

Mandatory stand-up talk

Jan. 20, 2004

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

Managers must deliver this stand-up talk on Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and associated protective measures to all available employees, beginning immediately and repeating as necessary until all employees have received this message.

SARS is back in the news. Last year's SARS outbreak stayed mainly outside the U.S., but another outbreak is possible this winter, and this time, it could affect us. This safety talk provides some basic facts about SARS, how you can protect yourself and what the Postal Service will be doing to protect you.

What is SARS?

SARS is a type of upper respiratory illness (URI), caused by a virus. Health authorities are concerned about SARS because it spreads very easily and produces severe symptoms. SARS was first reported in Asia in 2003.

How dangerous is SARS?

SARS is a *potentially* deadly disease, **but it can be effectively managed** through good personal hygiene, basic infection control measures and medical treatment. In 2003, more than 8,000 cases were reported worldwide, with just over 800 deaths. **In the U.S., we had 192 cases, but no one died.**

What are the symptoms of SARS?

SARS usually begins with a fever above 100.4 F. Besides the fever, an infected person may have any or all of the following: chills, headaches, body aches, diarrhea, mild respiratory symptoms and general discomfort. Within two to seven days a dry, nonproductive cough develops, and can progress into pneumonia.

How does SARS spread?

SARS spreads like other Upper Respiratory Infections or URIs — by person-to-person contact, on respiratory droplets from coughs or sneezes, or by touching contaminated objects and surfaces. Infected persons can spread SARS only while they have symptoms.

What is the Risk of Getting SARS at Work?

Only a few occupations, like hospital workers and airline crews, have an increased chance of contracting SARS at work. Postal employees and workers in most other industries have a relatively low chance of contracting SARS at work.

How Can I Protect Myself and Others From SARS?

First, optimize your current health status with a flu shot, a healthy lifestyle and by properly managing any underlying medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes or asthma.

Second, practice good personal hygiene by washing your hands often, not touching or rubbing your mouth, nose or eyes, and covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.

Should I wear PPE?

Personal protective equipment like FFPs and nitrile gloves are not recommended at this time for additional protection against SARS. **Optimizing your health status and practicing good personal hygiene are your best means of prevention.** If a SARS outbreak actually occurs, the Postal Service will solicit and follow CDC guidance and expertise regarding PPE and other protective measures.

Can I come to work if I have SARS-like symptoms?

So far this winter we have had no cases of SARS in the U.S., so there is little chance of getting SARS at this time. In the event of a SARS outbreak, USPS will follow CDC guidance on when employees should stay home, versus reporting to work. If a SARS outbreak occurs and you have symptoms (especially fever) CDC recommends you seek medical advice before going to work, school or other public places.

Will my facility close if a SARS outbreak occurs?

The Postal Service will follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and state and local health departments regarding facility closures, quarantines, and other public health measures. These severe measures will only be used if a serious outbreak occurs. Postal authorities are coordinating with these agencies daily and will pass new information along to you as it becomes available. The Postal Service has a contingency plan or CONPLAN for responding to a SARS outbreak.