

Reopening the Workplace

The COVID -19 pandemic has necessitated quarantine and shelter-in-place orders, requiring businesses to close or implement remote work strategies. As we move through this crisis, businesses are faced with yet another challenge: when and how to safely and effectively reopen the workplace.

The Decision to Reopen

The first step to take in the reopening process is to designate a person or team to oversee the design and execution of the reopening plan.

As a baseline, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance recommends being able to answer affirmatively to all the following questions before deciding to proceed with reopening your facility:

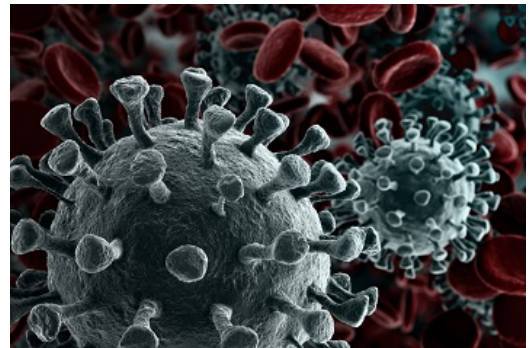
- Is the workplace in a community no longer requiring significant mitigation?
- Can you reopen in compliance with state and local orders?
- Will you be ready to protect employees at higher risk for severe illness?
- Are recommended safety actions in place, including cleaning and disinfecting and social distancing?
- Is ongoing monitoring in place to help ensure infected employees are not present in the workplace?
- Is a plan in place to close quickly, if needed?

This checklist will help businesses evaluate many of the considerations that should be taken into account when reopening the workplace. However, the actions necessary to reopen safely and effectively will be unique to each workplace and will depend on location and the type of industry. Each facility should use risk assessment techniques to determine what precautions to implement to keep their employees and customers safe and healthy.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Before bringing employees back into the facility, you will want to make sure the facility has been adequately cleaned and disinfected and that plans are in place to continue the cleaning and disinfecting activities at regular intervals.

- Follow all applicable state and local orders and directives related to cleaning and disinfecting.
- Determine what needs to be cleaned, and identify all frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- If your workplace has been unoccupied for 7 days or more:
 - Clean all visibly dirty surfaces with soap and water.
 - Conduct a normal routine cleaning of the workplace.
- If your workplace has been occupied within the last 7 days:
 - Clean all visibly dirty surfaces with soap and water.
 - Disinfect all frequently touched surfaces and objects.
 - Conduct a normal routine cleaning of the remainder of the workplace.
- Develop a protocol for cleaning and disinfecting your facility should someone in the facility become infected with COVID-19 in accordance with CDC guidelines.
- Develop a plan for ongoing cleaning and disinfecting the facility after it reopens. Be sure the plan:
 - Identifies who is responsible for scheduled cleanings.
 - Describes what surfaces and objects will be cleaned with soap and water.
 - Describes what surfaces will be disinfected. Examples include tables, doorknobs, light switches, keyboards, touch screens, shared machinery controls, tools, countertops, handles, desks, phones, faucets and sinks, and toilets.
 - Describes how porous material will be cleaned or disinfected.



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- Describes the frequency of cleanings. Frequently touched surfaces and common areas should be cleaned at least daily. However, more frequent cleanings of certain areas may be necessary throughout the day. Other surfaces should be cleaned routinely based on the level of contact.
- Ensures that Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved disinfectants are being used.
- Includes procedures for monitoring to ensure proper cleaning is taking place as required.
- Obtain appropriate supplies of cleaners, disinfectants, and other equipment.
- Obtain appropriate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) needed for cleaning and disinfecting.
- Ensure the people cleaning and disinfecting:
 - Are equipped with appropriate PPE, including gloves and gowns
 - Have adequate ventilation
 - Have read and are following the manufacturer's instructions, product labels, and safety data sheets (SDSs) for the cleaners being used
 - Have been appropriately trained on the hazards of the products being used and how to use any necessary PPE
- Remove unnecessary objects and furniture from the facility to reduce frequent handling and touching.
- Provide cleaning and disinfecting products so employees can clean their workspaces, equipment, and tools before each use.

Facility Systems

If your workplace has been unoccupied or idle for an extended period of time, you will want to confirm that building and critical safety systems and equipment are functioning properly or that necessary testing and/or inspections have been conducted.

The following systems have been evaluated and determined to be functioning properly, and all necessary tests and/or inspections have been conducted:

- Building ventilation
- Sprinkler systems
- Alarms
- Fire extinguishers
- Local ventilation hoods
- Eyewash stations and showers

Social Distancing

As employees return to the workplace, each facility will need to take actions to ensure the workforce can maintain proper social distancing (i.e., maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet between employees). This will involve administrative actions to determine which employees or groups of employees return to the workplace and their work schedules. It will also involve physical changes to the workplace to avoid having employees in close proximity to customers or one another.

- Follow all applicable state and local orders and directives related to social distancing.
- Determine what employees or groups of employees to bring back to the facility while still being able to maintain proper social distancing and taking into account requests not to return, as well as employees who may be in a high-risk group or live with someone in a high-risk group.
- Determine what administrative actions can be taken to honor the requests of those who wish not to return to the workplace and to minimize the number of people on-site at the same time. Options include:
 - Continue to allow remote working, if possible.

