

SacRT Employee FAQs

Over the past two weeks, an abundance of information has been shared with you regarding the Coronavirus (COVID 19) outbreak and what you can do to protect yourself against contagion. The following frequently asked questions will focus on decisions that directly affect you as an employee at SacRT.

How should I decide whether I should call in sick?

Health agencies are recommending that employees “who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and must stay home if they are sick.”

Must I have medical proof to take sick leave?

Normally, “administratively acceptable evidence” of sickness — typically a doctor’s note — is required for sick leave for three days or more; however, in response to this critical situation, SacRT will accept an employee’s self-certification as to the reason for his or her absence as administratively acceptable evidence. Supervisors should use their best judgment, absent a clear reason to question the request for absence, to permit employees to take leave and use the accrued sick leave.

What happens if I go to work with no symptoms but start feeling symptoms during the day?

The same guidance states that “employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately.”

What if I’m age 65 or older, or have a chronic illness (i.e., asthma, diabetes, heart or lung disease)?

Stopping short of a state order, Governor Gavin Newsom on March 15, 2020, called for the home isolation of all seniors (age 65 and older) and those who are health compromised in the state of California. SacRT urges you to follow that recommendation if you fall into one of the listed categories and seek to avoid potential exposure. If you fall into this category, you may be eligible for State Disability Insurance (SDI) or Unemployment Insurance (UI). See section below for details.

What is SacRT doing to help provide a safe environment for employees?

SacRT is asking employees in customer-facing roles or those that require onsite presence to take appropriate preventative measures – whether they are operating buses or light rail vehicles, riding in buses or light rail vehicles, maintaining vehicles, cleaning vehicles, or interacting with customers. We are providing hand sanitizer, disinfecting spray and wipes; and have increased cleaning and sanitizing on all buses and light rail vehicles and in all break rooms, restrooms and meeting rooms.

Has SacRT identified positions eligible to telecommute?

Special guidelines under which some employees may be permitted to telecommute have been developed and will be made available to employees who may discuss their eligibility with their supervisors, subject to approval by their division Vice President.

With schools closed, are there resources for SacRT employees with childcare needs?

SacRT assessed the possibility of providing child care to employees but for many reasons has determined we are not able to provide any child care opportunities to employees.

Will I be paid if I am unable to come to work?

As discussed above, management has adopted a generally liberal leave approval practice as employees face the consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak. Additionally, the SacRT Board of Directors will be asked in the next few days to authorize employees to use sick leave if they are self-isolating, quarantined, exposed to the virus but not symptomatic, or unable to report to work due to child care or dependent care issues associated with COVID 19. The Board will also be asked to authorize new employees or those who earn limited sick leave accruals to be able to advance up to 56 hours of sick leave to cover COVID 19 related absences and to “repay” the advanced leave credits as they are earned in future pay periods. If employees leave SacRT’s employ before repaying the 56 hours, they will be required to repay any remaining unpaid hours upon termination.

How is SacRT communicating with all employees about updates related to COVID-19?

A combination of posted written material, handouts in unit or department meetings, headways posts, emails and direct communication from your supervisor will continue to provide basic information to our employees as this situation evolves. Additionally, employees are being asked to ensure their current after hours and emergency contact information is on file. We also anticipate employing a subscription-based texting service for all employees to enroll their contact information in order to be apprised at any time of day about important developments that may affect their work.

Does SacRT have a Service Plan if Ridership is Reduced?

Such plans are being reviewed and updated and should be presented for final approval over the next few days.

Disability or Paid Family Leave Benefits**What benefits are available if I’m sick and can’t work and don’t have any accrued leave (sick, floaters or vacation) available?**

If you are unable to work due to exposure to COVID-19 and if you have the necessary supporting medical documentation (see question #2), you are encouraged to file a State Disability Insurance (SDI) claim. SDI provides short-term benefit payments to eligible workers who have a full or partial loss of wages due to a non-work-related illness, injury, or pregnancy.

Most California workers are covered by SDI through deductions from their paychecks (noted as “CASDI” on most paystubs).

The Governor’s Executive Order issued on March 12, 2020 waives the one-week unpaid waiting period, so you may be able to collect SDI benefits for the first week you are out of work. If you are eligible, the Employment Development Department (EDD) processes and issues payments within a few weeks of receiving a claim.

For more information, contact:

Employment Development Department
PO Box 10402
Van Nuys, CA 91410-0402
<https://edd.ca.gov>

What benefits are available if a family member is sick and I have to miss work to care for that person?

If you are unable to work because you are caring for an ill or quarantined family member with COVID-19, you are encouraged to file a Paid Family Leave (PFL) claim. PFL provides up to six weeks, this extends to eight weeks starting July 1, 2020, of benefit payments to eligible workers who have a full or partial loss of wages because they need time off work to care for a seriously ill family member or to bond with a new child. For the purposes of PFL coverage, a family member is defined as seriously ill child, parent, parent-in-law, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, spouse, or registered domestic partner. For more information, contact EDD.

Unemployment Insurance Benefits

What benefits are available if I am subject to quarantine but I am not ill and I am not found eligible for a Disability Insurance claim?

You are encouraged to apply for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits if you are unable to work because:

- Your hours are reduced due to the quarantine
- You were separated from your employer during the quarantine
- You are subject to a quarantine required by a medical professional or state or local health officer.

The Governor’s Executive Order issued on March 12, 2020 waives the one-week unpaid waiting period, so you may be able to collect UI benefits for the first week you are out of work. If you are eligible, the EDD processes and issues payments within a few weeks of receiving a claim.

For more information, visit https://edd.ca.gov/about_edd/coronavirus-2019.htm