



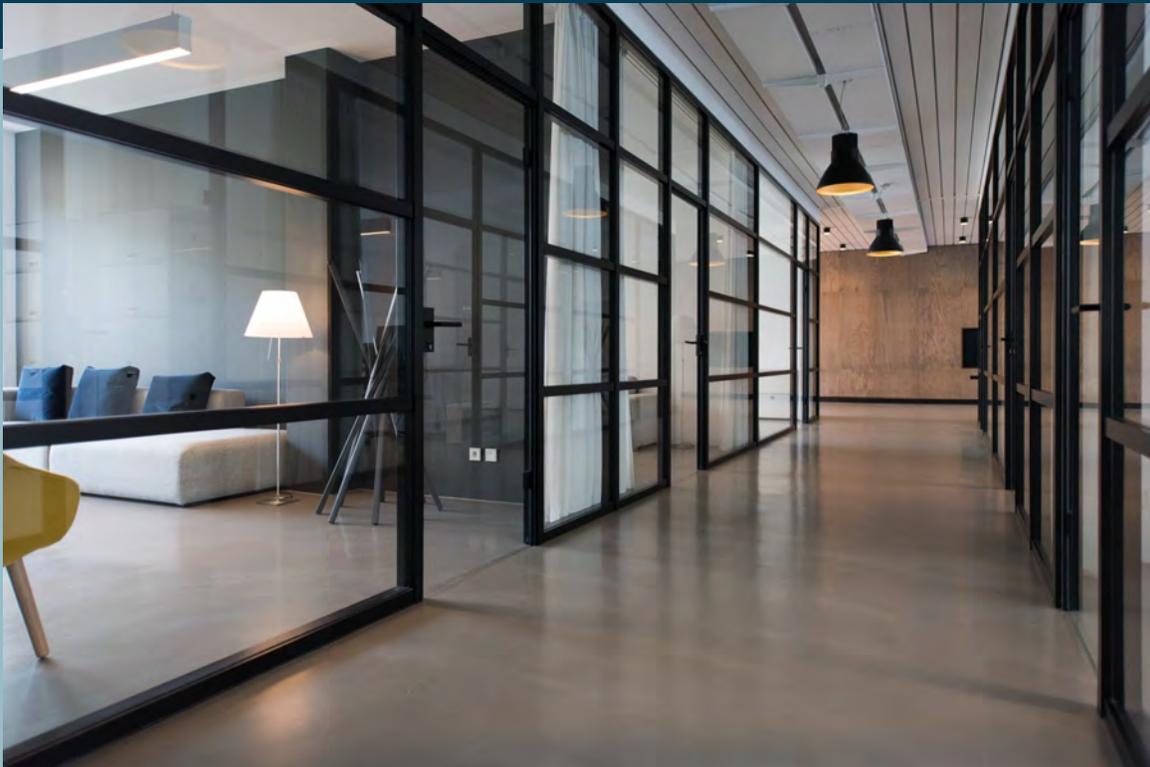
RETURN TO WORK GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus pandemic and subsequent shut down of many industries poses unprecedented challenges for many companies and individuals alike. The ripple effect from this health tragedy and economic downturn will likely be felt throughout the global economy for years to come.

While the timeline of re-opening “non-essential” workplaces remains uncertain, it is recommended employers consider sooner, rather than later, what measures they will need to prepare to protect the health and safety of their employees. There is no one-size-fits-all approach for a safe return to the workplace, and procedures will need to be selected that best suit the workplace in question.

LaSalle Network is uniquely positioned to offer resources for organizations considering the options in their return to work plans. As a staffing partner for thousands of business across all industries, we’ve collaborated with company leaders across the country to gather extensive resources and solutions for safely returning employees to the workplace.



DISCLAIMER

Please be advised that these suggestions may not be applicable to all businesses. This guide should be used as a resource to help companies return to work safely.

We recommend consulting with legal counsel and healthcare professionals to ensure the suggestions presented are best suited to your workplace.

Note this report will continue to be updated as new information is released and the situation progresses.

Sections that have been recently updated will be highlighted in the Table of Contents in gold.

We are updating this guide regularly as new information comes out. Sections marked in yellow reflect the sections that have been updated with new information as of May 22, 2020

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SECTION 1

CONSIDERING A RETURN TO WORK PLAN

CONSIDERING A RETURN TO WORK PLAN

Before creating a return to work plan, it is important to consider how the business has been able to operate remotely or not, and what value would be added by returning to the office. For some businesses it is impossible to operate remotely, such as manufacturing or food service that relies on their physical workspace to produce products or generate revenue. Other businesses that work remotely more easily should consider their reasoning for returning to the office.

Some companies have preemptively postponed their return to the office past Shelter in Place orders. If remaining efficient while working remotely, some may choose not to bring employees back into the office indefinitely, even until **2021 or later**. The availability of communication tools, laptops, phones, VPN connections and other essential technologies have not only made working from home possible for many professionals, but in some cases have made them more **productive** as well.



While operating smoothly virtually, leadership may decide not to risk bringing employees back in case of a COVID-19 outbreak at their offices. An outbreak would not only harm those falling ill, but also would render them unable to work for weeks at a time and may shut down the facility as a whole.

Resources

- **Tech Republic:** ["More Companies Likely to Work from Home..."](#)
- **Business News Daily:** ["Working from Home Increases Productivity"](#)

CONSIDERING A RETURN TO WORK PLAN

If considering maintaining remote work for an extended period of time, your company may consider creating a remote work training in order to maintain motivation, efficiency and quality of work. For many people, the working in the office results in much of the day being split up into chunks of work between meetings and other events. While working from home, many have found they accomplish more meaningful, **deep work**. While many have had several weeks or months to now try out working from home, your company should create best practices to address how employees may fall short and in what areas their tasks may shift.

Other companies working remotely may feel that they are not able to operate as desired and will decide to reopen their workspace.

Companies that want to return to physical office spaces may do so for the following reasons:



Connectivity



Training and Development



Lack of technology



Workplace culture



Resources

- **Business News Daily:**
["Working from Home Increases Productivity"](#)

CONSIDERING A RETURN TO WORK PLAN

Gartner Survey of CFOs & Finance leaders in March 2020

WILL SHIFT PART OF THE WORKFORCE TO BE PERMANENTLY REMOTE

74%

WILL MOVE AT LEAST 20% OF ON-SITE EMPLOYEES TO REMOTE POSITIONS

17%

Consider what, if anything, is lacking in your remote workspace and how that may be mitigated temporarily. For some organizations it's the connectivity, for others it's coaching and development of new employees. Before returning to the office, consider what solutions could be added to your remote set up to improve operations and keep employees safe and socially distant.



Resources

- **Gartner:** "[Gartner CFO Survey Reveals...](#)"

CONSIDERING A RETURN TO WORK PLAN

Just as there have been regulations on both the federal and state level for the shut down of many businesses, there is also federal legislature on the reopening of businesses and will likely be state guidance as well. The national "[Opening Up America Again](#)" plan includes criteria states should satisfy before reopening, preparedness guidelines and three phases to ease off of social distancing measures to open up businesses.

The criteria for states to reopen businesses include:

- Downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses reported in a 14-day period
- Downward trajectory of covid-like syndromic cases reported within a 14-day period
- Downward trajectory of documented cases within a 14-day period
- Hospitals treat all patients without crisis care
- Robust testing program in place

The CDC has drafted [interim guidance](#) on how businesses, schools, churches, mass transit and other organizations should handle their reopening safely.

Each state may have varied guidelines and processes for reopening. Please refer to the proper state legislation for your organization. For Illinois businesses, Governor Pritzker has released a 5 phase plan to "[Restore Illinois](#)."

Resources

- [White House: "Opening Up America Again"](#)
- [Illinois Gov: "Restore Illinois"](#)
- [CDC: "Interim Guidance"](#)

CONSIDERING A RETURN TO WORK PLAN

Conducting a Risk Assessment

While considering whether to bring employees back into the office, consider **these suggestions from the CDC**. They have outlined a checklist of risk considerations before reopening the workplace.



IDENTIFYING
HAZARDS



DETERMINE



OUTSIDE
EXPOSURE



IDENTIFYING
HAZARDS

Businesses need to think critically about their employees' potential exposures, and particularly about the chance of an infected individual entering the facility.

When **identifying hazards**, perform a walkthrough of the premises and consider high-touch areas, or areas employees may come into close contact with one another (e.g., break rooms and other areas where people may congregate).

Resources

- [CDC: "Workplace Decision Tree"](#)
- [Huntington: "Coronavirus"](#)

CONSIDERING A RETURN TO WORK PLAN

Conducting a Risk Assessment



DETERMINE

Determine who may be harmed by these hazards and how. Determine what populations of your workforce are exposed to COVID-19 risks (staff members who meet with customers or individuals), and what populations of your staff may have preexisting medical conditions that may put them at risk.



OUTSIDE
EXPOSURE

Consider employee exposure outside of work. No matter how thorough a company's risk mitigation strategy may be within the facility, employers must consider the hours that employees spend outside the facility, as well. Employees taking public transportation, working second jobs or not abiding by social distancing policies in their social lives may put other employees at risk. Determine how and what questions to ask employees while determining their additional risk factors by collaborating with a legal professional specializing in employment law.

