CHECKPOINT
Part of the Check Safety First Group

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-NCOV)

UPDATE - 02/03/2020

Since the initial publication of this information bulletin the World Health Organisation has reassessed the risk associated with COVID-19 (https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---28-february-2020) and now consider it a high risk on a global scale. This is primarily due to the increased number of cases outside of China and the numbers of countries involved. At this point the spread of the infection is mainly through those that have travelled to an area of infection and not within communities, however to prevent further spread it is important to break the chains of infection by acting responsibly.

As this situation has a significant impact on the hotel and travel industry we are advising that all organisations in this sector make arrangements to protect themselves and their stakeholders from this risk. The previous information and advice listed below is still valid and we also recommend the following:

1. Develop a COVID-19 response team that is led by senior management and with representation at all levels of the organisation. This team should be focused on implementing proactive preventative measures (such as awareness and hygiene campaigns) and be ready to react should a potential case of COVID-19 be diagnosed within their area.

2. Create or update emergency procedures associated with the Prevention of Spread of Infection (POSI) to include the appropriate isolation, notification and remedial measures associated with COVID-19.

3. Ensure that staff are fully trained and follow appropriate decontamination measures such as those laid out in this advice from Public Health England: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings

4. Ensure that sufficient quantities of cleaning equipment and personal protective equipment is available to enact the decontamination procedures.

5. Develop an isolation strategy for the property / affected areas that includes the ability to maintain an appropriate level of service for guests without allowing for the spread of the infection.

6. Due to the potential for staff to become ill procedures should be developed for operation of the facility with a minimal staff level and where necessary reduce service availability (particularly those with higher chance of infection spread).

7. Ensure that high risk populations (the elderly and very young) within the property have the highest level of protection and if necessary consider the modification / suspension of services such as kids clubs if the local risk level increases or a suspected case is identified.

Whilst the possibility of a positive test for COVID-19 in some areas is low it is still advised to make suitable preparations. The benefit of making such arrangements is that it puts an organisation in a very strong position for dealing with other common illness outbreaks (e.g. Norovirus) and is good business practice. Being more prepared as an industry will reduce the perceived threat and help to ensure that customers continue to travel with as much confidence as possible under these circumstances.

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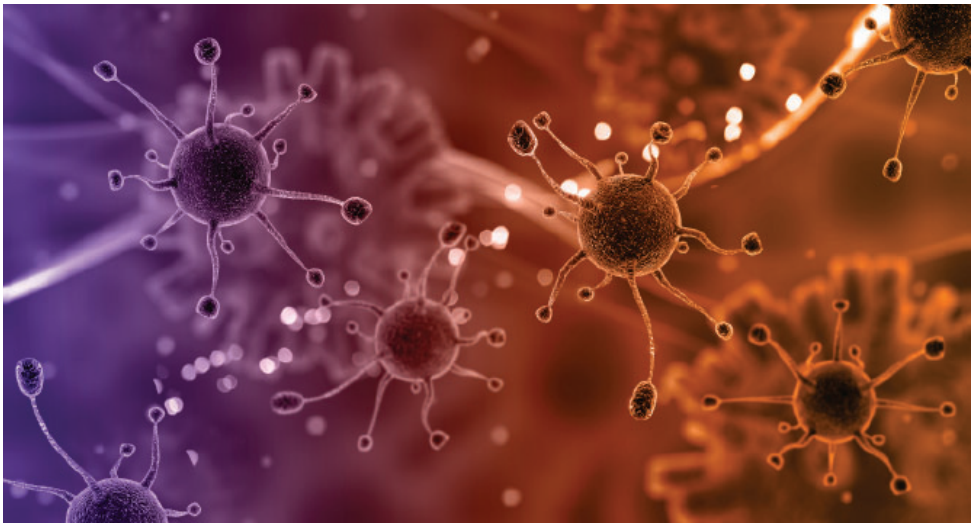
To assist the travel and tourism industry in addressing the uncertainty regarding the Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) that was initially detected within the Wuhan region of China, Checkpoint Solutions recommend the following information to all those in the travel and tourism sector. This information will be updated as the situation develops and please contact us if you have any specific queries.



Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) has been classified as a new virus that is genetically similar to the common cold and also the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) virus. This new virus has very similar symptoms and those infected will experience the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

The level of these symptoms can vary dramatically and range from mild to deadly. One of the main causes of death being the development of severe respiratory illness including pneumonia.

Detection is masked by the fact that these symptoms are common to many other similar illnesses and therefore control is required that addresses all those presenting these symptoms. One additional risk associated with transmission is that the incubation period can range from 2 days to up to 14 days and therefore allow people to travel without displaying any symptoms.

The original source of the virus has been linked to animals (including bats and cats) However, it is now believed that the person to person transmission is the main route of infection. As it is not fully understood how contagious this new virus is, it is necessary to treat it as being highly infectious.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SYMPTOMS AND TRANSMISSION

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The virus can be transmitted by person to person contact, with those infected spreading the virus through coughing, sneezing or spreading it through contact with the non-infected.

In addition food hygiene and safety is essential to prevent the spread of this and other issues.

The animal route of contact should not be ignored and advice should be given to avoid direct contact with wild / stray animals where symptoms may not be evident, but the animal is a route of transmission.

PRIORITY ADVICE FOR TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

1. Monitor WHO situation reports on the spread of reported cases of infection: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/ and ensure that you are aware of cases in your area. If localised cases reported consider increasing the level of hygiene and infection control programmes in place.

2. Ensure that all staff are aware of the symptoms of Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) and emphasise that they maintain good personal hygiene in work, but also whilst at home and within their community. Share information such as WHO advice for public: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public with particular emphasis on:

    a. Frequent washing of hands with soap and water. Thorough and effective handwashing should be emphasised and the use of alcohol-based sanitiser is also encouraged.

b. Ensure that those displaying any cold like symptoms cover their nose and mouth with a handkerchief when sneezing or coughing. Proper disposal of handkerchief should also be ensured to prevent contaminated material infecting others.

c. Avoid contact with eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.

d. Avoid direct contact (such as kissing, sharing food or utensils) with sick people.

e. Ensure that all contact surfaces are thoroughly cleaned with effective sanitisers. Particular emphasis should be placed on the cleaning of frequently touched areas such as door handles, switches, controls or public equipment / facilities.

f. Room cleaning protocols should be strictly adhered to, and where necessary implement emergency cleaning procedures that prevent the spread of virus from room to room.

3. Ensure that food hygiene practices are fully implemented and the risk associated with poor food handling, management and cooking practices are eliminated as much as possible.

4. Communicate with members of the public using your services / facilities in a manner that avoids panic but does emphasise the seriousness of maintaining good personal hygiene practices. Being able to confidently explain the risk associated with your area (using the situation reports above) and combine that with a proactive programme of information and hygiene practices should help to reduce fear and uncertainty.

5. Ensure that senior members of your team make themselves fully aware of the information available on Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) via the reference links included below will help to ensure that the actions taken are based on a full understanding of the risk.

USEFUL REFERENCES

1. WHO Information hub for Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV):
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

2. WHO Situation reports showing updates on spread of reported cases:
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/

3. WHO Advice to public that includes information leaflets and flyers:
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public

4. CDC Information hub for Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV):
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

5. CDC Frequently Asked Questions on Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV):
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html