OSHA Clarifies COVID-19 Reporting Requirements

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has published two additional answers to its list of COVID-19 frequently asked questions (FAQs). The new answers clarify when employers must report COVID-19 in-patient hospitalizations and fatalities.

Reporting Hospitalizations

OSHA requires employers to report in-patient hospitalizations only if the hospitalization occurs within 24 hours of an exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace. As a result, employers must report COVID-19 hospitalizations only if the hospitalizations are:

- For in-patient treatment; and
- The result of a work-related case of COVID-19.

The report must be submitted **within 24 hours** of the time the employer determines there was an in-patient hospitalization caused by a COVID-19 case.

Hospitalization for diagnostic testing or observation only is not "in-patient" hospitalization.

Reporting Fatalities

OSHA requires employers to report fatalities that occur within 30 days of an exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace.

Employers must submit fatality reports **within eight hours** of learning that the fatality took place and that it was due to a work-related exposure.

Recording Requirements

These FAQs address only reporting requirements for COVID-19. Employers can review their COVID-19 recording requirements on OSHA's website.

Preventing Workplace Gossip During a Crisis

Gossip is a reality in many workplaces and, when not adequately addressed, can impact company culture and employee morale. During a crisis, such as the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, leaders are challenged with maintaining positive employee morale while addressing current realities.

Employees know that a crisis can cause disruption, and they want to be aware of both the current and future impact of a crisis. These impacts can include:

- What changes will take place at their workplace
- The potential for layoffs or furloughs, if any
- If and how long work-from-home measures will be in place
- Any potential impact on total rewards

Should leaders fail to address their concerns, gossip can begin to serve as a source for employees seeking up-to-date information.

Employer Takeaway

Effective communication can help address employee concerns, reducing the risk of employees spreading or listening to rumors and gossip. To mitigate gossip, tips for employers include:

- Address employee concerns transparently.
- Use communication channels that reach all employees.
- Equip managers with the knowledge to effectively discuss employee concerns.
- Set expectations for employees.
- Consider why gossip is occurring.

Every workplace is different, and employers should consider how communication initiatives will resonate with their employees. For more employee relations resources, contact Sullivan Benefits today.