holding events in your area.

What precautions should associations take in the workplace?

Consider alternative work arrangements for your employees, such as remote work, and holding virtual meetings to limit close contact between individuals. To prepare your staff, distribute your business continuity plan so staff is aware of the association's policies and practices, and is prepared in the event they are unable to report to work. It may be a good idea to do a trial run in which all staff work from home for a "test" day to ensure your association's plan and systems are functioning properly.

Has NAR provided guidance for REALTORS® on coronavirus and its impact on their business?

Yes. Please refer members to NAR's "[Coronavirus: A Guide for REALTORS®](#)".

What else should associations consider in handling coronavirus?

First, implement a mandatory "stay-home" policy for employees exhibiting any signs of illness, and decide whether your staff will need to use "sick days" for the time off or be allowed to work remotely. The CDC recommends that employers **not** require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to return to work, since doctors' offices will be very busy. In addition, consider allowing staff to stay home to care for sick family members, and communicate that policy in advance.

Second, provide staff with regular updates on how the Association is handling this issue. Make sure staff knows where to address any questions or concerns.

Finally, do not panic, stay informed, and use your best judgement. The situation is rapidly changing, so focus on putting policies and procedures in place to keep your employees informed, safe, and to avoid business disruption in the event the situation worsens.