CONSIDERING A RETURN TO WORK PLAN

Connecting with Customers

For companies whose revenue generation relies heavily on meeting customers, clients or vendors in person or sales teams whose strategy is primarily in face to face networking, business operations will have changed substantially in this time. While this guide will focus on returning employees to the office, consider the ways in which these policies and procedures may apply to customers and vendors you may typically have on site, as well.

While planning to phase employees back into the office or planning for the safety of employees, consider if and when you will allow guests on site. Create policies regarding how to keep both employee and guest safe during their visit. This may include PPE, limiting the space and number of people they come into contact with and reconfiguring common areas to allow for social distancing. Many companies have preemptively determined they will not allow guests until all employees are able to be back in the office. For some, this may mean December 2020 or later.



Consider ways in which to streamline your company's **communication with customers and clients**. Inform them of your new processes and what your standard operating procedure will be moving forward. Many companies have used this as a chance to demonstrate how they will be ensuring the safety of their employees and customers, as well.

Resources

- [SalesForce: "COVID-19 Response Playbook"](#)

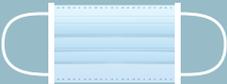
SECTION 2

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

As an organization, it is important to develop a strategic plan for informing and preparing employees to return to work. Regular communication with employees both now, as they work remotely, and as they return to work, will be important.

EMPLOYEES SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED BY NEW POLICIES, NOR EXPECT WORK TO RETURN TO NORMAL RIGHT AWAY.

 GAUGING COMFORTABILITY	 RE-ENTRY COMMITTEE	 ASKING QUESTIONS
 MESSAGING	 RE-ORIENTATION	 TRAINING
 RETURN TO WORK KITS	 SELF- SCREENING	 TRAVEL

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

Gauging Willingness to Return to the Workplace

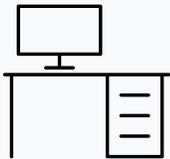
Before reaching out to employees, first discuss the executive leadership team's willingness and comfort levels with returning to work, and consider what preparations would need to be made for them to feel comfortable. Decide as a team **what factors** into the feeling of security needed for workers to leave their homes. This could include:



Workplace sanitization



Transportation



Workplace reconfiguration



Health screenings

UNTIL CONCERNS ARE ADDRESSED AND LEADERSHIP FEELS SAFE, EMPLOYEES SHOULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO FEEL COMFORTABLE OR PRESSURED TO RE-ENTER THE OFFICE.

Resources

- **Vita:** "[COVID-19 Employer Playbook](#)"
- **CNBC:** "[How the Biggest Companies in the World are Preparing to Bring Back Their Workforce](#)"

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

Gauging Willingness to Return to the Workplace

Gauging employee comfort is an important element to consider when preparing a return-to-work plan.

CONSIDER IMPLEMENTING A SURVEY OR ANOTHER WAY OF GATHERING EMPLOYEE SENTIMENT AROUND RETURN TO WORK.

This could help inform you of additional concerns to address in your plan and ways to offer employees support. When gauging employee willingness, we recommend following the **guidelines issued by the CDC in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.**

Some employees will be reluctant. The thought of potentially using public transportation and working in enclosed environments, coupled with concerns about **a second wave**, may cause staff to become nervous for their safety. Open communication with employees will allow you to plan for challenges that may arise and modify safety procedures to ensure as many employees feel as comfortable as possible.



Resources

- **Vita:** "[COVID-19 Employer Playbook](#)"
- **Business Insider:** "[2nd and 3rd Waves of Coronavirus...](#)"

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

Gauging Willingness to Return to the Workplace

An important aspect of communicating with employees will be working to **alleviate fear**. While gauging employee's willingness and comfortability with returning to the workplace, create a positive messaging plan.

Strategies for alleviating fear and anxiety include:

- Re-engaging employees by providing virtual work support such as video conferencing meetings, email chains and one on one check ins
- Proactive virtual trainings on new procedures prior to arriving onsite
- Signage outside and around the office with encouraging messages telling employees they have been missed and leadership is happy they are back
- Sending care packages with appropriate PPE required for their first day back
- Train HR leaders to provide mental health resources and support



Resources

- **Vita:** "[COVID-19 Employer Playbook](#)"
- **Cushman & Wakefield:** "[Recovery Readiness](#)"
- **Business Insider:** "[2nd and 3rd Waves of Coronavirus..](#)"

Employee Communication

Gauging Willingness to Return to the Workplace

SAMPLE EMPLOYEE SURVEY QUESTIONS



I have what I need to be productive and work effectively from home (direction from managers, tool & equipment).



What is the biggest challenge you are currently facing while working remotely?



Thinking about your current work from home arrangements, how long is this something you could comfortably maintain?



I would feel safe re-entering the workplace if “shelter in place” orders were lifted in my state, if no, when would you feel comfortable coming back into the office?



What are your main concerns about going back to the office?



What are you most looking forward to about returning back to the office?



I feel confident that our company can pull through this pandemic and achieve our goals.



Are you comfortable taking your normal means of transportation into the office (i.e. public transit)



Are you comfortable using the common areas in our offices (kitchen, lounge areas, etc.)



Are you comfortable using the shared restrooms in our offices?



What would make you comfortable (or more comfortable) to come back into the office?



What would make you comfortable (or more comfortable) to come back into the office?



What would make you comfortable (or more comfortable) to come back into the office?



If your role requires you to travel, how comfortable do you feel about travel at this time?



If given the option to continue working from home, would you be interested?



Do you feel prepared for the changes that might have occurred to your role during the COVID-19 pandemic?

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

CREATE A RE-ENTRY COMMITTEE

With the declaration of the Coronavirus as a pandemic, many organizations formed an emergency response team to make major business decisions, create new policies and manage the ongoing challenges associated with COVID-19 and the workplace. Most likely, this team is comprised of executives, Human Resources teams, Operations teams, Communications teams, and senior-level management within the organization who are trusted to make decisions for the future of the company and the health and safety of employees.

Consider creating another team to plan for the **safe re-entry of employees** into the office and mitigate the risks involved. This team will be the key players in developing a detailed return-to-work plan, communicating it with employees and considering the ongoing policies and procedures best suited for their organization.

Who Comprises a Re-Entry Committee?

- Committee chair: An efficient and decisive executive with crisis management experience
- Members of Human Resources and Legal Teams
- Outside Legal Counsel, if applicable
- Facility Management
- Management in charge of operations and safety

Resources

- **JD Supra:** ["Preparing For Re-Entry: Key Considerations"](#)

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

HEALTH / WELLNESS AMBASSADORS

To complement your Re-Entry Committee, consider designating another group of managers or HR specialists as health and **wellness ambassadors** to act as a liaison between employees and the committee. They may be given responsibilities to support the committee, such as greeting employees on their first day back in the office, demonstrating new procedures and answering questions regarding their return to the office. Consider assigning one of these ambassadors to each employee to act as their point-person for Coronavirus and policy-related questions.

Regular communication from these ambassadors may be important to instill new practices as employees readjust to the new workplace policies. Employees who need additional accommodation at this time, such as parents of young children or employees considered vulnerable to the disease, should be comfortable reaching out to these ambassadors for the support they need.



Resources

- **Jones Lang LaSalle:**
["COVID-19 Re-Entry"](#)

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

ANSWERING EMPLOYEE QUESTIONS

Health and wellness ambassadors, managers and the human resources team should be prepared to answer questions on specific policy changes and safety protocols around the office, as well as know the process for providing reasonable accommodation for employees who request additional support.

To address concerns and offer support, your leadership team or health & wellness ambassadors can:

- Host a video conference
- Create an FAQ guide
- Post information on the company intranet

Consider creating a **COVID-19 specific email inbox** or online portal to submit questions or concerns, and make sure employees are reminded of who they can reach out to with concerns directly. For a list of FAQs employers should know, **see this resource** from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Resources

- **US EEO:** ["What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA"](#)
- **McKinsey & Co:** ["A Leader's Guide: Communicating with Teams..."](#)
- **Tesla:** ["Getting Back to Work"](#)



EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

REGULAR COMPANY-WIDE MESSAGING

Provide employees with the necessary informative materials for reopening, such as a return to work handbook or FAQs sheet, as well as continue regular companywide communication. This communication should be informative, provide direction and provide encouragement. Make sure employees **feel supported** in your messaging plan and feel like a part of the conversation by providing ways for them to submit responses or ask questions. Over-communicating changes to the office norm will be important in making employees comfortable with their new norm and following recommended procedures. Establishing **a regular method of communicating** updates and policy reminders will be essential in creating an environment of trust, as well as establishing a point person for every employee to go to with questions.

In addition to provide information about your workplace policy and procedure, provide guidance to employees for what resources they should look at for COVID-19 related information. Consider factual and well-rounded resources such as the CDC, state-specific guidelines and company specific FAQs.

