

IRMA COVID Spike at IRMA Members

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Cc: IRMA Staff <IRMAStaff@irmarisk.org>

This email is being sent to the Delegates, Alternates, Claims Coordinators and Department Heads.

IRMA NEEDS YOUR HELP: COVID SPIKE

In the past 30 days, we have seen a spike in COVID-19 outbreaks at IRMA members. Within the past 2 weeks, we have received an influx of claims because of outbreaks in our member workplaces. Several IRMA members are submitting up to 15 claims at a time because of workplace outbreaks. We need your help now. Through our claim investigations, we are seeing an alarming disregard of the most basic guidelines, and we are not only disappointed, but we are concerned. Many employees are flagrantly disregarding state mandated preventative measures, infecting and spreading COVID-19 in ways that are totally preventable; and employers are not enforcing COVID policies. Claims data confirms the majority of outbreaks are happening in shared offices, workspaces, and living spaces; not while performing field work. To date, more than 60% of our claims are coming from Police Departments. The majority of the positive cases are occurring amongst coworkers while at their police stations, not while enforcing the law.

We are recommending that all IRMA members appoint a “COVID Czar” immediately in order to assist with not only conducting contact tracing, but also with prevention efforts. This person should be authorized to enforce existing IDPH guidelines such as wearing masks, social distancing and appropriate disinfection protocols across all departments. With the current surge, we recommend that employers require employees to wear face coverings anytime they are indoors. Under CDC and IDPH guidelines, workplaces should require face coverings be worn every time an employee enters a communal work area, a hallway, a shared use space, or any time they are performing work that does not allow for proper social distancing between individuals. Anything less could be considered in violation of the most basic employee rights – as outlined in the General Duty Clause, [Section 5\(a\)\(1\) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970](#), 29 USC 654(a)(1), which requires employers to furnish each worker “employment and a place of employment, which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm.” Yesterday, the CDC stated, [“A mask is not a substitute for social distancing and should still be worn in addition to staying at least 6 feet apart from others.”](#) Your COVID Czar should be empowered to issue discipline to employees who are not wearing face coverings, not social distancing and not disinfecting as required. Your COVID Czar should be charged with uniformly enforcing these requirements across all departments. Your COVID Czar should be required to conduct contact tracing every time an employee has symptoms, or tests positive. The time is now. Once COVID Czar is appointed, IRMA’s Risk Management Department can work directly with that individual to ensure current protocols are in place and can provide personalized assistance in managing adherence to workplace safety.

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