



Practical steps for pandemic preparedness

Preparing for the new coronavirus outbreak

A novel strain of coronavirus (2019 n-CoV) was first identified in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, in December 2019. To date, thousands of infection cases have been confirmed within and outside of China.

Public authorities in China and internationally are taking decisive action to respond to this emerging public health threat: issuing travel advice, quarantining cities and convening an Emergency Committee of the World Health Organisation (WHO). On 30th January, the WHO declared a global emergency.

This escalating threat has led businesses to consider their own pandemic preparedness measures. It is important that organisations are proactive and prepared, while remaining pragmatic, as the situation continues to quickly evolve.



Early interventions

- **Assess organisational exposure.** If you have a large presence, extensive business travel to and from or key dependencies in China (e.g. supply, revenue generation or outsourcing activities) you will need to take more decisive action. You should understand your exposure to the threat to determine what constitutes a proportionate response.
- **Review your pandemic and crisis plans and playbooks.** Many organisations will have prepared pandemic plans for the outbreak of H1N1. The current outbreak is a reminder that ensuring plans are up-to-date and fit-for-purpose is essential to organisational resilience.
- **Prepare for a proportionate response.** If not already included in your pandemic plans, determine meaningful organisational activation and deactivation triggers and review continuity procedures to better understand your critical staff, functions and operational hubs.
- **Monitor your global travel policy.** You should proactively monitor latest travel guidance for all affected areas and review travel policies in response. Aligning with any third-party providers (e.g. Travel Management Companies) and the capability to rapidly communicate with business travellers are important considerations.



Communicate internally and externally

- **Communicate with your employees early and often.** Employees will rightly be concerned about the latest developments and will expect organisations to provide accurate, authoritative information. You can build pandemic awareness into business-as-usual internal communications: share information and infographics from authorities; educate business travellers on measures to take and symptoms to look out for; and encouraging functions and teams to review their pandemic arrangements.
- **Engage with your critical suppliers.** Businesses should have sight of their critical suppliers' pandemic preparedness measures and encourage ongoing dialogue on current-state readiness should the threat materialise.
- **Remain in contact with key stakeholders.** You may need to coordinate with local and national public authorities as part of regional preparedness activity. Communicating with other stakeholders, including investors and customers, will be key to maintaining stakeholder confidence.



Plan, monitor and review your response

- **Think ahead and scenario plan.** Use scenario planning to think ahead about how the different business disruptions will materialise and stress-test your playbooks. Consider extensive employee absences, shutdowns of geographies, supply chain disruptions.
- **Stay up to date with the latest advice and information.** International and national public health bodies will continue to provide information and advice. They will also publish latest statistics on suspected cases which will provide useful metrics to track the evolving threat. You will need to ensure that this is being built into organisational preparedness measures.
- **Keep plans, policies and procedures actively under review.** Organisational preparedness is an iterative process. Plans, policies and procedures should be adaptive and flexible to the emerging threat to ensure an organisation remains prepared and protects its people, reputation, strategy and bottom line.

Useful references

World Health Organisation
www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus

Information on the virus and practical advice for travellers and businesses, including infographics which can be printed on posters for the workplace.



International Crisis and Resilience contacts

If you would like to discuss your pandemic preparedness, please get in touch with your local Deloitte Crisis & Resilience contact:

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