Examples of consistent company messaging:

- Daily all-company meetings
- Town Hall meetings to address FAQs
- Weekly CEO email updates
- Pre-recorded weekly or bi-monthly video announcements

Resources

- **McKinsey & Co:** "[A Leader's Guide: Communicating with Teams...](#)"
- **Hines:** "[Ready..](#)"

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

REGULAR COMPANY-WIDE MESSAGING

Additionally, consider how your communications team will refer to this return-to-work plan to the organization at large, and the channels they will use to do so. Using a branded phrase or slogan to refer to your return-to-work plan may make the process less intimidating while being unique to your organization. This can help to create a sense of community and consistency around the plan and its messaging.

Your communication should be:

- *Detailed*
- *Empathetic*
- *Transparent*
- *Accommodating*
- *Consistent with your company culture*

Resources

- [Addison Group: "Back to Business"](#)

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH

In addition to protecting employees from an outbreak of COVID-19, employers may need to consider how the pandemic has taken a toll on employee's mental health. Communicating with employees regularly to address their questions and concerns will be a large part of how employees can support them, along with creating a support system of Human Resources, Wellness Ambassadors, management and peers.

Consider providing mental health resources and tips for relieving stress. Consider including a section addressing how employees can relieve stress and **support themselves** in your return to work handbook.



Resources

- [TESLA: "Return to Work Playbook"](#)

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT YOURSELF

- **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can cause undue stress, so consider taking a break from it.**
- **Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.**
- **Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.**
- **Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.**

Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

EMPLOYEE RE-ORIENTATION

Despite it being the same physical office space, business will likely look very different and include a myriad of new policies and procedures. Host a virtual “re-orientation” **training** for everyone at the organization to go over the new policies, procedures and expectations. Be sure to highlight the policies that have changed, as well as those that have not. Any extra clarity you can provide an employee in uncertain times will benefit their readjustment.

It will be important that all employees understand the safety requirements, protocols and expectations for accountability and following each policy.

EVERY EMPLOYEE’S ACTIONS MATTER AND UNDERSTANDING THE REASONING BEHIND POLICY CHANGES SHOULD BE EXPLAINED DURING TRAINING.



Resources

- **OSHA:** ["Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19"](#)

Employee Communication

EMPLOYEE RE-ORIENTATION

Re-training may include topics such as, but not limited to...

Communication Policies



- Discuss what the new communication 'norm' for the office will be, including technologies used to communicate on a company level and updated policies for communicating within a team. **Here is an editable template from LEAR for re-orientation messaging.**



Wellness Ambassadors

- Assign each employee their point-person for questions and support regarding COVID-19 policy concerns and questions. View more in section 3, "Create a Re-Entry Committee."



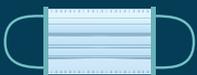
Wellness Self-Checks

- Discuss how to properly conduct a daily wellness self-check and establish accountability. View more in section 3, "Daily Self-Screening Handout."

Wellness Checks



- If your company will be doing on-site wellness screening, prepare employees for what to expect and what **their rights and protections are.** This may include a questionnaire or a temperature check before an employee is able to enter the office. View section 6, "On-Site Health and Wellness Screening," for more information.



Policies Regarding PPE

- What equipment is required to be worn by whom, and how will it be distributed to them? Include demonstrations of how to properly wear, wash or dispose of the PPE. View more information in section 6, "Personal Protective Equipment."



Office Policies

- Discuss any new expectations of how employees are to move about the office and use communal spaces, such as break rooms or restrooms. Consider giving an office tour explaining new regulations.

Employee Communication

EMPLOYEE RE-ORIENTATION



Disinfection Standards

- Discuss what your company is doing to maintain a safe and healthy office and the extra sanitation precautions that are being taken.



Employee Responsibility in **Sanitization**

- Establish what responsibilities employees at your company may have in taking part in sanitation efforts. This may include personal hygiene and hand washing, wiping down of personal space or disinfecting communal surfaces after each use, depending on the company's cleaning policies and procedures.



If You Feel Ill at Work

- Inform employees what to do if they at any time begin to feel ill while in the office. Explain who they can notify, how and where they can go to isolate themselves. View more information in Section 6, "A Plan for Symptomatic Employees."



Consequences

- Ensure employees know what consequences will be if they do not adhere to these new policies and make it clear exactly what will be required of them. Consider giving a tentative timeline for how long company leadership may be expecting these policies to be upheld.

Remember, you will likely need to communicate these changes regularly to the organization throughout the re-entry period.

Resources

- **LEAR:** "[Safe Work Playbook: 2nd Edition](#)"
- **OSHA:** "[COVID-19 Control and Prevention](#)"
- **Vita:** "[COVID-19 Employer Playbook](#)"

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

INDIVIDUALIZED TEAM TRAININGS

Consider the following groups when deciding what training to conduct in your organization.



RE-ENTRY COMMITTEE



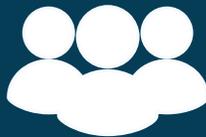
DISINFECTION TEAM



WELLNESS AMBASSADORS



HEALTH SCREENING



HR AND MANAGEMENT



RECRUITERS

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

TRAINING FOR THE RE-ENTRY COMMITTEE:



RE-ENTRY COMMITTEE

Depending on the company, members of your Re-Entry Committee may be some of the first back in the office.

They can each be trained on:

- Best practices to make other employees feel safe and welcome
- What new policies are being enforced
- How to effectively enforce new policies
- How to answer common questions that may arise

Resources

- Jones Lang LaSalle: ["COVID-19 Re-Entry"](#)

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION



DISINFECTION TEAM

TRAINING FOR THE DISINFECTION TEAM

Office sanitization will be a major consideration of an organization's return-to-work plan. Because of these increased cleaning and disinfection standards, an office's designated cleaning team may have to be reinforced with additional members and be trained on the **CDC's recommended cleaning** and disinfection procedures. This includes:

- Increased frequency in which surfaces need to be cleaned
- **Specific cleaning solutions** approved to fight the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus.

Brief your designated designated disinfection team on the new cleaning protocols and ensure the team is large enough to handle the increased demand.

Train them on what approved cleaning products to use on which surfaces, and if they are suggested to wear PPE, such as gloves or a face covering while cleaning. Designate a schedule for how frequently different areas will need to be disinfected.

Resources

- **CDC:** "[Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities](#)"
- **EPA:** "[List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)"

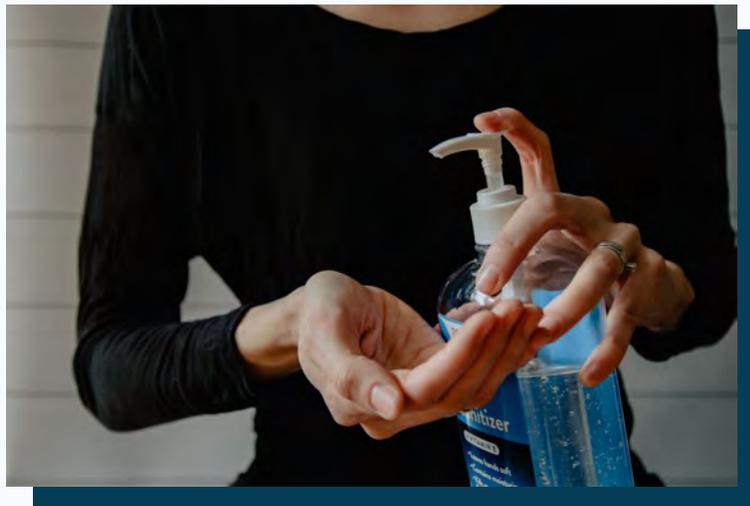
EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION



WELLNESS AMBASSADORS

TRAINING FOR WELLNESS AMBASSADORS

If your company chooses to have **wellness ambassadors** as point-people for employees to reach out to with questions, they can be trained on how to respond to and assist employees regarding COVID-19 policies and concerns.



The Re-Entry Committee can prepare ambassadors to support them by sharing detailed information on office policy changes, as well as answer questions employees may have. Ambassadors can be trained on properly empathizing with and supporting employees, as well as what reasonable accommodations can be made for employees with concerns.

Resources

- **EPA:** ["List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2"](#)
- **Jones Lang LaSalle:** ["COVID-19 Re-Entry"](#)

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION



HEALTH SCREENING

TRAINING FOR HEALTH SCREENING

Some companies have chosen to require health screenings of all employees to ensure they are not symptomatic for COVID-19 before they enter the office. If your company chooses to hold these or other health screenings, it's recommended that your organization:

- Designates an individual who will be responsible for these screenings
- Determine what the standard procedure would be to properly conduct them
- Train employees on what questions to ask regarding COVID-19 symptoms
- Train employees on how to use a no-touch thermometer
- **What to do** if an employee presents with a temperature or reports experiencing symptoms

Many companies holding health screenings require those doing the screening to wear face coverings or gloves. So, in this instance, the team would need proper training for using PPE, as well.

For further information on health screenings, view section 6, "On-Site Health and Wellness Screening."

Resources

- **SHRM:** "[COVID-19 Employee Health-Screening Form](#)"

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION



HR AND MANAGEMENT

TRAINING FOR HR AND MANAGEMENT

This training can include handling concerns from staff, any updates to the attendance and work-from-home policies, and mental health training. Consider discussing best practices for recognizing depression and anxiety in employees and how to best support employees having difficulty.

