

Dear Staff,

The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), in cooperation with our Office of Emergency Management and Sheriff's Office, are working closely with Tri-County Health to manage the County's response and communication efforts to citizens and employees. The number of cases within Arapahoe County remains at three, although the [number of cases statewide is increasing](#).

The [World Health Organization](#) has officially declared the spread of COVID-19 a pandemic, which means the outbreak of the disease is no longer isolated to one or several communities but rather spreads throughout the world. While guidance and information are constantly evolving, Arapahoe County's top priority is employee health and safety. With that in mind, the Board of County Commissioners has implemented some new policies and frequently asked questions for all employees to follow, building upon the initial guidance issued earlier this week.

Questions about the county's response or guidance can be submitted via the existing [online form](#). Responses will be posted to the COVID-19 page on the [intranet](#).

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) GUIDELINES

How can I keep myself safe?

If you get sick: stay home, at least six feet away from other people, and call your health care provider. Everyone should continue to wash their hands often, cover their cough with an elbow or tissue, then throw away the tissue and wash their hands immediately.

What if I feel sick?

Employees who have symptoms of a possible respiratory illness (fever, cough, symptoms of flu/COVID) need to go home. Such employees shall be encouraged to virtually connect with their medical provider, to determine next steps, including testing. NOTE: Some people infected with the virus have no symptoms. When the virus does cause symptoms, these can include low-grade fever, body aches, coughing, nasal congestion, runny nose, and sore throat. COVID-19 can also occasionally cause more severe symptoms such as high fever, severe cough, and shortness of breath, which often indicates pneumonia.

- Employees shall use their sick leave or work remotely (if possible) during their illness.
 - If employees exhaust or have insufficient sick leave, they can still get paid under sick leave (in arrears) during the pandemic. When the employee returns, they will continue to accrue sick time on a monthly basis, which for most employees will bring them back to the positive available hours.
 - Upon separation of employment, any remaining negative accruals will be paid back to the County from the final paycheck, up to the legal allowable amount, usually through vacation bank payout, when available.
- Employees who go home sick and have no evidence of COVID-19 may return to work once they have been free of fever for 24 hours.

Employees that are determined to have contracted COVID-19 can return to work only upon completion of isolation/quarantine protocol (two negative tests).

What if I test positive for the virus or may have come into contact with someone who has it?

Employees who are or may have been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19 shall be sent home, unless they have already been tested and it is clear they do not have COVID-19.

- Such employees will not return to work until the latter of:
 - The timeframe for contracting the illness has passed, based upon the probable date of exposure, *and* they do not have symptoms of the illness, or
 - Any mandatory quarantine or isolation period has passed.
- Employees who are sent home due to exposure to a person who has tested positive:
 - Shall be evaluated to determine if they can work from home.
 - If yes: will continue to work.
 - If no: will receive paid administrative leave.

Is the County doing anything to keep our buildings and work areas safe beyond the normal cleaning procedures?

- Cleaning crews will continue to focus on high-priority areas.
- Based on TCHD guidelines, public spaces and some high-traffic work areas (such as the DMV) may be sanitized.
 - Departments that want sanitization service should submit FIX ticket requests.
- If an employee is sent home because they are sick with a respiratory illness, or because of exposure to someone with COVID-19, then their work areas shall be sanitized pursuant to protocols from the CDC or TCHD.
- The County has also been proactive in placing handwashing signs and reminders in all facilities as well as posting information on COVID-19 in common areas. If you need additional materials in your work area, please contact Communication Services.

How long should someone who stays home wait before returning to work?

- If there's no evidence of COVID-19, employees can return to work after 24 hours of experiencing no fever.
- Employees who have tested positive or been exposed to COVID-19 and have been quarantined by TCHD or other health officials, can return to work upon completing the isolation/quarantine protocol, which includes two negative tests.
 - NOTE: Quarantine is a legal classification that could result in civil or criminal action against employees who return prior to quarantine expirations and expose others to the illness.

What is the County doing to accommodate vulnerable/high-risk populations (as defined by CDC)?

- Kaiser Permanente and county FMLA leave coordinators will send a notice to employees who Kaiser has identified as high risk. This will encourage them to discuss their work environment with their department director and/or office deputy, and with an HRBP.
 - The County will determine whether high-risk employees serve an essential function and/or whether these employees can:
 - Work from home
 - Complete an alternative assignment (e.g., front-facing vs. back office)
 - Take a temporary leave of absence (unpaid or paid via vacation or compensatory time).

What are the County's plans for holding or canceling events?

