



Coronavirus: What You Can Do

With coronavirus in the news and the advent of cases in the U.S., people are gearing up to learn more about how they can prevent it.

The U.S. government says the virus, also known as COVID-19, is not spreading through American communities. As of Monday, there were 14 confirmed cases in the U.S., but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says If people are experiencing flu-like symptoms it is probably not coronavirus. People in Oregon and across the country are working to understand the virus and limit its spread.

In the meantime, here is what the CDC says you and your employees should do to stay safe:

- Wash your hands – using soap and water -- for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick and avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and throw that tissue into a trash can.
- Clean and disinfect objects you touch frequently.
- Get a flu vaccine if you haven't gotten one already.
- If you are [experiencing symptoms](#), contact your healthcare provider.
- Get your information from trusted sources. The CDC has a [website specifically for COVID-19](#), and the [Oregon Health Authority](#) is giving weekly updates.

The CDC also has resources for employers, including guidance on how to respond to concerns about COVID-19. [Click here](#) to learn more.



The Oregon Health Authority is releasing weekly notices about COVID-19. As of Tuesday, Oregon has zero cases. The OHA is monitoring 76 people because they had close contact with someone who had traveled to China. Doctors have cleared 178 people.

Though no one in Oregon has the virus, COVID-19 is [affecting markets globally and Oregon's](#)

[economy locally](#). Oregon state economist Josh Lehner [told Willamette Week](#) that actions taken in China to try and mitigate the outbreak are affecting Oregon companies. In China, factories are closed and workers are staying home. That means Oregon companies can't export goods there. In 2018, Oregon exported [\\$4.2 billion worth of goods](#) to China, making up 21% of the state's total goods exports.

As we learn more, we will keep you in the loop. But for now, the best thing to do is to make sure you and your employees are frequently washing their hands, check you got your flu shot and stay home if you or your employees are ill.

OBI Member Survey

Now is your chance to be entered to win a **\$500 Amazon gift card!** If you haven't already done it, please fill out the OBI annual survey. This is our way of finding out how to better serve you, our members. Please click the button below and complete the 10-minute survey by March 20. Thank you!

Membership
Survey

In the Legislature

This week Republicans walked out to deny a quorum and block a vote on the controversial cap-and-trade bill, [SB 1530](#). [Senate Republicans left on Monday](#) after the Ways and Means Committee sent SB 1530 to the floor for a vote, and [House Republicans left on Tuesday](#) after new carbon bills were filed in the House Rules Committee. For now, meetings and hearings are still taking place, but bills are unable to progress with both houses of the Legislature without a quorum. It is unclear whether the Republicans will return to the Capitol.

Lawmakers are under a strict time limit in the short, 35-day session. All business must be complete by the constitutionally mandated deadline of midnight on March 8, so the walkout could mean the demise of several still unfinished bills, including many being tracked by OBI.

Before the walkout on Monday, the House Business and Labor Committee voted [SB 1527](#) on to the full House with a do-pass recommendation. The bill makes changes to noncompete agreements. OBI and others negotiated making the agreements enforceable for 12 months (as opposed to six as originally proposed) and retained the basic structures of existing noncompete agreement law. Other stipulations of the bill include a requirement that noncompete agreements can only be asked of employees earning at least \$97,311 annually. Additionally, the bill requires employers to provide certain notices to employees when entering into a noncompete agreement and when the employee leaves the position.

[SB 1525](#) was scheduled for a vote in the House today, but is now in limbo due to the lack of a quorum in the House. This bill reflects the compromise agreement that emerged from the prevailing wage workgroup that met 15 times over the fall of 2019 before the session. It requires enhanced notice and data collection for construction projects in the enterprise zone, rural long-term enterprise zone and strategic investment programs but does not subject those construction projects to prevailing wage laws. OBI negotiated several changes to the bill prior to the start of session.



Regulatory Updates

Paid Family and Medical Leave

The Oregon Employment Department has created a committee to advise the department on implementing the new paid family and medical leave law. Paloma Sparks is on the committee, as are representatives of both employee and employer interests. The state has a website for the new program; check it out by [clicking here](#). The department has issued a [Request for Information](#) to gather information about options for a third-party administrator as provided in the bill.

Rulemaking

OBI continues to engage with the Workers' Compensation Division and Oregon OSHA to advocate for our members on a wide variety of issues. We have testified and submitted written comments relaying our concerns about dramatic changes in attorney fee rules. We have also engaged with OSHA on questions of when an employer is likely to be aware of hazardous conditions or activities in the workplace.

Oregon Employment Department Analysis: Job Vacancies in 2019

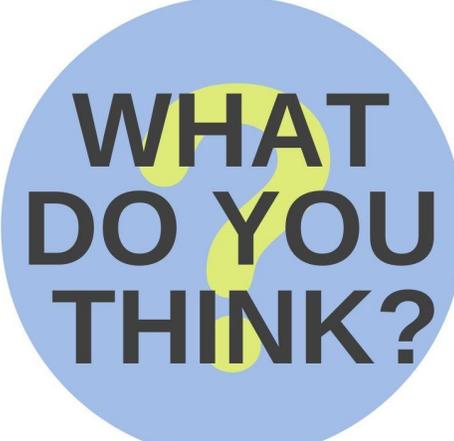
Oregon employers are aware of the tight labor market in our state, a result of low unemployment and a need for qualified applicants. The Oregon Employment Department [released an analysis](#) of job vacancies in 2019, which noted employers faced difficulty in filling six out of every 10 available jobs last year.