TRAINING FOR RECRUITERS

If your company is hiring, train recruiters and hiring managers on proper interview safety. If you will be conducting interviews virtually, consider hosting a separate training to cover best practices for video interviewing. Inform recruiters of additional safety and sanitization standards and consider encouraging them not to shake hands or come in close contact. Consider preparing a recruiter for interviewing in the case that a candidate is **presenting symptoms of COVID-19.**



RECRUITERS

Sample Health Screening Questionnaires:

- [CDC Questionnaire](#)
- [Mayo Clinic](#)

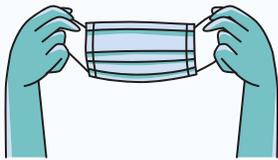
Resources

- [CDC: "Interim Infection Control Guidance"](#)

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

RETURN-TO-WORK KIT

Before bringing any employees back into the office, consider preparing each individual a Return-to-Work Kit. This not only ensures that employees arrive with the required materials on their first day back, but also cultivates a sense of security and preparedness. This kit could include:



ANY REQUIRED PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)



HAND SANITIZER



HANDOUTS FOR SELF-SCREENING OF COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

Sample Health Screening Questionnaires:

- [CDC Questionnaire](#)
- [Mayo Clinic](#)

Resources

- [CDC: "Interim Infection Control Guidance"](#)

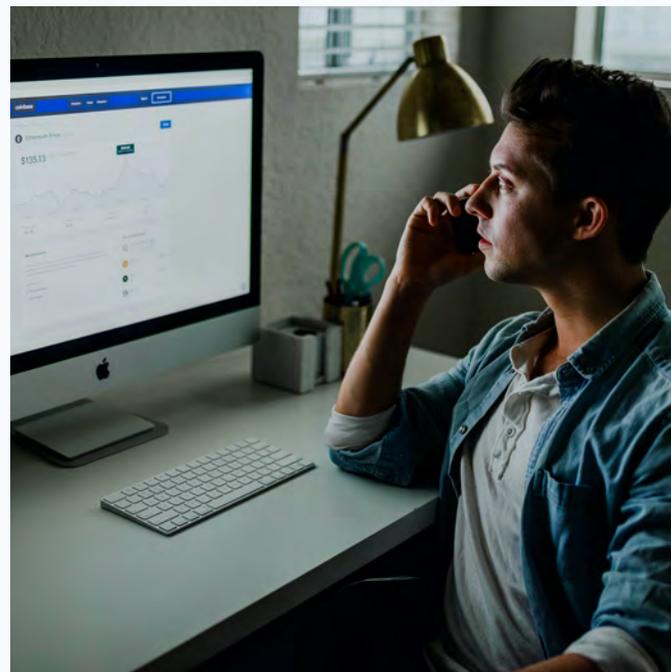
EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

RETURN-TO-WORK KIT

Because each company's return to work will be unique and include organization specific policies, consider compiling and including your own "**Return to Work**" guide. This should include employee FAQs, information on benefits, training materials on **office procedures**, updated paid time off information and work from home policies. Include materials to refresh on new and old safety procedures.

When discussing benefits, highlight not only any changes in coverage, but also give examples of ways employees can utilize their benefits to either protect themselves from getting sick or to assist them if they fall ill. Include information on how they may use their Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) on ways to remain healthy both mentally and physically, if applicable.

Include encouraging messaging from leadership on brand with your return-to-work messaging. Making your company's return to work encouraging and brand specific will be important to ensuring employees feel supported and trust their leadership's decisions.



Resources

- [Huntington Bank: "Re-Opening Together"](#)
- [Tesla: "Getting Back to Work"](#)

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

DAILY SELF-SCREENING HANDOUT

This handout, which can be included in the Return-to-Work Kit, can provide information on how to self-check specific signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Employees can use the handout daily to monitor their own health and well-being, and self-report in the case that they fall ill. The handout can include a list of common symptoms to watch for. This includes, but is not limited to:

✓ **Temperature**
>38°C (100.4°F) or higher

✓ **Unexplained shortness of breath**
Or difficulty breathing

✓ **Frequent unexplained cough**

✓ **Unexplained tiredness**

The handout can also include a list of characteristics that may make an employee especially **vulnerable** to the infection and define who may need to take extra safety precautions. These characteristics include, but are not limited to:

- **Individuals over the age of 65**
- **Individuals who are immunocompromised**
- **Individuals with moderate or severe asthma**
- **Individuals with chronic respiratory illness**
- **Individuals with chronic liver or kidney illness**

Sample Health Screening Questionnaires:

- [CDC Questionnaire](#)
- [Mayo Clinic](#)

Resources

- [CDC: "People Who Need to Take Extra Precautions"](#)

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

TRANSPORTATION

While considering which employees to bring back to the office first, consider their method of transportation and how it may put them at risk for COVID-19 exposure. Employees with personal vehicles will have a limited amount of risk, while those relying on shared rides, carpooling or public transit may be cause for concern.

Public transportation has continued to run, but sanitation standards and frequency of routes may vary. While employees may be willing to utilize public transit in their commute, your company should be informed of the additional risk this may entail not only to the individual, but to the other employees they may encounter at your facility. Remain informed of your city's sanitation standards and the CDC recommendation for mass transit in order to decide if employees utilizing public transit should be invited back into the office at this time.



Resources

- **The New York Times:**
["Biggest Hurdle to Bringing People Back..."](#)
- **Cushman & Wakefield:**
["Recovery Readiness"](#)

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

TRANSPORTATION

As an example, the city of [Chicago Public Transit's](#) sanitation procedures include:

- Daily vehicle cleaning at the start and end of the day, as well as between trips
- Daily cleaning of high touch zones at stations Required use of face coverings for all riders
- Required use of face coverings and other PPE by staff
- Suggested social distancing of riders

If deciding to allow employees utilizing public transit or shared rides back into the office, consider these suggested safety standards. These precautions could include facial coverings and other PPE, as well as hand washing on their trip to and from the office. Upon their arrival at the office, consider requesting employees wash their hands or change into fresh PPE.



Resources

- [CTA: "Coronavirus Info"](#)

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

TRANSPORTATION

Communicate with employees before hand to know what method of transportation they plan to use, and send appropriate tips for the PPE and commuting time suggested for public transit or shared rides.

Consider all methods of **facilitating an easier and safer commute for your employees**. Consider the feasibility of stipends for employee parking to encourage the use of personal vehicles as opposed to public transport.

Some companies are considering coordinating a carpool for their staff. Companies may have employees picked up in a **bus or shuttle** while encouraging social distancing measures and requesting the use of PPE. Ensure shuttles have a process to maintain 6 ft distance while loading/unloading and queuing. Shuttles likely will need to remain at half capacity or less, according to your state's stage of reopening.

The transportation methods each employee has access to and length of commute may influence the company's decision of the timeline for when each employee will come back to the office.



Resources

- **The New York Times:** "[Biggest Hurdle to Bringing People Back...](#)"
- **Cushman & Wakefield:** "[Recovery Readiness](#)"
- **Tesla:** "[Getting Back to Work](#)"

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

EMPLOYERS SHOULD PREPARE FOR THE FOLLOWING FAQs FROM EMPLOYEES:

- ? How will new policies affect my day-to-day tasks?
- ? What will be the Work from Home policy be like in the future?
- ? How long will these added safety measures remain in place?
- ? What should I do if someone on my team shows symptoms?
- ? What if I'm concerned about exposure from a colleague who I think isn't following recommended stay at home or social distancing guidelines?
- ? What should I do if someone in my household is a healthcare worker?
- ? What if I have higher health risks or someone in my household has higher health risks?
- ? What if I'm not comfortable returning to office?
- ? What if I need to use public/mass transit but am worried about the safety?

SECTION 3

HOW TO BRING EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE

HOW TO BRING EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE

WHO TO BRING BACK FIRST



Many office spaces will not be able to handle all employees on premise at a time while practicing appropriate social distancing measures. In this case, companies are recommended to gradually bring back **small percentages** of their workforce at a time.

SEVERAL COMPANIES HAVE ALREADY DECIDED TO KEEP 75% - 80% OF THE WORKFORCE REMOTE INITIALLY IN ORDER TO SPREAD OUT THE EMPLOYEES ON SITE SUFFICIENTLY.

While considering the ways in which to limit office capacity, consider grouping the same employees together for each shift in the office to minimize the variation in individuals they come into contact with. This is a variation of **CDC recommendations** to bring children back to school in the same small groups of students.

Resources

- [McKinsey & Co: "Europe Needs to Prepare to Get Back to Work"](#)
- [CNBC: "How the Biggest Companies in the World are Preparing"](#)

HOW TO BRING EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE

WHO TO BRING BACK FIRST



LEADERS

As mentioned in Section 4, organizations are first determining whether their front-line managers, as well as mid-level and senior-level executives, feel comfortable returning to work. Having leadership present will help reinforce the new norms and protocols, while providing direction and maintaining morale.



VOLUNTEERS

Some companies are considering bringing employees back to the office on a volunteer basis. If taking volunteers via survey, make it clear that employees will not be penalized for not volunteering. Encourage employees to share their concerns and rank their comfortability honestly.

In this case, companies will want to ensure the volunteers selected include the appropriate personnel to handle enforcing and training others on new safety procedures. It also will need to include personnel to manage the facility and maintain sanitization standards.



