Washington Governor - Jay Inslee

Inslee announces workers' compensation coverage to include quarantined health workers/first responders

March 5, 2020

Story

Today, Gov. Jay Inslee and Joel Sacks, director of the Washington Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) announced that the state is taking steps to ensure workers' compensation protections for health care workers and first responders who are on the front lines of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak.

L&I is immediately changing its policy around workers' compensation coverage for health care workers and first responders who are quarantined by a physician or public health officer.

Under the clarified policy, L&I will provide benefits to these workers during the time they're quarantined after being exposed to COVID-19 on the job.

"These health care workers and first responders are protecting our communities," said Inslee. "They need to know that we have their backs. This is the right thing to do."

Workers' compensation coverage can include medical testing, cover treatment expenses if a worker becomes ill or injured and provide time-loss payments for those who cannot work if they are sick or quarantined.

"Health care workers and first responders are playing a key role in the COVID-19 response," said L&I Director Joel Sacks. "We need them to go to work knowing they will be taken care of if they are exposed to this new coronavirus and have to be quarantined or get sick."

While L&I is taking this step to bolster coverage for certain types of workers, the agency is also encouraging employers to continue to pay workers who are quarantined after being exposed. Time loss is partial payment and does not replace a worker's entire income. Quarantined workers who continue to be paid by their employer may not need to file a workers' compensation claim.

Current L&I rules already provide for workers' compensation coverage if health care providers and first responders become sick in connection with their job duties.

Workers can file a workers' compensation claim up to two years after being exposed to a disease at work. The expanded coverage takes effect immediately and covers eligible workers already under quarantine.

Media Contact

Public and constituent inquiries: 360.902.4111

Press inquiries: 360.902.4136

Tim Church
Department of Labor & Industries Communications Office
360.902.5673