The analysis said employers reported 57,000 job openings at any given time in 2019. Here are a few more statistics from the report:

- Health care and social assistance reported the most job vacancies at 11,200
- Leisure and hospitality was second, at 7,700
- Third was retail trade, at 7,400
- 93% of job openings were for permanent positions
- 77% of job vacancies were full-time in all industries
- In manufacturing, 97% of job vacancies were full-time
- In construction and information, 92% were full-time

In looking at the labor shortage, the analysis said, “with low unemployment rates, it also makes sense that employers most commonly cited a lack of applicants as the primary reason for difficulty filling vacancies. At any given time in 2019, Oregon’s private employers had 6,600 job openings with too few applicants, or none at all.” It also listed lack of qualified candidates and working conditions like shift work or hard physical labor.

Read the full analysis by [clicking here](#).



Were you able to find the workers you needed to fill job vacancies in 2019?

Yes

Select

No

Select

Last month, we shared the U.S. Department of Labor's new final rule regarding what counts towards an employee's regular rate of pay for overtime purposes. Not to be outdone, several other agencies have made their own announcements. Below is a summary of recent changes and links to resources for additional information:



New Form W-4

The IRS redesigned Form W-4 for the 2020 tax year. The updated form may be downloaded [here](#). All new employees first paid on or after January 1, 2020, must use the redesigned form. Existing employees who previously completed older versions of Form W-4 are not required to furnish new ones unless they elect to adjust their withholdings.

The redesigned form looks very different from previous versions. For example, withholding allowances are no longer used. The updated form comes with three pages of instructions on how to properly complete it. Employers should provide these instructions when presenting the form and may also direct employees who have questions to the IRS' [FAQ page](#).

New Form I-9

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has released a new Form I-9 that must be used no later than May 1, 2020. Early adopters may choose to use the new form as early as January 31, 2020. The updated form is available in fillable and unfillable formats and may be downloaded [here](#). The new Form I-9 and its instructions are available in both English and Spanish, but Oregon employers must complete the English version to comply with the verification and retention requirements of the law. The Spanish version may be used as a translation guide for Spanish-speaking employees.

For more information about Form I-9, please visit the [Q&A section of USCIS' Handbook for Employers](#).

New H-1B Electronic Registration Process

USCIS also recently announced the implementation of a new electronic registration process for employers seeking to file H-1B cap-subject petitions. The new process is designed to streamline H-1B processing and reduce filing costs. Employers who wish to file H-1B cap-subject petitions for the FY 2021 cap must first [create a USCIS online account](#). The account creation steps are intuitive, and the process will generally take less than 10 minutes to complete. Employers may begin establishing their "registrant" accounts beginning February 24, 2020. The initial registration period for H-1B registrations opens at noon on March 1, 2020 and runs through noon on March 20, 2020. Employers (or their representatives) are required to pay a non-refundable \$10 H-1B registration fee for each beneficiary before they may submit a registration for that beneficiary. USCIS will select registrations for continuation in the H-1B petition process after the registration period closes. They will notify employers (or their representatives) of their selection by March 31, 2020. Registrants who are not selected may not properly file an H-1B cap-subject petition for FY 2021.

Please see USCIS's website for more information about the new [H-1B electronic registration process](#). A step-by-step tutorial on how to create a USCIS online account and submit an H-1B registration is also available [here](#).

This article is provided for educational purposes only, does not constitute legal advice and does not create an attorney-client relationship.

Heidi Mason is contributing this column for the newsletter as part of Innova Legal Advisors partnership with OBI through the [LegalPlus Program](#). If you or your company would like to contribute content to OBI newsletters, please let us know by emailing communications@oregonbusinessindustry.com.



In the News

[Education Produces a Big Wage Boost – but Race and Gender can Matter as Much, or More](#)

[Oregon Inbound Migration Rate is Among the Nation's Fastest](#)



Upcoming Events

Webinar: Employee Performance Documentation

As a member of OBI, you get FREE access to this employment webinar from hrsimple.com.

- What: Employee Performance Documentation Webinar
- When: 10 a.m., Thursday, Feb 27
- [Register here](#)

OBI has teamed up with hrsimple.com to bring this webinar series to help you effectively manage your most important resource – your employees.

This month's topic focuses on employee performance documentation. Emily Pontius, an employment law attorney with Fredrikson & Byron, P.A., will discuss how to conduct thorough and timely documentation of performance issues and discipline – which is key to maintaining a high performing workforce. She will cover the rules and requirements of documentation, strategies for effective documentation, examples of effective and ineffective documentation and ways to avoid the legal pitfalls that are associated with these tasks.

2020 Oregon Talent Summit

When: 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday, March 9

Where: Oregon Convention Center, Portland

The Talent Summit brings together experts and partners from across the workforce and education landscape to share industry-based information and data related to the talent needs of Oregon's employers and our current and future workers. Organizers invite statewide partners and stakeholders from businesses, workforce and talent development organizations, K-12 and postsecondary education, economic development, community-based organizations, local and state government to register and attend.

Learn more about the event by [clicking here](#) or register by [clicking here](#).



Resources

Wholesale Fuel Pricing

OBI has partnered with MCP Petroleum to drive down OBI

members' fuel cost. OBI is leveraging the collective purchasing power of our membership to get wholesale fuel pricing for our members. In addition to fuel savings, OBI members will have access to a comprehensive fuel management system that will reduce slippage, save valuable employee time and provide accountability and oversight of your company's fuel consumption.

OBI members who use 900 gallons of fuel annually through their company are eligible for this program. Please contact [Nancy Marquay](#) for more information.



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LegalPlus Program



Did you know, by being an OBI member you can get free legal advice? OBI and Innova Legal Advisors provides members 15 minutes of free legal consultation each month through the LegalPlus program. Check it out by [clicking here](#). Or contact Bob Blackmore at Innova Legal Advisors: Phone: 503-479-7175; email: Bob.Blackmore@innovalegaladvisors.com



OBI HealthChoice

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