

# Preparing for a Pandemic



The World Health Organization defines a pandemic as “the worldwide spread of a new disease.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines it as “an epidemic that has spread over several countries or continents, usually affecting a large number of people.”

## Taking Precautions

Before a pandemic, encourage your employees to follow these tips from [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov)<sup>1</sup>:

- ▶ Store additional supplies of food and water
- ▶ Periodically check your regular prescription drugs to ensure you have a continuous supply in your home
- ▶ Have nonprescription drugs and health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins
- ▶ Get copies and maintain electronic versions of health records from doctors, hospitals, pharmacies and other sources, and store them
- ▶ Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick or what would be needed to care for them in your home

## Responding to a Pandemic

During a pandemic, follow these procedures to limit the spread of germs and prevent infection:

- ▶ Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- ▶ Stay at home when you are sick to protect others
- ▶ When coughing or sneezing, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue
- ▶ Wash your hands often (check out this resource from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html)<sup>2</sup>)
- ▶ Avoid touching your face
- ▶ Practice other good-health habits, such as getting plenty of sleep, staying physically active, managing stress, drinking plenty of fluids and eating nutritious food

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ready.gov/pandemic>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

## **Workplace Response Tips From the CDC:**

- ▶ Coordinate with state and local health officials so timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses
- ▶ Encourage sick employees to stay home until the criteria to discontinue isolation are met
- ▶ Remind employees to notify supervisors of any sick family members
- ▶ Visit the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) website for information on protecting workers from potential exposures
- ▶ Identify individuals who may be at a higher risk for serious illness; consider minimizing face-to-face contact for these employees
- ▶ If an employee is confirmed to have the disease, inform fellow employees of potential exposure but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- ▶ Ensure your sick leave policies are consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies
- ▶ Identify a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for disease-related issues and their impact at the workplace

## **Remote Servicing Plan**

In addition to the tips above, your business should establish a remote servicing plan in case you need to work remotely for a period of time. Establish your plan before you are required by the government to work remotely so that you are ready.

To get started, prepare a skeleton crew that you can utilize while your company is working remotely. A skeleton crew is the minimum number of people needed to keep a business or an organization operating; this is the group of people who would continue to work from your office while the rest of your workforce conducts business remotely.

Next, consider how your employees will communicate from home. Skype for Business, Zoom and BlueJeans are examples of applications you can utilize. Ensure the software you choose is installed on employees' work and/or personal computers and that they know how to use it.

When you have the logistics figured out, split up the teams within your company, and have each team test working from home on a certain day. This will allow you to identify any issues — and address them — ahead of time.

When you begin remote servicing, make sure employees take home all of their necessary belongings. This includes their computers, monitors, phones, mice, keyboards, headsets, notebooks and anything else essential to their role.

For more workplace tips, please explore this resource from the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html)<sup>3</sup>. Additional information can be found via the [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int/)<sup>4</sup> and [OSHA](https://www.osha.gov/)<sup>5</sup>. We also encourage you to [watch our presentation](https://usli.wistia.com/medias/e0royspu6d)<sup>6</sup> on how to respond to disasters and emergencies such as a pandemic, what processes USLI follows and recommended resources.

We hope you find this information helpful. Please be safe.

Thank you for your support and business.

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3 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

4 <https://www.who.int/>

5 <https://www.osha.gov/>

6 <https://usli.wistia.com/medias/e0royspu6d>