

A COVID-19 JOURNAL

Abstract: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), novel coronavirus – officially known as Covid-19 as WHO named – occurred in Wuhan, China in December 2019. Since then, the number of virus expose has sharply moved up while information is typically limited on the clinical identifications¹. The first case recorded in California on Jan 25, 2020 was an Orange County man traveled back home from Wuhan, China, brought the confirmed cases in America to three at this point of time².

Mar. 16, 2020: At 9:20am after the first break of the day, our company director informed we would have a meeting with Human Resources Department (HR) at 1pm to update some important information, that's it. My colleagues and I, I mean nobody knows anything more about the possible contents of this update, but we guess it could be about coronavirus. The rumor is spreading quickly with most negative news toward Covid-19 until the lunchtime. In fact, the Santa Clara County's first case was announced on Jan. 31, 2020, but no one has ever hoped coronavirus moving fast without feet but horns. At 1pm, all employees gathered in the Production Floor ready for the HR update but nobody in the Management Team presented, excepted the Production Supervisor staying with us. Ten minutes later, the Operation Manager passed by, telling us the Management Team is still in the meeting, expecting the outcomes would be ready at 1:30pm, and asking for the crowd's patience. We stood around until our Director and HR showing up. HR started

¹ "COVID-19 Publications," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), March 23, 2020).

² "Timeline: California Reacts to Coronavirus." CalMatters, May 13, 2020.

with an apology for the late due to information has changed swiftly within the last 30 minutes, which was out of the normal circle. And that our company will be closed tomorrow in aligning with Governor Gavin Newsom's shelter-in-place order just released today. Every employee will get a day-off paid but not for the following days, vacation hours will be put in the paycheck if anyone wants to, or with no-pay otherwise. Employees will be contacted via phone call or email or both by their Supervisors who receive direct information from HR. The crowd was dismissed at 3pm after some questions and answers.

Mar. 17, 2020: The first time I feel the direct impact of coronavirus, worrying what's going on next. Normally, when I have a day off, it could be totally relaxing, but it's not this time. I wake up early at 6am as usual, still staying in, and a feeling of scare slowly comes into my mind. I'm scare for myself, of course, but for my family members as well. The shelter-in-place order was said in effective temporarily within three weeks and would be ended on April 06, so that everybody could resume to work from April 07 on if nothing changes. At 5pm, I saw a missed call from my Supervisor, and her message was "Back to work on Thursday Mar.19 at 9am." Checked email, I saw one sent by our Program Manager with details "Hello everyone, we have been granted permission to resume work starting 3/19. However, if you are feeling ill or have any symptoms that may prevent you from coming to the office, then please inform your supervisor or manager and do not come in. If you are over 65 years of age, please follow the recommended guideline by CDC or consult with your physician before you come in (Recommended). The plan is to have everyone report at 9:00 AM where the management team will update everyone on the latest status and the work plans moving forward. Again,

if you have any questions, concerns, or issues that you need to discuss or address, please feel free to contact HR number or myself or your manager. Please inform your direct reports to be there at 9:00 AM and not earlier. Will see you all Thursday.”

Apr. 18, 2020: One more day off before resuming to work. All family members are at home. We cannot go anywhere under the shelter-in-place order, except to Costco to buy something for food. Streets are quiet and isolated. The first time in the US I do not deal with high traffic. Listening to radio news that someone is challenging Newsom’s order for its constitutional being, and that by laws the California Governor preserves all rights to place the order aiming at protecting the state people from the pandemic. Not many people in Costco makes this place become spacious and commodious comparing to its normal operations. Everything seems normal but toilet papers, sanitizers, and rice of all kinds were sold out couple days ago. Luckily, we still have these leftover at home that we do not bother in a short run. We take almost the things we need to fill in two refrigerators that could be used in one week or more.

