

## Joint Guidance on Employee Travel and Return to Work Issues for Local Government Employees

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Under the original Executive Order 2020-04, and as continued to the present, only non-essential out-of-state travel by municipal employees for official business purposes was suspended. At the current time, there is no prohibition on personal travel by municipal employees.

Nevertheless, certain travel by municipal employees increases the risk of contracting COVID-19. Because at-risk travel increases the chances of getting infected and spreading COVID-19, municipal employees should be informed that avoiding it is most likely the best way to protect themselves and fellow employees from getting sick. Employees should be informed that while at-risk travel is not prohibited it will be the subject of employer workplace health screening in accordance with public health guidelines.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-in-the-us.html>

Under the Universal Guidelines for all New Hampshire Employers and Employees, municipal employers should develop a process for screening employees reporting for work about the existence of COVID-19 symptoms, and other risk factors. The NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services has also issued a guidance document related to employee travel entitled New Hampshire COVID-19 General Travel and Quarantine Guidance, & Employer Screening and Exclusion Criteria. We recommend that employers review this document carefully because it contains important information.

Based on this guidance, when screening for COVID-19 symptoms, municipal employers should include in the daily screening process a question that asks whether the employee has returned from interstate travel outside of Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, or Rhode Island, international travel or travel on a cruise ship. If an employee responds that s/he has just returned from concerning interstate travel, international travel or travel on a cruise ship, DHHS's current recommendation is as follows:

- Employees reporting concerning travel with new or unexplained COVID-19 symptoms should isolate and get tested. A person with a positive test should see a medical provider and not return to work until medically cleared. A person with a negative test should self-quarantine for 14 days from the last date of travel unless they qualify for either the "essential travel" exemption or the "essential critical infrastructure employee" exemption. These exemptions, and a helpful assessment grid, are detailed in the Employer Screening and Exclusion Criteria linked above.
- Employees reporting concerning travel but who are asymptomatic should self-quarantine for 14 days from the last date of travel unless they qualify for the "essential travel" exemption or the "essential critical infrastructure employee" exemption. These exemptions, and a helpful assessment grid, are detailed in the Employer Screening and Exclusion Criteria linked above.
- If remote work is available, that is encouraged as an alternative to a temporary leave of absence.

Please note that these are general employer recommendations that may be superseded with appropriate guidelines and procedures implemented for specialized positions.

The State guidance is not mandatory for municipal employers but is strongly recommended by the State, NHMA and Primex<sup>3</sup>.

You may contact Primex<sup>3</sup> with any questions regarding application of the guidelines.

Whether interstate, cruise ship or international in nature, travel will continue to be a return to work risk factor that is subject to rapid change so appropriate consultation with the most current CDC and NH DHHS guidance is necessary.