TEAMS

Some companies have decided to phase in employees by teams. In this case, consider what teams would most benefit from returning to the office first, then reach out to those employees to gauge their comfortability and make any needed accommodations. The teams to consider first may include executive leadership, IT, finance and others needing increased desk space and technology.

HOW TO BRING EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE

LIMITING OFFICE CAPACITY



Depending on city regulations and industry, there will likely be regulations on how many people may be present in an office at a time. It is likely that many offices do not have the square-footage or layout available to hold all their employees to these social distancing standards at one time.

Different businesses and industries may rely more heavily on being in the office to generate revenue, while others are more equipped to operate at capacity remotely. If bringing employees to the office, consider **grouping them into teams** that will work, travel and eat together at the same times as to facilitate health tracking and minimize the number of individuals they may contact.

The pages that follow outline the three options many organizations are considering right now.

As an example, a large Chicago company has decided to maintain an initial maximum threshold of 25% occupancy at any one time in their workplaces with occupancy thresholds increasing in alignment with state government plans. Upon opening, they will adhere to a maximum occupancy of no more than one person per 200 square feet for restricted/secured rooms.

HOW TO BRING EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE

LIMITING OFFICE CAPACITY



**STAGGERED
SHIFTS**

After a brief warehouse closure, Victoria's Secret online store has reopened after introducing **staggered shifts** to reduce the number of employees entering the building at a time. Depending on the business, other organizations may consider shifting the designated work times of employees in this way, as well.

While staggering shifts, be sure to allocate seating to ensure employees are always six feet apart and do not use the space or technology one after the other without sanitizing. Consider how each station will be cleaned - this may require employers to conduct multiple cleanings throughout the day to fully sanitize each workstation before the next employee begins their shift.

Staggering shifts may look different depending on the industry and typical hours of operations. Some offices operating 24-hours will split the day into thirds, while others that typically are only open 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. may extend to include two separate 8-hour shifts. While allowing time for the office to be thoroughly cleaned between shifts, an example of this would be the first shift operating from 5 am to 1 pm and the second from 2 pm until 10 pm.

Resources

- [Business Insider: "Victoria's Secret Reopens..."](#)
- [CNBC: "How the World's Biggest Companies are Preparing"](#)

HOW TO BRING EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE

LIMITING OFFICE CAPACITY



ALTERNATING DAYS

If bringing employees back to the office who have been working virtually, consider bringing them back only part time, and alternating days in the office and working from home.

Many of Wall Street's biggest firms like JPMorgan Chase and Goldman Sachs have already **announced their plans** to have employees alternate weeks working from home in order to reduce the number of employees in the office at a given time.

By reducing the number of employees in the office, the risk of overcrowding and contamination can be managed more easily.

Resources

- [Bloomberg: "Wall Street Tries Fighting Virus With Staggered Office Plans"](#)

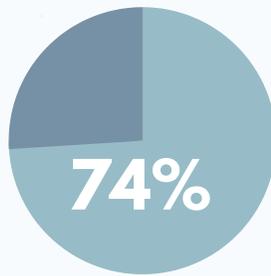
HOW TO BRING EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE

LIMITING OFFICE CAPACITY



WORK FROM HOME

317 Chief Financial Officers responded to a [Gartner survey](#) on March 30, 2020 stating that:



of companies intend to shift some employees to remote work permanently post COVID-19.

In an effort to keep employees safe while also cutting commercial real estate costs, remote work may become more of the norm for many companies.

Many organizations that had been reluctant to embrace remote work have now been able to test it out, and some have found that partial or total remote work may benefit them indefinitely.

Others may have struggled or noticed a significant decline in productivity or company culture and may rethink policies moving forward.

Each company's work-from-home policies may look slightly different while accommodating the company and employees' needs during this time.

Resources

- [Gartner: CFO Remote Work Survey](#)

HOW TO BRING EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR AT-RISK EMPLOYEES

With schools and daycares closed for the 2019-2020 year, some employees with children may need to stay home for the time being. Other employees may be immunocompromised or are in some other way at-risk and do not want to return to a crowded office. Employees considered "**at-risk**" may need to request additional accommodations from their HR representative.

Depending on the company's work-from-home policies and office layout, decide ahead of time what accommodations may be appropriate if requested. This may include but is not limited to extended work from home, changing shifts for a less populated time block or adjustments to travel, as needed.



Resources

- [OSHA: "Hazard Recognition"](#)

HOW TO BRING EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE

BREAK TIME POLICIES

Remember that hourly employees working from home must still receive a **30-minute uninterrupted** lunch break in accordance with state labor laws and remind employees as such.

Consider scheduling **staggered break times** to limit the number of people in or passing through communal spaces and utilizing shared appliances such as the refrigerator or microwave. Allow enough time for the employee to wipe surfaces and appliances used and schedule regular professional sanitization of these areas throughout the day, especially throughout common break times.

Depending on the company, it may be necessary to designate eating areas and policies surrounding the food and drink in the office.

While communal cafeterias may remain closed indefinitely and it is recommended to remove communal tables, consider providing designated refrigerators and eating areas where employees can space themselves apart. Some employers are considering closing kitchen spaces altogether and are asking employees to bring lunch boxes to store their food.



Resources

- [SHRM: "Taking Precautions with Food at Work"](#)
- [CBRE: "Re-Opening the World's Workplaces"](#)
- [ManPower: "Smart Restart"](#)

HOW TO BRING EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE

BREAK TIME POLICIES

At some offices this may mean eating at their desk, and for others it may mean sectioning off meal areas with a six-foot area designated for each employee on break at a time. In this case, designate one or two employees to remain posted in the communal space to ensure each space is disinfected to **EPA standards** between uses.

If recommending employees eat at their desk, ensure they still take the required 30-minute uninterrupted break time where no work is performed.

The **CDC recommends** that restaurants move towards single-use condiments and disposable plates and utensils, install sneeze guards at registers and avoid self-serve stations. Lunchrooms in offices should take similar precautions if choosing to continue to provide communal kitchenware, food or drinks.



Resources

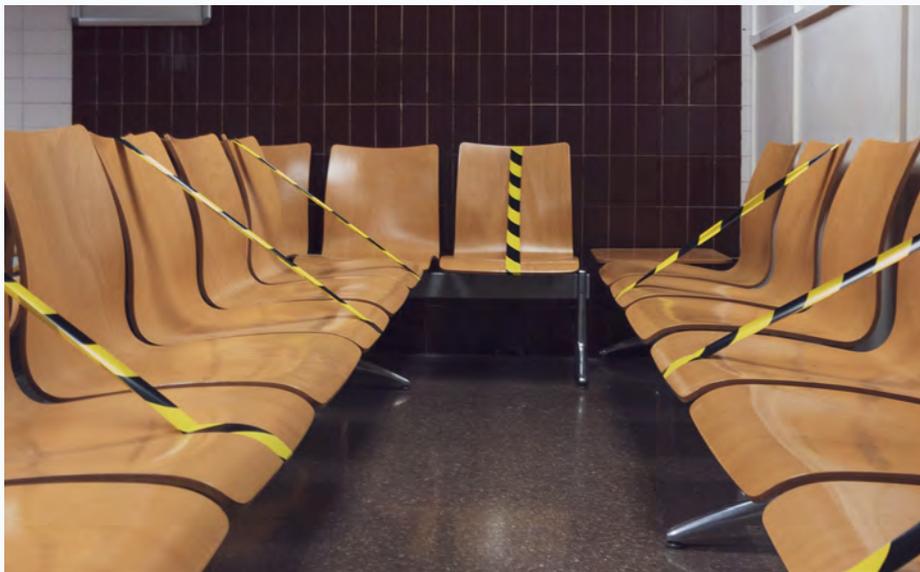
- **EPA**: "[Disinfectants for Use Against...](#)"
- **CNN**: "[CDC's Draft Guidance for Reopening...](#)"

HOW TO BRING EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE

MEETING/EVENT POLICIES

One of the most notable pieces of office culture that will change because of COVID-19 is routine in-person meetings. While such meetings have either been canceled or moved to virtual platforms in the past months due to COVID-19, it has shown that, for many companies, the need for **regular meetings is drastically less than previously thought**. Many talking points for meetings can be transcribed into email communication or hosted via video conference, rather than gathering in large groups.

If your team hosts regular meetings or check ins, consider having employees share regular updates on project progression via messaging system. This can result in more clear and concise communication that team members can reference as needed.



Resources

- **Inc:** "Real Talk Business Readiness..."

HOW TO BRING EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE

MEETING/EVENT POLICIES

As your organization returns to the office, consider which meetings can effectively remain virtual via a conferencing or messaging system. Non-essential travel should be limited or postponed based on CDC guidelines. If **travel** is required, consider the ability to drive a personal vehicle rather than fly. If employees must fly for essential travel, consider providing them with recommended PPE and sanitary wipes for the trip.

If meeting in person, limit the number of people in a room at a given time by CDC guidelines and state legislature, depending on your state's reopening plan and what phase you are in. Ensure each person is at least 6 feet away from one another. Do not shake hands, and make sure to post signage both outside and inside the room reminding attendees of this and other social distancing **policies**. Be sure to stay updated on your state's social distancing standards and regulations when it comes to **in-person meetings** to ensure you are remaining compliant.