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- Stagger shifts.
 - Implement alternate work schedules.
- Increase the distance between employees for proper social distancing (i.e., at least 6 feet). Options include:
 - Workstations
 - Modify the layout and or use of workstations by physically relocating them or by only allowing certain workstations to be used.
 - Install partitions or other physical barriers between workstations.
 - Implement policies to limit sharing equipment.
 - Order extra supplies so employees spend less time away from their workstation.
 - Meeting/conference rooms
 - Conduct meetings virtually via audio or videoconference.
 - Post signs designating the maximum capacity of the room.
 - Remove/rearrange furniture to reinforce the maximum capacity and social distancing.
 - Common areas (e.g., break rooms and cafeterias)
 - Close breakrooms and cafeterias.
 - Encourage employees to eat outside, in their cars, or at their desks or workstations.
 - Post signs designating the maximum capacity of the room.
 - Remove/rearrange furniture to reinforce the maximum capacity and social distancing.
 - Hallways and stairwells
 - Limit hallways to one-way traffic flow.
- Communicate policies and actions being taken to implement proper social distancing to employees electronically and by using visual cues and/or signs as reminders throughout the facility.
- Increase the distance between customers and employees. Options include:
 - Limit business travel and in-person meetings.
 - Install physical barriers.
 - Implement curbside pickup.

Hygiene

Proper hygiene is critical to preventing the spread of COVID-19. All employees will be expected to follow appropriate personal hygiene protocols in the workplace.

- Follow all applicable state and local orders and directives, as well as CDC and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidance, related to respirators, masks, face coverings, and other PPE.
- Implement a PPE and face covering policy, in accordance with applicable state and local orders and directives, as well as CDC and OSHA guidance and regulations, that outlines who must wear PPE and/or face coverings, the types of PPE and/or face coverings required, and what training is necessary.
- Ensure an adequate number of hand-washing/sanitizing stations exist throughout the facility.
- Post signs and information throughout the facility emphasizing good hygiene—specifically, proper hand-washing and coughing/sneezing etiquette.
- Make available to employees and throughout the workplace adequate supplies of the following:
 - Hand soap
 - Hand sanitizer
 - Sanitizing wipes
 - Paper products (i.e., paper towels, tissues, etc.)
 - Face coverings and masks
 - Applicable PPE (e.g., gloves, respirators, masks, face shields, etc.)
 - No-touch trash cans

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- Discourage/prohibit employees from sharing equipment, tools, and workstations.
- Encourage employees to clean and disinfect their workstations on a regular basis, including desk, phone, keyboard, mouse, touch screen, shared machinery controls, etc.

Monitoring Employees

Monitoring employees to ensure they are healthy is critical to preventing the spread of the virus and protecting the health of all employees and their families.

- Develop and implement a policy to monitor/screen employees for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
- Establish procedures for isolating a sick employee or one showing symptoms of COVID-19.
- Establish a policy requiring sick employees to stay home.
- Establish criteria, in accordance with CDC guidelines, for sick employees to return to work.

Facility Access

Controlling facility access, especially restricting visitor access, will help limit personal interactions.

- Make necessary changes to employee entrances and exits to minimize the touching of door handles and to maintain proper social distancing.
- Develop and implement a policy to screen and control access to the facility by visitors.
- Establish procedures to inform and instruct all visitors of the actions and procedures in place within the facility to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and instruct them to adhere to posted signs and visual cues throughout the facility.

Communication

An effective and efficient reopening of the workplace depends on clear, consistent communication between management and employees. Employees may be apprehensive and anxious about returning to the workplace due to health and safety concerns. Effective communication can build trust and ease concerns.

- Before reopening, develop and implement a communication plan to inform employees of:
 - Who is expected to return to the workplace and when
 - Any changes to how employees access the facility
 - Any wellness monitoring they may be subject to before or upon entering the facility
 - The cleaning and disinfecting activities that occurred before reopening and the plan in place to continue cleaning and disinfecting the facility
 - The actions taken to enhance social distancing within the facility
 - How to report any safety or health issues or concerns, including possible cases of COVID-19, and their right to report safety and health concerns without fear of retaliation
- Develop a plan to manage and communicate changes in policies and procedures as the COVID-19 situation evolves.
- Communicate proper hygiene and social distancing practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to employees electronically.
- Post visual cues and signage throughout the facility to remind employees and visitors of proper hygiene and social distancing practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Communicate in a language employees understand.

Training

Employees have been away from the workplace for quite some time, and the workplace they are returning to may be unlike the one they left weeks ago. Adequate training will be required to help them get reacquainted with the job and the “new normal” that exists within the workplace.

- Train personnel conducting cleaning and disinfecting appropriately for the task.
- Train employees and facility visitors on the hazards of COVID-19 exposure, how to report a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, and proper procedures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including:
 - Hand-washing
 - Coughing/sneezing etiquette
 - Social distancing
 - Masks and face coverings
 - Other PPE
- Train management or designated individuals to enforce policies on:
 - Hand-washing
 - Coughing/sneezing etiquette
 - Social distancing
 - Masks and face coverings
 - PPE
- Train employees to carry out different roles and responsibilities, as needed, as a result of operating with a reduced on-site workforce.
- Provide refresher training on the hazards associated with specific job functions for employees who have been away from work for an extended period of time.