



TOWN OF SUFFIELD

March 30, 2020

Dear Town of Suffield Employees,

We continue to actively monitor the fast moving developments related to Coronavirus (COVID-19). As the situation continues to evolve, the need for communication becomes more important than ever. Our thoughts are with you and your loved ones as we all navigate through this crisis together.

To continue to minimize the spread of the COVID-19 we would like to remind you of guidelines for keeping yourself healthy and safe, along with updates as it relates to the New **Families First Coronavirus Response Act** and employee resources.

Educate yourself and know how Coronavirus spreads

- The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus
- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possible be inhaled into the lungs.

Continue practicing preventative measures everyday

- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth** with unwashed hands.
- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, use the inside of your elbow and throw used tissues in the trash
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Put distance between yourself and other people, practicing social distancing
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes, tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks and inside of vehicle touch points

What should I do if I become ill?

If you have a fever or cough, you might have COVID-19. Keep track of your symptoms. If you have any emergency warning sign (including trouble breathing) get medical attention right away.

- **Stay home**, most people with COVID-19 have mild illnesses and are able to recover at home without medical care. Do not leave your home, except to get medical care.
- If you or any **family member is ill, stay at home and call your supervisor.**
- **Stay in touch with your doctor**, call before you get medical care. Be sure to get care if you are having trouble breathing, or have any other emergency warning signs.
- **Separate yourself** from other people in your home, this is known as self-isolation.
- **Call ahead** before you visit your doctor
- Follow CDC guidelines

Respecting the confidentiality of a confirmed employee

If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, we will inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](#) of their potential exposure.

New Leave Provisions:

President Trump signed into law the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (the Act) which includes provisions to protect employees and assist employers in providing emergency paid sick leave, as well as paid family leave in the case of school closures, for families impacted by COVID-19. First responders (police, fire, ambulance, dispatch) may be excluded from accessing leaves under this provision; the Town will address any requests on a case by case basis.

Emergency Family and Medical Leave

The Act expands the existing Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which already applies to employees, by requiring employers to provide up to 12 weeks of job-protected FMLA leave for “a qualifying need related to a public health emergency.” The definition of “qualifying need” is limited to situations where an employee is unable to work due to the need to care for a minor child if the minor child’s “school or place of care has been closed, or the child care provider of such son or daughter is unavailable, due to a public health emergency.”

Employee Pay

The first 10 days of this emergency FMLA leave can be unpaid, but employers are required to pay employees for the remainder of the leave. The Act requires that the employee be paid for the number of hours the employee would otherwise be scheduled

to work at a rate of two-thirds of the employee's regular rate. The Act caps these payments to individual employees to no more than \$200 per day and \$10,000 in total. While an employee may elect to utilize his/her accrued vacation, sick, or other personal paid leave, an employee cannot be forced to use paid leave.

Emergency Paid Sick Leave

In addition to Emergency Family Leave, the Act also provides up to 80 hours of paid sick leave to an employee (of any tenure) who is unable to work (or telework) because:

- (1) the employee is subject to a federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;
- (2) the employee has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine because of COVID-19;
- (3) the employee is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and is seeking a medical diagnosis;
- (4) the employee is caring for an individual who is subject to, or advised to, quarantine or isolate;
- (5) the employee is caring for a son or daughter whose school or place of care is closed, or child care provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19 precautions; or
- (6) The employee is experiencing substantially similar conditions as specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor and Treasury.

Employee Pay

There are limits on the amount of paid leave available under this law. If paid sick leave is requested for any of the reasons outlined in paragraphs (1), (2) or (3) above, the eligible employee is entitled to the required compensation due to them for a regular work week, based on their current hourly rate of pay, up to a maximum of \$511 per day, or \$5,110 in the aggregate. For the reasons listed in paragraphs (4), (5) or (6) above, the eligible employee is entitled to the required compensation due to them for a regular work week based on their current hourly rate of pay, up to a maximum of \$200 per day, or \$2,000 in the aggregate.

Short term disability benefits

- Employees who are benefits eligible will be covered under Short Term Disability benefits (STD)
- All STD benefits are subject to terms and conditions of plan document and collective bargaining agreement
- STD benefits due to illness begin on day 8 of disability
- Claim forms can be obtained from the HR Department or town website
- Return completed forms to the HR Department

Vacation Pay

Due to the uncertainty regarding COVID-19 pandemic, we are allowing employees who are unable to take some of their vacation time off in this fiscal year to carry over unused time to the following fiscal year, but such time must be taken by September 30, 2020. Employees should continue to follow the established practice of requesting time off in accordance with their respective collective bargaining agreement.

Employee Resources

Additional resources are attached that may be helpful to you and your families during this challenging time. If you should have any questions or need any support, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Karin J. Ziembra

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Human Resources Director

CC: Kristen Sweet, Town Hall and Library Union Representative
Eric Brown, Police Union Representative
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Jeremy Powell, Dispatch Union Representative
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