**Coronavirus Causes Worldwide Health Crisis**

The recent “2019 Novel Corona Virus” (aka 2019-nCoV or Coronavirus) outbreak has been the focal point of intense worldwide efforts to both control its spread and to develop a vaccine. Thought to originate in a market in the city of Wuhan, China, as of February 3, 2020, the virus has claimed the lives of 362 Chinese nationals and 17,386 infected people have been identified in over a dozen countries, including 17,238 in China alone. The United States now has eleven cases including three in New York City.

Although it has been confirmed that the virus spread originally from animals to humans, the *World Health Organization* (WHO) also has identified cases resulting from human to human contact. Chinese health officials also reported that one hospitalized patient infected 14 medical staff members.

American health organizations such as the *Centers for Disease Control* (CDC) have continually issued bulletins to update Americans as this rapidly changing situation evolves. The agency has also implemented countermeasures by deploying health-care workers to detect the virus by screening inbound passengers arriving from Wuhan at five major US airports (Los Angeles, Atlanta, New York (JFK), San Francisco, and Chicago (O’Hare).

Efforts to create a vaccine to combat the virus are proceeding at a feverish pace. The *National Institutes of Health* (NIH), in cooperation with *Moderna Therapeutics*, *Johnson & Johnson*, and *Inovio Pharmaceuticals* currently is coordinating American efforts to develop one. It is expected that human trials could begin in the next three months.

OSHA to date has not promulgated specific standards devoted to the Coronavirus. Instead, the agency created an informational page on its website (please see the following link): ( <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/novel_coronavirus/standards.html>) to inform and remind employers what they must do to help prevent the spread of communicable diseases among their employees by emphasizing three of its regulations, the *General Duty Clause* , *Personal Protective Equipment, and Record Keeping and Reporting*.

***General Duty Clause:*** This regulation requires employers to furnish “a place of employment which is free from recognized hazards that are causing or likely to cause the death or serious physical harm to … employees.” To that end, there are some readily achievable steps that employers can take to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus (and other contagious illnesses) within the workplace, such as providing hand sanitizer to employees, ensuring that surfaces and eating areas are disinfected regularly, and encouraging employees who are sick to stay home. Employers also may start to consider certain policy changes they may wish to implement in response to an employee becoming infected.

***Personal Protective Equipment****:* *OSHA requires that protective equipment, clothing, and barriers be* provided whenever it is necessary to prevent employees from being exposed to environmental hazards. Employers are required to assess the workplace, determine if hazards are present, and if so, select and have employees use protective equipment. Employers whose employees may encounter individuals infected with the Coronavirus, such as those in the healthcare and travel industries, should begin to consider what protective equipment would be necessary to protect its workforce.

***Recordkeeping and Reporting***: OSHA requires that certain employers keep a record of specific work-related illness and injuries (often referred to as the OSHA Form 300 log). While there is a regulatory exemption for recording instances of the standard cold and flu, OSHA has deemed the 2019 Novel Coronavirus a recordable illness when a worker is infected on the job. In addition, certain employers may be subject to reporting requirements under state and local law if they have a reasonable belief that a significant disease is present in the workplace