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SPECIAL BULLETIN 2020 – 04

March 11, 2020

OSHA Issues Guidance to Employers on Preventing Worker Exposure to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

On March 10, 2020, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued [Guidance](#) for employers to help prevent occupational exposures to the coronavirus. OSHA reminds employers that while no specific standard governs occupational exposure to the coronavirus, the Occupational Safety and Health Act's General Duty Clause, 29 U.S.C. § 654 (a)(1), requires employers to provide their employees with a workplace free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm.

The Guidance contains recommendations that, if followed, could limit coronavirus exposure in the workplace and help employers avoid complaints or other actions from employees who may inadvertently be exposed to COVID-19 in the workplace. The Guidance lists what OSHA believes to be effective protective measures (from most to least effective): engineering controls, administrative controls, safe work practices (a type of administrative control), and personal protective equipment (PPE).

The Guidance directs employers to “plan now for COVID-19” and urges employers who have not yet prepared for this event to take steps now to prepare themselves and educate their workers.

OSHA is advising employers to:

- Recommend employees take personal measures to prevent exposure, such as frequent hand washing.
- Assess the hazards to which workers may be exposed.
- Develop an infectious disease preparedness and response plan, and policies and procedures for prompt identification and isolation of sick employees.
- Select, implement, and ensure employees use controls to prevent exposure, including physical barriers to control the spread of the virus; social distancing; and appropriate PPE, hygiene, and cleaning supplies.

This is the third in a series of Special RIPA Bulletins designed to help its members address issues related to the coronavirus outbreak.