Keep record of meeting attendees for at least two weeks after the event. In the event that any one of them falls ill, notify the others to self-quarantine.



Resources

- **Laner Muchin:** ["ReOpening the Workplace"](#)
- **Hays:** ["Return to the Workplace"](#)
- **WHO:** ["Getting Workplace Ready"](#)

SECTION 4

RECONFIGURATION OF YOUR OFFICE

OFFICE RECONFIGURATION

For many organizations, the office itself, as well as much of a company's day-to-day operations, will have significant alterations in order to keep employees safe and prevent a second wave of infection. In order to best prepare your organization for its return to work, here are things to consider and preemptively plan for today.

SPACE & OCCUPANCY PLANNING

In order to mitigate the spread of infection, new distancing guidelines will need to be put into place in the office. While considering the layout of furniture and flow of foot traffic, there may be major changes needed to your **office organization**.

Consider de-clustering workspaces and adding partitions to desks to block contagions that can be transmitted by talking, coughing, or sneezing. Avoid seating employees directly facing one another without a partition between the two, and partitions may move up and down with standing desks. If partitions are unavailable, ensure that employees are staggered as to not face any one directly and there is a radius of at least six feet between each.



Resources

- [CBRE: "Reopening the World's Workplaces"](#)
- [Jones Lang LaSalle: "COVID-19 Re-entry"](#)

OFFICE RECONFIGURATION

SPACE & OCCUPANCY PLANNING

Avoid layouts that encourage employees to be either standing or seated within the same 6-foot radius. While reconfiguring the office, consider each floor's maximum occupancy given [social distancing guidelines](#), and organize workspaces to follow suit.

Other nations around the world have already begun [re-organizing](#) their office spaces to protect employees returning to the workplace. Spacing out desks, adding distance guidelines into the carpeting, and paper desk placemats are only a few of the many strategies that real estate company Cushman and Wakefield has implemented into their 6 Feet Office model.

Consider the design of the office and how to affectively create more closed off spaces. These spaces, while protecting against viral spread, also contribute to deep work and offer less distraction than an open office layout. While a reconstruction of the office may not be fiscally attainable at this time, several companies have begun creating individualized privacy booths with soundproof walls, ventilation and the ability to sit or stand while working.



Resources

- [CDC: "Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation"](#)
- [Fast Company: "Our Offices Will Never be the Same..."](#)
- [CNBC: "From Privacy Booths..."](#)
- [Cushman & Wakefield: "6 Feet Office"](#)

OFFICE RECONFIGURATION

ON-SITE SIGNAGE

Display posters promoting policy changes, social distancing guidelines, and hygiene recommendations regularly throughout the office. Consider installing large format visual displays throughout the office, rather than standard signage, to draw attention. Post **regular signage** in high touch zones indicating the last time the surface was cleaned. Combine this with the other direct, company-wide communication measures discussed in section 3 of this document. Signs may include but are not limited to:

- Notifications of new policies
- Reminders for health and safety standards
- Designating high touch-zones
- Reminding employees to avoid certain areas



Resources:

View additional [Signage Templates](#) from LEAR on page 52 of their Playbook

OFFICE RECONFIGURATION

DESIGNATED ENTRANCES AND EXITS

Consider the usual flow of foot traffic throughout your office and the numerous times employees may come in contact throughout the day. To maintain social distancing protocols, offices can move furniture in a way that designates a **circular flow** for employees to travel in throughout the office. The one-way path minimizes instances of employees crossing paths face-to-face.

This path can include designated entrances and exits to all rooms in order to avoid employees coming face-to-face in doorways. These entrances and exits can be clearly marked and enforced.

Companies may also need to develop protocols to avoid crowding in **elevators and stairs**. Consider adjusting elevator capacities depending on the size and ability to maintain social distancing measures. Place stickers on the floor of the elevator to indicate "**safe zones**" 6 feet apart. If electing to use the stairs, consider if it would be possible to designate staircases as one-way with one case for going up and another for climbing down.

Unless a company owns the entire building, it is likely organizations will have to coordinate these policies and the sanitization process of these spaces with property management.



Resources

- [Cushman & Wakefield: "6 Feet Office"](#)
- [Faegre Drinker: "Q&A Employer Guide..."](#)
- [ManPower Group: "Safe Restart"](#)

OFFICE RECONFIGURATION

RESTROOM POLICIES

Consider the ways in which employees will be able to maintain social distancing standards while using the office restroom. It may be necessary to enforce a limited maximum occupancy for the number of people in a restroom at a time, as well as block off alternating stalls or urinals to ensure 6 feet between employees at all times.

It is suggested that the **high-touch** areas of a restroom, such as doorknobs and faucets, are disinfected no less than four times a day. It is also recommended that appropriate cleaning materials may be left in the restrooms for employees to clean up after themselves as an added precaution between cleanings.

Each employee can be briefed on the proper method for hand washing after using the restroom. Watch the video below for the CDC's proper handwashing practices:



Resources

- [CDC: "What You Need to Know about Hand Washing" Video](#)
- [CDC: "Health Promotion Materials"](#)
- [LEAR: "Safe Work Playbook"](#)

OFFICE RECONFIGURATION

BUILT-IN SYSTEMS

The virus can live on surfaces for days at a time and can float for **three hours** in the air. Given that, it may be necessary for some offices to consider additional ways to ensure a healthy and sanitized environment. While sanitization protocols for surfaces around the office may be more easily kept up, consider the implications of **built-in systems** impacting the sanitization of the office. Heightened filtration standards for HVAC systems may be necessary.

Consider the feasibility of adding automated technology to help reduce the number of high-touch zones throughout the office, such as automated doors, lights, sinks, toilets, garages, refrigerators and paper towel dispensers. Consider the options for hands free handles and surfaces, such as door foot pulls or hooks. Consider stationing standing sanitation areas at the entrances and exits of a room. This may include a self-dispense hand sanitizer station and other appropriate cleaning material for the given room.

Common areas, such as the kitchen, may need to be modified or reconfigured to support social distancing measures. Non-essential items like common silverware, water fountains, toasters and coffee makers might need to be put away, unless self-dispensing options are available.



Resources

- [CNBC: "Coronavirus Lives for Hours in Air Particles..."](#)
- [CBRE: "Re-Opening the World's Workplaces"](#)

OFFICE RECONFIGURATION

TECHNOLOGY GAP ANALYSIS

Quarantine may have revealed a technology gap in many companies to enable employees to work remote. From making sure enough laptops were available, to providing monitors, keyboards and headsets as needed, there will likely be a reevaluation of the technology used in the office to **increase portability**.

With new work-from-home policies and social distancing measures in offices, consider the ways in which workspaces may need to be flexible. To avoid disease transmission, it may be a best practice to provide individual laptops and accessories to each employee. In this way, workspaces can be more easily moved, and employees may work in shifts or from home as needed. If devices are being shared, create a plan for disinfecting thoroughly between uses.



Isolation Room

Designate a specific room ahead of time to serve as an employee **isolation room** to hold individuals who begin to feel ill in the workplace. Ensure the employee can maintain a safe social distance of at least 6 feet at all times to avoid spreading the infection to others.

Resources

- **CRN**: "[Some May Work from Home Permanently](#)"
- **LEAR**: "[Safe Work Playbook](#)" Page 50

SECTION 5

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

Returning to the office does not mean returning to business as usual. When the time comes for employees to return to the office, new policies and procedures will likely need to be put into place to protect the staff. While preparing and looking ahead at what day-to-day procedures may need to be modified, employers may consider the following.

MINIMIZING RISKS OF TRANSMISSION

It is recommended employers ensure all employees who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 while at home do not return to work. Should they experience symptoms while at home, remind your employees to notify the Human Resources team at once and follow the **appropriate precautions** outlined by the CDC. These guidelines include recommendations for **at-home isolation**, monitoring your symptoms, when to seek medical care, and emergency signs.

Ensure all employees understand which **criteria the CDC recommends** to be met before returning to work and are recommended to remain in isolation until then. Should employees need to remain home to care for someone with COVID-19, they are recommended to also notify the Re-Entry Committee and follow **these guidelines** from the CDC.

Resources

- [CDC: "What to Do If You Are Sick"](#)
- [CDC: "Discontinuation of Isolation..."](#)
- [CDC: "Manage COVID at Home Guide"](#)
- [CDC: "If You are Sick or Caring for Someone"](#)

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

ON-SITE HEALTH AND WELLNESS SCREENINGS

When phasing employees back into the workplace, regular **health and wellness screenings** are recommended to prevent a future outbreak in your office. These screenings can be done by the employee themselves before they enter the workplace, and at the entrance to the workplace by a designated professional if deemed necessary.

Work within your team to develop a protocol for when employees will be tested, what the expectations are, what equipment is needed and what to do if an employee does not meet the requirements for safely entering the workplace.

Some companies, such as **Walmart**, have designated certain employees to take the temperatures of all employees daily before entering the building with a no-touch thermometer. They then run through a questionnaire to inquire if the employee has been experiencing any of the early symptoms of COVID-19.