- Whether the County is staging or hosting an event, all attendees will be instructed to follow established guidelines. These include:
 - Use social distancing to whatever extent possible. Social distancing is defined as ways to increase physical distance between people, such as not shaking hands, keeping six feet of separation, or “attending” via platforms such as Microsoft® Teams or Cisco Jabber, if possible.
 - All 17-Mile Open Houses and Tours are canceled through April.
 - The County is working with partners to postpone or reschedule large-scale events at the Fairgrounds through April.
 - The County is postponing large internal events, meetings, training, and celebrations with more than about 20 attendees, including employee and volunteer appreciation gatherings, and meetings such as the Quarterly Communication Meeting.

What about public meetings?

- The County will avoid or postpone scheduling unnecessary hearings that might draw a large audience.
- For meetings that do take place, the County will post signs requesting that attendees practice social distancing and that sick persons not attend.

What is the status of business travel?

- No new travel will be booked until future notice.
- We strongly discourage intra/interstate travel until further notice, even if already planned. Please discuss with your supervisor and manager
- No international travel.
- No travel to locations that have implemented local government restrictions or been identified as hot spots. The list of such locations is updated daily.

Are there any special guidelines for front-facing employees?

- Front-facing work areas will receive extra intermittent cleaning.
- The County is encouraging residents access services online as much as possible.
- Employees and the County will encourage social distancing using signage and visual guides
- New communications efforts will ask sick customers to reschedule appointments to reduce spread of disease

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Where can I find trustworthy resources on COVID-19?

A: The Tri-County Health Department provides our official guidance on the disease, transmission and the epidemiological response to COVID-19. Check the TCHD [website](#) for official information. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment also offers [extensive resources](#) about the disease.

Q: What is the County doing to manage COVID-19?

A: There have been many activities occurring throughout the County for the official response to the COVID-19 epidemic. Here are a few notes:

- The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) opened the Emergency Operations Center, which is the clearinghouse for our official response to COVID. As well, the EOC formed a Joint Information Center (JIC) to help collect and disseminate information to key stakeholders. OEM staff work closely with the Sheriff's Office, elected officials and Tri-County Health.
- Departments have been updating their Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP), which help guide us if we have a significant reduction in workforce; that is, if we have a reduction in the number of employees on hand for critical operations.
- The E-Team met this week to develop policy recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). These include guidance for employees and managers.
- On Thursday, the BOCC adopted several measures and will continue to meet as our needs change. Staff have been briefed via email and ACWeekly and information will continue to be shared.

Q: What are your recommendations for our custodial staff?

A: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has offered specific recommendations for those cleaning areas that are visited by the general public. The CDC recommends that you:

- Wear disposable gloves for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.
- Use a gown or mask if the cleaning process has traditionally required those items. Otherwise those items are not necessary.
- Carefully remove gloves and gowns to avoid contamination to yourself and surrounding areas.
- Clean your hands often, especially immediately after removing your gloves.
- Report any tears in your gloves immediately to your supervisor.

Q: Are we providing extra cleaning of our public areas? Staff areas?

A: To the extent possible, our fantastic custodial crew is making every effort possible to focus on high priority areas: customer facing counters, restrooms, common areas, break rooms. Some departments are also providing additional cleaning of public spaces using their own staff. Sanitization work should be requested by completing a FIX ticket.

Q: I work with the public; specifically, I visit the public at their homes. How can I be assured I'm safe?

A: County staff and leadership are preparing guidelines for staff who meet with clients or the general public outside of our facilities. We're also adhering to state protocols and/or national best practices for employees that serve customers in a residential environment. Check with your particular work group for details and new protocols to follow when leaving a County facility. In many cases, as much as possible, you'll be urged to call ahead and ask some screening questions to help determine what steps and equipment you'll need to take or what alternative plans you can help provide.

Q: I'm feeling stressed about all of this coronavirus stuff. What can I do?

A: The County provides all employees with GuidanceResources, an EAP (Employee Assistance Program), at no cost to you. Through GuidanceResources, you can access short-term counseling services to help you handle your concerns constructively. You can find GuidanceResources online. Click on "Register" and use "ArapahoeEAP" as the Organization Web ID to set up your account. Or you can call 1-866-519-8360, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Q: Why aren't our offices closing like some other Counties are?

A: Every county is different. There are many factors to consider when choosing to close a facility or even an entire county. Our Board of County Commissioners and Sheriff are committed to maintaining service levels as much as possible while also looking out for the health of our staff. Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) help guide managers and directors in these decisions. These COOP plans are reviewed by the Office of Emergency Management, who then works with departments on implementation and communication to the public.

Thank you for your ongoing professionalism and dedication to serve. We will get through this together.