Coronavirus (COVID–19) Communication Plan

Introduction

An outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID–19) acute respiratory disease was first detected in Wuhan, China, in mid–December, 2019. The disease has spread rapidly, with reports of the disease now in the United States.

The disease has the potential to drive significant business and operational impact on organizations and their employees. It is critical for organization to establish clear lines of communications with their employees, as well as clients and third–party entities. The following checklist is provided to help organizations identify key communications best practices should a need arise.

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Contact your Aon account representative or consultant for support in developing your crisis response and in organizing, preparing and implementing your crisis communication plan. Aon crisis communication consultants are prepared to help you develop and implement your plan.

Preparing Communications Strategies Now

- **Create an internal communication plan** — a process for reaching employees through combinations of emails, intranet postings, flyers/posters, leader talking points, FAQs or a website situation room. The plan should identify simple, key messages, a reliable process and the vehicles for providing continual updates and collecting feedback from employees.

- **Create an external communication plan** — a process for reaching external stakeholders, customers, media, shareholders, suppliers, local community, health care providers, analysts, retirees, union representatives, etc.

What to Say to Employees

- **State the facts:** Connect employees to timely, accurate information from CDC, WHO and your State and County Health Departments. Provide clear instructions about what to do if employees suspect they have been exposed to COVID-19

- **Demystify the fear and outline the steps the organization is taking on behalf of its employees:** Communicate the facts from authoritative resources on how COVID-19 is spread and how to avoid infection. Clearly articulate and communicate preventive actions the organization is taking to avert or contain transmission of COVID-19 at work (focus on technology and techniques for employee safety, hygiene, biohazard disposal)

- **Promote safety steps that employees can take at work:** Use posters, memos, emails, intranet postings, supervisor talking points, FAQs, etc. to promote preventive actions employees can take (hygiene and avoidance) – see WHO and CDC recommendations.

- **Describe the impact on the organization:** Describe the potential impact of a outbreak on your operations, services, travel, supply chain, business, revenues, etc., so employees can plan accordingly.

- **Summarize company policies/positions:** Describe health plan coverage (preventive and treatment), attendance, paid time off, payroll continuation, travel, and group meetings.

- **Articulate work-from-home policies:** One of the most effective strategies for limiting the spread of contagion among employees is to reduce human-to-human contact. If your organization supports telecommuting practices, clearly articulate procedures and expectations that employees should follow.

- **Promote safe travel policies:** Consider the organization's stance on employee travel and restrictions. Promote alternatives to travel, such as web conferencing and phone meetings. If employees must travel, offer clear guidance on safety protocols, augmenting with guidance from CDC and WHO.

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