Apr. 19, 2020: I drive to work on quiet deserted roads and freeways, worried in mind if being stopped by the freeway sheriff in relating to the shelter-in-place order because if it is in such the case, I could not thoroughly explain for the reason I’m not at home. I would say I’m on the way to work, but it takes a while for the sheriff to verify once my company opens at 9am today. The case in my mind was not happen but I wish I could be able to stay home as I feel so scary in this pandemic. However, staying at home suddenly is not a good idea, too, because no one could assure 100 percent it’s safe. For example, we will still be at risk when checking mailbox at home though we don’t have

close contact to anyone else. Many employees, but not all, present at company before 9am to get ready to work. HR holds a meeting at 10am, informing why not all employees resume to work, it's because employee rights to get paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave under the families first coronavirus respond act. No face mask is mentioned in the meeting.

Mar. 20, 2020: HR releases a memo letter saying that our company is exempted from the shelter-in-place order for working in medical industry which is essential to remain operation under the order's definitions. So then employees could print out this letter and put in car and show out the memo as being stopped by the freeway sheriff. All basic necessary information is included in the letter for easier verification if the sheriff wants to. Daily chatting between our colleagues is surrounding Covid-19 topic. Someone says they will neither buy nor order anything made in China for scaring novel coronavirus, others say they will keep away going to China Town if they have a chance to be there in San Francisco. Some is talking about running out of toilet papers, sanitizers, and rice of all kinds in Costco, supermarkets, and other grocery stores, but no one mentions about wearing a face mask.

Mar. 21, 2020: One of my student friends message me at noon asking for help to get some rice since supply at her home is running out. She cries, "Hi Dung, ... I cannot find rice anywhere." I message back, trying to calm her down as I heard that rice is available on Costco's shelves sometimes. I drive to Costco then to buy something for my family use and check if rice is available there as someone said. I wander around in Costco warehouse and catch a note that "Costco will not accept any return of rice, sanitizers, and

toilet paper items of all kinds. Thanks for your cooperation with Costco returning policy.” I go through down nearly to the end of the warehouse and see a half-full pallet with *California Extra Fancy Calrose Rice* at very good price at \$23.99 per 50 pounds, limit one per member. I take and send picture of rice to my friend and urge her to be at Costco soon before they empty the pallet. She feedbacks that she has never had that rice but Basmati, and now is not the time to be picky.

Mar. 22, 2020: Almost one half of company employees show up for the day so that the working atmosphere is tranquil and still. Management Team is working tightly on manufacturing schedule and progressing to split all employees into two shifts. Those who belong to group A will work on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday this week, then swap to group B to work on Tuesday and Thursday the other week, so that maintaining the possible minimum of employees working with a hope to flat the risk of virus expose. Workload remains the same but the manpower to run production is less, causing short hands everywhere along the manufacturing process. As a result, all employees are at double stress: one is because of coronavirus somewhere outdoors, and another is short hands in production. I come home, though tired, and take a bath as the first thing to do to clean up myself from viruses of all kinds.

Mar. 23, 2020: Today is the first day HR mentions to wearing face mask, checking employees' temperature, and practicing social distance on a daily basic in the early morning meeting. Employees are informed that every morning they will clock-in their times, then waiting to have their temperature checked, then preserve a facemask and now could able to reach their workplaces. No facemask, no work. Social distance

violence within six feet should go home. Every employee has three chances for temperature check, all three fails must go home, then report daily to HR to keep track with some certain assistances per case by case. Every morning, employees will be asked if they have any chances or close contacts to possible sources of Covid-19 threats. Lunchroom is being set to limit seats together with where to sit in order to assure social distancing. Those who enter the lunchroom or breakroom where all available seats are occupies should go out and come back at another time.

