



COVID-19 5x5 series: Insights and actions

Remote investigations



Beyond the physical and emotional tolls of COVID-19, the disruptions to business and changes to public policy unfortunately present a greater risk for fraudulent or corrupt behavior, which may result in an increased need for investigations. Adding to the complexity of the investigative process are social distancing requirements that make physical interactions challenging for the foreseeable future. This summary provides insights and actions to help you productively continue or initiate investigations in the current environment. To learn more, check out our [Forensic Focus on COVID-19 series](#).

5 insights you should know

COVID-19 may cause an uptick in fraudulent or corrupt behavior—in part due to the rise in remote workers—including financial statement fraud, misappropriation of assets, and insider trading.

Many financial and compliance controls may be weakened in a remote working environment. But anonymous whistleblower protocols can be an effective tool to identify and detect fraud in virtual environments.

Although some types of investigations can be delayed, others may require immediate attention because they concern allegations of significant financial impropriety.

Every investigation requires proper planning. But beyond traditional scoping considerations, companies should think through limitations and nuances for conducting remote investigations.

COVID-19 shouldn't be a reason not to conduct an investigation. Instead, view it as an opportunity for fraud investigators to redefine how they conduct investigations, becoming more tech-enabled and relying more heavily on the insights data and analytics can provide.



5 actions to take now

To mitigate the risk of **insider threats**, organizations should re-assess their policies, procedures, and controls surrounding key accounting, finance, vendor set-up, and payroll and procurement control processes.

Organizations should reinforce their use of anonymous **whistleblower** reporting mechanisms, ensure they're operating effectively, and investigate as appropriate. By promoting whistleblower hotlines, this helps signal that organizations are serious about anti-fraud measures and are ready to take action.

As companies evaluate their business operations in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, they should continue to be active and assertive in their **compliance activities**. Prioritize the investigations portfolio and implement cost and process efficiencies available through remote, digital technologies.

Companies should be prepared to efficiently and effectively respond to potential instances of fraud should they arise—and address any potential impacts that COVID-19 may have on their response plans. For instance, consider the potential implications of notifying custodians about data collection from their devices.

Organizations should stress test and assess the viability of options for conducting remote investigations. They should also look to new processes and fraud methodologies to modernize compliance and **fraud investigation** functions to guard against risk exposure resulting from the current pandemic and any future vulnerabilities.

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