



Baker Reopening Some Businesses in New Phased Plan

Reopening Phases Will Last Minimum of Three Weeks

Chris Van Buskirk 5/18/20 11:06 AM

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, MAY 18, 2020.....Massachusetts is on its way to reopening the state's economy with a detailed plan Gov. Charlie Baker is scheduled to unveil on Monday under which construction projects can resume immediately and some businesses can reopen on May 25 with public health restrictions in place.

The plan, outlined to reporters by a Baker administration official on Monday morning, offers the first glimpse into the guidelines, restrictions, and timeline for reopening businesses.

Progress in the four-phase approach to gradually roll back forced shutdowns of non-essential businesses will be measured against six data points including the COVID-19 positive test rate, the number of deaths from the virus, and health care system readiness. The state's COVID-19 Command Center plans to release updates every Monday on the six data points alongside their daily numbers.

Each phase will last for a minimum of three weeks with the understanding that government officials could revert to a previous phase at any time. Monday marked the start date of Phase One.

As for who gets to open first, manufacturing and construction companies and houses of worship can resume operations with restrictions, capacity limitations, and staggered start times on May 18. Businesses that were deemed essential will have until May 25 to comply with safety standards aimed at limiting the spread of the virus.

Labs, personal services like hair salons, pet grooming, and car washes, and retail spaces can also open on May 25 with some restrictions. Office spaces in Boston can open on June 1 with a 25 percent limit on the number of people who can show up to work.

Activities and outdoor locations like beaches, parks, drive-in theaters, some athletic fields and courts, most fishing, hunting, and boating will be accessible on May 25, Memorial Day.

Baker has previously emphasized that while some businesses might get the green light to start operations, employees should consider working from home when possible. As expected,

much of the timeline for reopening will rely heavily on whether or not key data indicators trend in a positive direction.

Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito and Economic Development Secretary Mike Kennealy headed up an advisory board to craft the reopening plan. The group heard testimony from more than 75 business associations, labor unions, non-profits, and coalitions that represent more than 112,000 businesses and more than two million employees.

If the COVID-19 cases continue to trend downward and other indicators are positive the state may move into Phase Two, dubbed "Cautious."

Restaurants and lodging will receive the go-ahead to open with restrictions and some capacity limitations once phase two of the reopening plan launches. Additional personal services like nail salons and day spas are also included in phase two.

Baker on Monday is also expected to update his stay at home advisory to "safer at home" where people should only leave their house for health care, permitted work, shopping, and outdoor activities. The state advises that people do not participate in close contact activities like pick-up sports games and should continue to use remote modes of communication instead of visiting high-risk friends or families.

When Phase III arrives, residents can expect bars, casinos, and all other business activities to resume with restrictions and capacity limitations. Large venues and nightclubs will remain closed during phase three.

During Phase IV, the state plans to enter into a "new normal" with full resumption of activities and business operations.

[This is a developing story]

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