Resources

- [LEAR: "Safe Work Playbook"](#)
- [The Business Journals: "Walmart to Begin Screening"](#)

Sample Questionnaires

- [Public Health Questionnaire](#)
- [Sample CDC Screening](#)

THE EARLY SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19 CAN INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO...



Fever



Repeated Shaking



Cough



Muscle Pain



Difficulty Breathing



Headache



Chills



Sore Throat



New Loss of Taste or Smell

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

When discussing personal protective equipment (PPE), it is important to understand the distinctions between the different types of equipment, which options are the safest choice for your employees, and what materials are available

According to [Little](#), experts in Labor and Employment law, there is an important distinction between a “mask” and a “face covering.”

Face Mask: A filtering respirator typically used by healthcare professionals, first responders or other essential business workers. This includes [N95 respirator](#) and surgical mask, one of the most effective options when it comes to protecting the user from airborne infection. The CDC does not recommend the general public wear N95 respirators to reserve the critical supply for health care workers and first responders.



Resources

- [Little](#): "Mask and Face Coverings"
- [FDA](#): "N95 Respirators and Surgical Masks..."

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Face Covering: Material worn around the mouth and nose to limit the transmission of the COVID-19 virus from one individual to another.

The CDC recommends use of face coverings while in public, "especially in areas of significant community-based transmission." Individuals are recommended to regularly wash their face coverings using a washing machine to ensure proper sanitation.

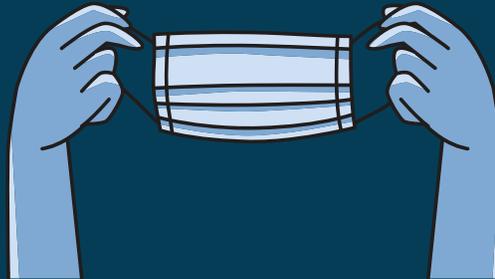
When removing your face covering, be sure to not touch your eyes, nose and mouth and wash your hands immediately after removal. It is recommended that face coverings not be worn by anyone who has trouble breathing, cannot remove the covering themselves, or on young children under the age of 2.



Resources

- [CDC: "Use of Cloth Face Coverings..."](#)

WHEN WEARING A CLOTH FACE COVERING, THE CDC SUGGESTS THE FOLLOWING 5 CRITERIA:



- ✓ **Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face**
- ✓ **Be secured with ties or ear loops**
- ✓ **Include multiple layers of fabric**
- ✓ **Allow for breathing without restriction**
- ✓ **Be able to be laundered without damage or change to shape**

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Additional layers of PPE such as gloves, gowns and coveralls, will depend on the workplace and the level of potential exposure to COVID-19 infection. For a detailed list of information on the following questions and more, visit the [CDC's Personal Protective Equipment FAQ page](#):

- What is the difference between gowns and coveralls?
- What testing standards should we consider when looking for CDC-recommended protective clothing?
- How do you put on and remove gloves properly?



Resources

- [CDC: "Personal Protective Equipment Q & A"](#)

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Employers can adapt infection control strategies based on a **hazard assessment** to decide what safety equipment may be necessary. Depending on the hazards at a given workspace and updated government or CDC recommendations, consider what your organization's policy will be regarding personal protective equipment (PPE).

PPE is used to prevent worker exposures to illness. Using the hazard assessments above, decide ahead of time what your **organization's policy** will be regarding what PPE is required, by whom and in what areas of the office.

Decide if the company or the employee will be responsible in procuring the appropriate materials. Some states, such as New York and New Jersey, have issued executive orders requiring essential businesses to provide their employees with masks or face coverings. Stay updated on the orders emerging for your state and communicate this ahead of time, and remind employees regularly of the policies.

Establish appropriate consequences for those who do not wear the required PPE and designate the procedures for individuals to enforce them.



Resources

- [OSHA: "Hazard Recognition"](#)
- [OSHA: "Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19"](#)

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

A healthcare call center that has been working in the office throughout COVID-19 has enforced the use of masks for all employees. They provided the masks, and if an individual shows up without the mask, they are not admitted into the building.



A manufacturing plant where all employees were presented with mandatory protective coveralls, shoes and face coverings, which were handed in and sanitized at the end of each shift. A designated task force oversees ensuring all employees are wearing the protective materials before they enter the door and takes their temperature to ensure no one is admitted with a temperature of over 100 degrees.

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

CLEANING PROTOCOLS

Regardless of the size of office, **cleaning protocols** can include more frequent and thorough sanitizing of all surfaces. For many companies this will likely include a more rigorous schedule of professional cleaning, as well as encouraging employees to sanitize surfaces and devices themselves before and after use. Make workplace cleaning **highly visible** by posting charts that label the last time a space was cleaned. These should be posted on all high touch zones, such as doors, restrooms shared tables and elevators.

Before opening your office, compile at least 60 days' worth of EPA certified cleaning supplies. Consider the number of high touch areas in the office, increased frequency of cleaning and suggested products for different areas while considering the amount and types of cleaning products to stock. Consider what PPE you will recommend your cleaning team to wear, such as masks, gloves, shoe covers or gowns and ensure you are stocked with 60 days' worth of that as well.



Resources

- [OSHA: "Covid-19: Control and Prevention"](#)
- [CDC: "Cleaning and Disinfecting your Facility"](#)

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

CLEANING PROTOCOLS

Create a plan to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, door handles and light switches regularly throughout the day and especially between shifts.

Whenever possible, employees are recommended to avoid using other people's phones, desks, workspaces or other tools and equipment. If equipment and workspaces are used by multiple people throughout the day, clean and disinfect them thoroughly before and after each shift.

To most effectively sanitize a surface, consider cleaning with soap and water prior to disinfecting. To disinfect, use products that meet **EPA's criteria** for use against COVID-19 and are appropriate for the surface.

In order to encourage employees to aid in sanitization efforts, consider using high-touch areas as stations for hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies, such as sanitizing wipes.



Resources

- [EPA: "Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2"](#)

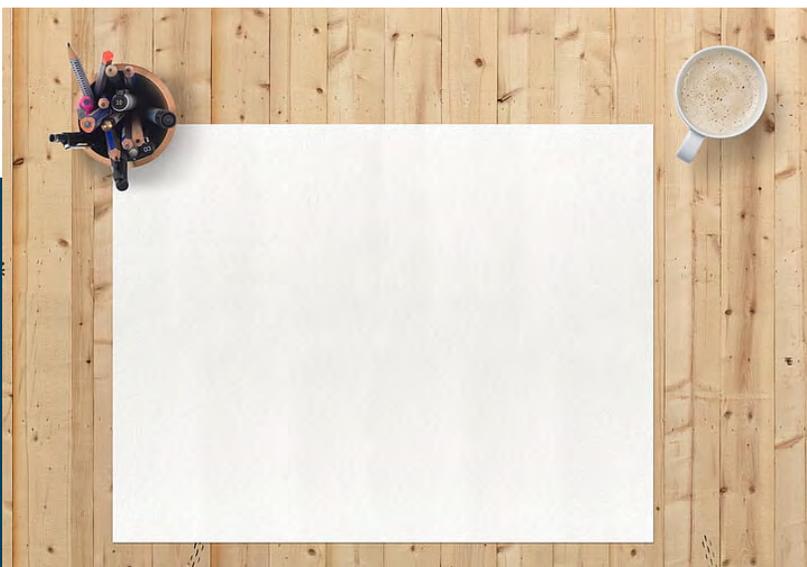
VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

CLEANING PROTOCOLS

By encouraging employees to wipe down surfaces before and after use, professional cleaning efforts can be supplemented throughout the day. Professional cleaning protocols are not only for workstations, but for conference rooms, communal areas, kitchens, reception desks, hallways, elevators and staircases, parking garages and restrooms.

While many of those areas may be mandated to sanitization professionals, encourage employees to maintain an uncluttered workspace so cleaning can be made more effective, and encourage them to do their part in wiping down surfaces and tools they use.

Some companies have encouraged utilizing a **paper placemat** to cover their desk and is disposed of at the end of the day to help mitigate some contact-based spread.



Resources

- **Fast Company**: "Our Offices Will Never be the Same.."

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

COMMUNICATING WITH PROPERTY MANAGERS

Some companies own their own building, while others may rent office space. In the case that a company is renting office space, it is recommended they communicate with property management about what **sanitization standards** will be put into practice.

Ensure you are informed of what additional **sanitization responsibilities** will be on the company versus what the building administrators will be addressing. The following page proposes questions to ask your property management company prior to returning to work.



Resources

- [LEAR: "Safe Work Playbook"](#)
- [CDC: "Cleaning & Disinfecting Your Facility"](#)

Communicating with Property Managers

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

-  Will there be extra cleaning prior to re-entry; will there be extra cleaning during re-entry?
-  How will security be staffed?
-  What are the plans for letting tenants use the elevators?
-  Plans for the restrooms?
-  Will there be guidelines with entry and departure?
-  Will there be any standards that tenants must comply with (i.e. being half-staffed, etc.)
-  Will gyms and common spaces be open?
-  Will visitors be allowed?
-  What will entrance and exits look like? Any additional screening?
-  How will an outbreak be handled? Communication, cleaning, etc.?

