



MEETING GUIDELINES: COVID-2019

Guidance for **organizers** holding meetings during the 2019/2020 coronavirus outbreak.

Last updated 18 Feb: For further advice contact the Occupational Safety and Health team of DHMOSH/DOS via osh@un.org.

BACKGROUND

Coronaviruses are a large family of respiratory viruses. Some cause less-severe disease, such as the common cold, and others more severe disease such Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Whilst the current outbreak of Covid-19 is still being investigated, it appears to be moderately infectious and able to be passed from human to human, primarily by droplet spread, as for other respiratory viruses. Whilst many cases will be of a mild illness, a small percentage progress to more severe illness and pneumonia. The current risk assessment for HQ New York is **LOW**. This is because the host country has put in place a range of screening and isolation measures that despite occasional cases, are likely to be very effective in limiting the outbreak from taking hold.

PREVENTION AND GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

At present influenza presents more risk to attendees than COVID-19 does. The same guidance for influenza or any of the respiratory viruses applies equally to COVID-19, as below:

1. Avoid being exposed to respiratory viruses:
 - Avoid close contact with people who are ill with fever, cough or respiratory symptoms.
 - Wash or sanitize your hands frequently – this is one of the most effective measures available.
 - Note there is no need for well people in low risk environments to wear a mask
2. Avoid spreading respiratory viruses if you are unwell
 - Stay at home or in your accommodation if you become unwell, develop a fever or other respiratory symptoms. Seek medical care but first always call ahead to your healthcare provider.
 - Maintain your distance from others – at least 1 m / 3 feet;
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing and use the nearest waste receptacle to dispose of the tissue after use. If you do not have a disposable tissue cough or sneeze into your elbow;
 - Wash or sanitize your hands frequently – after coughing, before preparing food or eating, after toilet use, after contact with ill persons, or during exposure to high traffic public areas.

HEALTHCARE FOR MEETING PARTICIPANTS

For respiratory illness: A participant who is unwell with fever, cough or other respiratory symptoms is most likely to have a more common illness – the common cold or even influenza – not COVID-19. They should be advised simply to seek care from a health care provider, of which there are many on the city. In the unlikely event that they have fever, cough or respiratory symptoms AND have been to a high-risk location or cared for someone with COVID-19, they may be considered a suspect COVID-19 case. Organizers (but not individual participants) should call the medical service on 212-963-7080 during business hours.



If a participant is unwell in the meeting room: Organizers should contact Security Operations Centre on 3-6666 in the first instance. Security Officers have been briefed on procedures, and the clinical staff of the HQ New York clinic have the appropriate protective equipment, procedures and training to manage ill participants and suspect cases, they will also advise on any necessary cleanup in the meeting room.

For Medical emergencies: Organizers should call 911 to call paramedics, and also call the Security Operations Centre on 3-6666 to ensure that emergency responders are granted access to the building. The Security Operations Centre will then mobilize a Secretariat medical emergency team.

For all other medical care: Organizers should advise participants who are unwell for any reason to either go to a local urgent care clinic, or for an emergency, to call 911. The HQ New York medical clinic is in the Secretariat Building, 5th floor, and is open for walk in consultations from 08h30 to 17h00 weekdays. It provides first aid, urgent care and advice on seeking care from New York City healthcare providers but does not provide prescriptions or replacements for prescriptions.

Contact- msdnurses@un.org

[HQ New York Clinic reception](#): 212-963-7080

After hours: For emergencies call the NYC emergency number 911, for general care seek out an urgent care clinic (e.g. CityMD, MinuteCare, Urgent care) the closest of which is at 37th and 3rd Ave 212 729 4668

SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR MEETINGS IN HQ NEW YORK

BEFORE THE MEETING

Organizers should

- Distribute the 'Advice for Meeting participants' package (including handwashing and cough etiquette advice).
- Seek the most current guidance or specific issues from the OSH section through osh@un.org.
- Develop a VTC capability – both for participants and presenters who can't attend in person.
- Speak with Facilities management regarding cleaning and the availability of hand sanitizer.

DURING THE MEETING

Organizers should

- Provide an introductory brief (see below).
- Provide numerous copies of the handwashing and cough etiquette brochures in the meeting room.
- Provide copies of the 'Advice for Meeting Participants'.
- Make sure they have a clear plan for what to do if participants become unwell – either in the meeting or out of hours.

Introductory brief for the Chair

We suggest something along the lines:

As you are aware the World Health Organization has declared the 2019 novel coronavirus outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Whilst the emphasis of this decision is on global measures to control the outbreak, individuals can contribute by following the advice to 'think global, act local'. I urge all attendees to follow the guidance provided by the Secretariat as hosts of this meeting, and which includes:



- *To strictly not attend the meeting if you are unwell, have a fever, cough or respiratory symptoms.*
- *To contact the medical service here in the Headquarters by telephone if you are unwell and have been to an 'at risk' location for coronavirus in the last 14 days; and*
- *To undertake regular preventive measures such as cough etiquette and regular handwashing as described in the brochures provided on the desks.*

These measures are for your safety, and to safeguard the wellbeing of us all.

FAQ'S FOR MEETING ORGANIZERS

A person with an important role or presentation to make is unwell. What should we do?

The presenter should not attend the meeting. Organizers should ensure there is a mechanism for a videoconference link to allow presenters to stay away but still deliver their information remotely.

A participant is coughing and unwell. What should we do?

The first step is for all other participants to keep their distance. If appropriate, encourage the person to avoid others and to seek advice from a healthcare provider.

A participant is coughing and unwell AND has recently been in a high risk country. What do we do?

This is unlikely given the host country screening, but if so and only if you believe there is a risk to participants, then contact the HQ New York medical service on 212-963-7080 and ask for advice. They will conduct a risk assessment to determine the next steps.

In the event someone should be 'quarantined', what does this mean?

This really means 3 key things in practice. The person should:

- Avoid contacts – stay in their accommodation and at least 1 m / 3 feet away from others.
- Minimize the spread of virus particles by covering coughs, cleaning surfaces and washing or sanitizing your hands regularly.
- Seek care or advice by phone first – *before* seeing a healthcare provider in person.

Will there be hand sanitizer available?

Generally yes. Organizers should specifically request Facilities Management to ensure hand sanitizer is available.

Should participants get or wear face masks?

No. There is no evidence that masks help well people in low risk environments, and we discourage their use in the Headquarters,. It may even increase spread of virus because we touch/adjust it so often. In line UN Medical Directors guidance we will not provide masks to well participants.

Is there other information available?

Yes. The information provided in this brief is enough to manage most concerns, however for further information we suggest only reputable and up to date sources. We suggest you review the 'Travel Advice' and 'Protect Yourself' sections at the World Health Organizations website, which is constantly updated to reflect the most recent guidance.

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>