Mar. 24, 2020: HR informs the shelter-in-place order will be extended to May 04. Outdoors, many things face to extreme delays. For example, a colleague of mine ordered two dozens of facemasks ten days ago, they would be reached his house today as initial estimated delivery, but every time he checks the schedule, always expected day prolongs. Even worse, another order of hand sanitizer is stay still without move, just simply showing “in processing.” This case was finally found out that the hand sanitizer seller ran out of stock for a while. At the time the order was placed, this guy was also waiting for his supply’s arrival, so then everything was being delayed at sources in a domino effect. Other than that, the prices of facemasks, hand sanitizers have increased a lot, and shipping costs are of the rising trend. HR also announces any business trips, both out of the state and out of country, would be cancelled if they are not “essential inquiry.”

Apr. 09, 2020: I go to Citibank to withdraw some cashes. I go into the bank, but the doors are closed though the bank is still operating. There are some scribes on the floor where customers could get line, once for every six feet. I supposed to use ATM, but six feet distance rule must be followed. Luckily, at the time I stand in the line waiting to get

in the bank, one customer from inside out, so then I could get in, and the doors immediately close behind me. The bank implements that way in order to better control the number of customers get in the bank at a time. If the bank is found not practicing social distancing by letting over the expected number of customers, it would be forced to shut down its operations by the city or the county. Everyone indoor or outdoor should have a mask on their face, otherwise they will be denied to service.

Apr. 15, 2020: My banking account is granted \$1,200 via direct deposit from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). I feel luck so much for not being granted an amount of money from the government but because I remain healthy and still have my job. I know that there are around three million applicants to EDD (Employment Development Department) to find help while losing jobs. From the White House in Washington, President Donald Trump writes me a letter (and all people who receive \$1,200) which has reached my mailbox one week later, saying that the money is an “Economic Impact Payment” under the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) which is releasing total \$2.2 thousand billions to the Americans (citizens and green card holders). The amount is to support American people to get through the coronavirus pandemic on a war toward “this invisible enemy” when the economic shutdown.

Apr. 24-30, 2020: Among various kind of fruits, I prefer avocado best that I eat one every morning. Usually, I come to Costco to buy a bag of fresh avocado. The parking is not so busy like other days before the pandemic, but customers are in a very long line waiting to get in the store. It's not because of there are more customers but they are all practicing social distance that every customer stands six feet away from one another,

which makes the line become long outdoor to effectively maintain an expected number of customers indoor. Also, there are some changes at the store. Masks are advised to be on face at entering the store. Every membership gains two admissions in the store.

Antibacterial wipers are giving to customers so that they could clean around the shopping carts for safety and hygiene purpose to wipe out as many as possible bacteria on shopping cart surfaces. 9am – 10 am is the time frame for senior customers, others else will not allow to get inside the store in this duration. Toilet papers, sanitizers, and rice of all kinds are back on shelves, limit one per purchase per membership.

May 01-12, 2020: Gas price is declining, resulting double benefits for car users in the pandemic. First, car owners travel less due to the shelter-in-place order, thus they don't consume much gasoline. Second, they pay less for the same car tanks. Hence, car users could save twice for gas. At Costco gas station, I realize all people are with mask on face and gloves on hands. The waiting time to be in turn to get pump is drastically cut off for less people traveling here and there. The shelter-in-place order is still in effective and extended one more time to end of May. Many opponents get angry for this extension time by time since they are rush to run businesses, and to work to resume their normal lives, but they are not majority in the state, and the country as a whole. To me, I understand why they oppose.

As long as the shelter-in-place order is in effective, many people are running out their budgets for the family expenses. Yet, money is important, but coronavirus proves that it is not absolutely correct as sometimes money cannot buy a facemask to keep a life be healthy. We had ever gone through SARS, and Ebola pandemic previous years, but

Covid-19 reacts in a very extraordinary way: almost no symptom, no typical clinical characteristics. Affected people within the first two weeks do not give up meals, their overall appearance looks “normal” to the bare eyes. But this “normal” is killing people by an extreme spread easily between people via droplets in the air within the distance of less than six feet. Money or life is the deadly option hanging on all our heads. I’m scare, not for me myself, but for my loved ones as well, and other people outdoors, no one should be at risk, for any reason.

Bibliography

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