



## 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, there have been over 80,000 confirmed cases of infection and over 2,800 fatalities.

Public authorities 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, Italy or any other major area defined as contagious (e.g. supply, revenue generation or outsourcing activities) you will need to take more decisive action. You should understand their exposure to the threat to determine what constitutes a proportionate response.
- **Review your pandemic and crisis plans.** The current outbreak is a reminder that ensuring plans are up-to-date and fit-for-purpose is essential to organisational resilience. However, if there is no plan already available, you should consider drafting minimum framework requirements related to crisis indicators, crisis classification, crisis management team configuration and communication channels.
- **Prepare for a proportionate response.** If not already included in your business continuity plans, start identifying 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. As some areas go quarantined, travel restrictions can be enforced by authorities or you can be confronted to travel limitations (hotel booking cancellations, shrinkage of availability).



## 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 office workers and business travellers on measures to take and symptoms to look out for, and the options for alternative work arrangements (teleworking), medical leave and quarantine conditions.
- **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.
- **Exploit the alternative work arrangements, like work from home policies and loan staff agreements.** It is highly important the critical staff should remain valid throughout the crisis, so ensuring their dispersion can help in reducing the propagation factor.
- **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, especially if there are premises for activating Force Majeure clauses.



## Monitor and review your response

- **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.
- **Be aware of any exceptional security incidents manifestation,** due to either low staff availability, increased use of staff owned-devices instead of company ones, extensive usage of remote access from un-protected networks or cloud resources. During these days normal work conditions are not the rule, and threats and vulnerabilities exploitations attempts can increase. Moreover, you should be able to address in an agile manner any triggers linked to insufficient IT and technical capabilities, that could require activating some contingent arrangements.

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