Virus Mitigation & Sanitization

INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE HEALTH PROTECTION

The **CDC recommends** the following guidelines for employees to practice preventing infection and the spread of the virus to others. Find a way to communicate these expectations with employees before re-entering the workplace, and be sure to follow up with regular reminders:



- Wash hands regularly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds



- Wash hands after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose, or after being in a public space



- If hand washing is not possible, use a hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol



- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth



- Cover your mouth and nose when possible with a face covering



- Always cover your cough or sneeze



- Throw away used tissues in the garbage immediately after use

Resources

- [CDC: "Protecting Yourself & Others"](#)

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

CONTINGENCY PLAN

In effort to minimize the risk of an outbreak, your company may need to consider hiring the following:

- Temperature takers for completing a health scan of employees before they enter the workplace
- Contact tracers to research and mitigate potential viral spread
- Corporate health consultant for assisting in return to work planning
- Additional cleaning and sanitization staff
- Risk Management or Crisis Management professionals

If your organization has had to do layoffs or restructure, consider if it may be possible to move some employees from one department to another, retaining talent while building out the in-demand roles.

Resources

- [OSHA: "Guidance on Preparing Workplaces"](#)
- [ADATA: "Americans With Disabilities Act"](#)
- [CDC: "Testing for COVID-19"](#)
- [CDC: "Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities"](#)

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

CONTINGENCY PLAN

Even with the best sanitation efforts, there is still the possibility that an employee could begin to experience symptoms of COVID-19 while in the workplace. It is crucial that all employees and staff are trained on the proper response protocol should an employee begin to feel ill. Developing a contingency plan for this scenario could prevent an outbreak in your workplace and is essential for the safety of your employees.

Establish systems for reporting increased cleaning and reporting illnesses, and ensure you are able to contact trace by creating a strategy for cross referencing each employee's schedule to see where they may have come into contact with whom.

Contract tracing is the process by which you can create a list of everyone a sick person came into contact with in the 14 days prior to them exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. This is best done as soon as someone at your organization tests positive by mapping out the individual's schedule in the past fourteen days, compiling a list of those closest to them and compiling a list of others they may have come into contact with.



Resources

- [Laner Munchin: "Reopening the Workplace"](#)

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

CONTINGENCY PLAN

To begin **contract tracing**, ask to employee who tested positive:

- In the last fourteen days, have you been closer than six feet to another coworker or manager/supervisor? If so, whom?
- In the last fourteen days, had you been experiencing any COVID-19 related symptoms (fever, dry cough, shortness of breath, body aches, chills with body aches, headache, sore throat)?

Those who have been determined to have been exposed with close contact with the sick person should immediately be sent home to monitor for symptoms for fourteen days. Other workers should be informed of the confirmed case while protecting the anonymity of the person and may stay at work but be encouraged to monitor for symptoms.

For more information on how to establish a contract tracing procedure, visit the CDC. The Illinois Dept of Public Health defines a breakout of COVID-19 as two or more positive tests. Businesses should contact their local health department to report the breakout.



Resources

- [Laner Munchin: "Reopening the Workplace"](#)

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

CONTINGENCY PLAN

Create a [response plan](#) for employees who:

- Report or demonstrate symptoms at work
- Have recently been at work and tested positive
- Have been in contact with confirmed COVID-19 case
- Have not recently been at work but have tested positive
- Have been in contact with a confirmed case

Should an employee test positive for COVID-19, it is important to have a plan in place to quickly mitigate the spread of the virus in your workplace. Consider the following when putting a contingency plan in place in your workplace:

- If an employee feels ill, what resources can you provide to ensure they are tested accurately? Follow the [CDC recommendations](#) on when to get tested.
- What plan can be put in place to act on if an employee feels ill at work? If an employee tests positive, how will you alert the other employees that they could potentially be at risk while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act ([ADA](#))?
- Will you facilitate testing for other employees who now suspect they could be infected?
- How will your organization handle the cleaning of the space where the infected employee was working?
 - See [Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities from the CDC](#)
- What requirements will the infected employee need to meet before returning to work once recovered?

Consider the following when putting a contingency plan in place in your workplace:



If an employee feels ill, what resources can you provide to ensure they are tested accurately? Follow the **CDC recommendations** on when to get tested.



What plan can be put in place to act on if an employee feels ill at work?



If an employee tests positive, how will you alert other employees they could potentially be at risk while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (**ADA**)?



Will you facilitate testing for other employees who now suspect they could be infected?



How will your organization handle the **cleaning** of the space where the infected employee was working?



What requirements will the infected employee need to meet before returning to work once recovered?

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

A PLAN FOR SYMPTOMATIC EMPLOYEES

If an employee **experiences symptoms** consistent with those of COVID-19 while at work, it is recommended that your organization act quickly to ensure the virus isn't spread to others in the workplace.

They should contact their direct supervisor and designated Health and Wellness Ambassador through electronic means to avoid spreading infection and **separate themselves** from others immediately. After notifying their supervisor, the employee should go home to self-isolate and follow **CDC recommendations** to test themselves for COVID-19 at their earliest opportunity.

Employers should **take note** not to violate confidentiality by disclosing the name of the sick individual beyond a need-to-know basis, do not ask questions regarding symptoms, testing or recent travel.

Close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the sick person within the last seven days and wait 24 hours before **cleaning and disinfecting** to minimize potential of other employees being exposed to respiratory droplets while cleaning. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.



Resources

- [LEAR: "Safe Work Playbook"](#)
- [CDC: "Interim Guidance for Businesses..."](#)
- [Tesla: "Getting Back to Work"](#)
- [Hays: "Return to the Workplace"](#)

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

A PLAN FOR SYMPTOMATIC EMPLOYEES

If possible, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in these areas.

If an employee receives test results confirming COVID-19, the employer should notify all staff occupying that office of their possible exposure while concealing the identity of the sick employee. Staff should then consider themselves exposed and take additional precautions to avoid spreading the infection to others.

These **precautions** may include self-isolation, utilizing masks and gloves, self-checking for symptoms of COVID-19 or getting tested. (Link here to the self-checklist.) Employees who tested positively for COVID-19 or have exhibited COVID-19 like symptoms may be required to self-isolate for fourteen days after symptoms subside and provide a doctor's note before coming back to the workplace.



Resources

- [CDC: "Public Health Recommendations..."](#)

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

A PLAN FOR SYMPTOMATIC EMPLOYEES

Create a standard messaging procedure via phone or video to inform employees of their potential exposure and provide informational materials of what they should do to minimize their risk of exposing others. Consider this example from [Harvard Business Review](#) on informing employees of their potential exposure:

“Someone in our workplace has tested positive for Covid-19, and they have identified you as a close contact according to the CDC definition. We are here to support you. If you are at work, please prepare to leave as quickly as you can. Once you get home — or if you are already working from there — find a place to self-isolate, monitor yourself for any symptoms, and talk to your doctors.”

If exposed to an individual with COVID-19 up to 48 hours before the onset of their symptoms, the exposed person should:

- Maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet from others at all times
- Self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough and shortness of breath
- Check temperature twice a day Avoid contacts with people at higher risk for severe illness

Resources

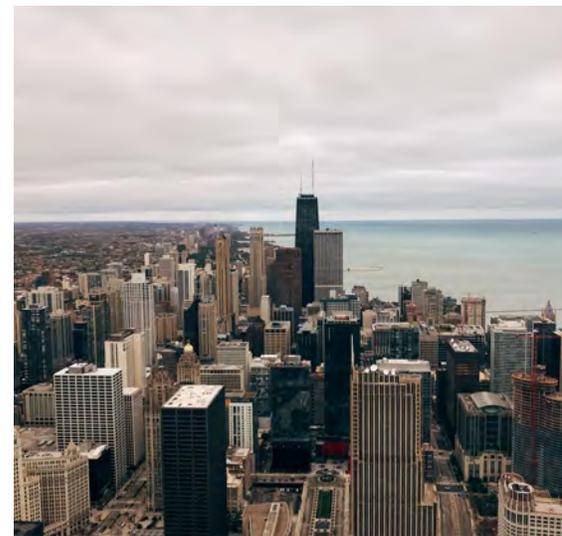
- [HBR: "Your Employee Tested Positive..."](#)

VIRUS MITIGATION & SANITIZATION

A PLAN FOR SYMPTOMATIC EMPLOYEES

As a part of your contingency plan, prepare Human Resources and your Wellness Committee to handle an influx of **employee concerns** and questions, and preemptively put together an employee FAQ handout. Expect employees who have been exposed to the virus to exhibit stress and request more information. Remember that under the ADA, companies may not disclose the identity of a sick person.

As concerns arise due to a COVID-19 outbreak, remind employees of the ways they can reach out to Human Resources or Wellness Ambassadors with questions and concerns. Consider sending a survey to gauge employee concerns or create online portal to submit questions anonymously.



Resources

- [CDC: "Interim Guidance..."](#)

CONTACT US

We hope this guide served as a useful resource when considering how best to bring back your workforce safely. For more intel into navigating the Coronavirus, visit our [COVID-19 resources page](#).

Have additional questions? Contact us:

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