

FROM THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR  
COVID-19 FREQUENTLY ASKED CITY QUESTIONS

As of March 18, 2020

The following is a process for dealing with the COVID-19 (coronavirus) for those working for the City of Saint Peter. **First and most importantly, stay home if you are sick. Wash your hands on a regular basis. Cover all coughs. Use hand sanitizer and practice 6' social distancing.** The City will look to step up sanitizing work on desk tops, computer key pads, vehicles and other areas but we will need everyone's help in that effort.

Here are some questions that everyone seems to be asking:

**Will I lose my job/get laid off due to COVID-19?** No. Even if we close offices/buildings to the public, it is not our plan to lay anyone off. We will have plenty of work to do for all of our regular employees. You may, however, be asked to perform other duties.

**If I am out sick will I get paid?** Yes. You will first need to use your sick, comp and vacation time. We do allow folks, on a case by case basis to "go in the hole" for a maximum of 40 hours. While I have not previously allowed it for other than what I felt were catastrophic issues, this is a situation where I am willing to modify that practice. However, please note you will be required to make the request to go into a negative sick leave balance before you have exhausted all of your vacation, comp and sick leave. Only the City Administrator can approve this request and again, it must be made in writing to your Department Director in advance of going into a negative balance. The Department Director will then forward the request to the City Administrator's Office.

**What happens if we close offices to the public? Do I need to come to work?** Yes. The current plan is not to close offices unless recommended by the Department of Health or Nicollet County Public Health. But even if we close offices, they will just be closed to the public. There will still be work to do so I do not see any layoffs or sending folks home based on an office being closed. You may be asked to perform other duties temporarily if needed.

**If my boss is sick and I get appointed to do their work will I be compensated?** Yes. We have rules in Union contracts about how that works. If you are not in the union we will look at that on a case by case basis.

**If I am out for an extended period will my health insurance get terminated?** My initial plan is "no" it will not be terminated unless you fail to return to work, cannot demonstrate you were sick under our personnel policy rules or unless I take other action. FMLA rules will cover this in most instances. **Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)** – If you have depleted all accrued sick, comp, vacation and holiday leave, FMLA will provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid job protected leave. During the 12 unpaid weeks your health insurance benefits will continue. The City will continue to pay its portion of your medical insurance (\$0 for single coverage or \$252 for family). You, the employee, will be responsible for payment of the employee contribution amount during these 12 weeks. In addition to what you are provided under FMLA, the City, during this emergency, will cover your share of insurance premium costs. Once you are back at work, we

will make arrangements for you to pay your share of those costs back to the City. If for some reason you do not come back to work, you will still be required to pay those costs back.

**Will I be expected to respond to homes or other places we provide services and other public locations even if offices are closed?** Generally, yes. We will take this on a case by case and function by function basis and develop protocols if needed for this.

**Can I stay home if I am not sick and no one in my household is sick?** We will follow our current use of sick time policy. We will look at vacation requests on a case by case basis but operations do need to continue.

**Doctor on Demand.** Doctor on Demand is a benefit of our BCBS insurance coverage. All covered employees are eligible to use the service. Blue Cross has indicated that all fees associated with Doctor on Demand will be waived through April 14<sup>th</sup>. If you are in need of medical assistance during this time, Doctor on Demand may be a better option for many of us than trying to get into your regular medical provider. We recommend that everyone create a Doctor on Demand account now...before you need it. The link is available at <https://www.doctorondemand.com/bcbsmn>. To set up your account you will need your BlueCross ID card. You can set up an account now with a password, enter your family members, choose your pharmacy, etc. If you set up an account now – you won't have to do that when the time comes that you need it. Again, through April 14<sup>th</sup>, this service will be free of charge. Information on Doctor on Demand is available on the employee benefit hub.

**Will we still have public meetings?** We will follow Department of Health and County Health recommendations and use technology where appropriate to keep things moving and when able.

**What about meetings with sales persons and others on a smaller scale?** Even if the doors to City buildings become closed to the public, we may still need to meet with individuals. Our standard response will be, "We do want to meet with you, but our preference at this is to meet over the phone, over a program like Go To Meeting or Skype. If necessary we will meet you in person if we are able to maintain the social distancing recommendations of the Department of Health."

**Can I work from home?** We will review that on a case by case basis. Priorities will be:

- Needs of the City to maintain operations and function
- Practical value of allowing work from home by the City
- Does the employee have the ability at home to be able to do it? In most instances the City will not provide the electronics and/or hi-speed internet connection necessary to work from home.
- Likely includes limited scope and therefore limited hours and pay.