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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES NEW PROTECTIVE MEASURES TO ENSURE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF ESSENTIAL CITY WORKERS AMID COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Latest measures to provide cloth masks to all essential employees and create COVID Safety Officers to ensure social distancing; Hotel Julian to provide isolation for City employees with COVID-19

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today announced new protective measures to further ensure the health and safety of the City's essential workforce who continue to help maintain the continuity of government and essential city services amid the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak. As part of the latest citywide efforts to prevent the spread of the disease, all essential City employees will be provided with and trained on the proper use of cloth masks. Additionally, new COVID Safety Officers will be designated to further ensure social distancing techniques are practiced across departments. To further protect employees with COVID-19, the City is also announcing a new partnership with Hotel Julian to provide City workers with a safe space to isolate themselves if they cannot be at home.

"The resiliency and dedication of Chicago's public servants who continue to serve our residents and provide vital services is a testament to the character of this city during a time of unprecedented crisis," said Mayor Lightfoot. "We have an obligation to ensure the health and safety of our workers, and with these new measures, we are continuing to provide our employees with the vital resources and supports they need to stay protected from this terrible disease."

Beginning this week, cloth masks will be provided to essential City workers to wear in their workspaces. This latest measure builds on guidance from public health experts at the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which recommend individuals wear cloth face coverings in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. While the cloth masks are optional, they will provide city employees with tools they need while reserving critical supplies such as N-95 respirators for healthcare workers and first responders.

"Since even before COVID-19 arrived in our city, our north star has been ensuring all measures taken are rooted in science and data. By building on the social distancing efforts that appear to be flattening the curve and stem the spread of COVID-19, we can outrun this crisis and save more lives in the process," said Dr. Allison Arwady, CDPH Commissioner. "From sanitation workers to public health workers, City employees from every department continue to keep Chicagoans protected and informed throughout this unprecedented time."



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To build on the strict public health guidelines established across departments, the City will roll out a Social Distancing Plan that describes how departments should enforce distancing and require each department to identify a COVID Safety Officer to ensure social distancing measures are followed. Safety Officers will work with offices, facilities, and field crews to identify any situations where social distancing cannot be followed and provide alternative protective measures that may be taken in lieu of social distancing.

Acting as the main point of contact for COVID-safety issues, each Officer will be responsible for the overall management and implementation of facility-specific social distancing plans. As part of that effort, the Officers will prepare and distribute up-to-date education and training materials for essential employees on how they can take steps to ensure social distancing in their workspace and redirect individuals not following the mandatory public health guidance.

In addition to these efforts, the City will establish a process whereby City employees who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 but who cannot safely isolate themselves at home while they recover can gain access to the Hotel Julian – one of the City’s quarantine and isolation hotels. Beginning next week, this benefit will permit City employees to safely recover and return as quickly as possible to their families and workforce without endangering their families or others with whom they live.

Earlier this month, the City announced agreements with Hotel Essex to provide first responders a place to rest without having to return home and risk the health of their families during the crisis. Additionally, the City has partnered with London House and the Godfrey Hotel to provide healthcare workers a place to sleep, shower or eat – while providing peace of mind and place for workers to go without risking exposure to their families during the crisis.

This is the latest in a series of preventative and precautionary actions taken by the administration to prevent further spread of COVID-19 while maintaining essential city services. As COVID-19 continued to spread across Chicago, each City department and agency reviewed Continuity of Operations Plans to ensure core City functions continued to be provided to residents while also implementing new telework policies and healthcare services to ensure the safety of their own staff.

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