CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Safe Business Re-opening Plan

Expert Advice from Cove Risk Safety Services

OPEN

Safety
Awareness
For
Everyone

Things to Think About as You Prepare Your Safe Business Reopening Plan During COVID-19

As businesses start to reopen it's important to keep focus on the seriousness of COVID-19 by taking every possible precaution for keeping employees and customers safe.

There's new information emerging daily, and government leadership, local authorities, and industry regulators will be continuing to update procedures and protocols related to your business. Be prepared to plan, revise your plan, have alternative plans available, and keep your options open. Protections you take to open your business in May or June might not be the same as you need in July, August, September, or beyond. Employee feedback will be important, and you should plan to hear their concerns and ideas.

Cove Risk Services is dedicated to staying updated on government guidance, best practices for safety and health, and risk management related to COVID-19. We're available to answer questions, give advice, and assist as you resume or reconfigure business operations.

Don't assume your employees are prepared to take precautions. Information about COVID-19 changes daily. Even the doctors and government leaders are regularly educating themselves, so they can keep the public informed. You should educate your employees about the symptoms of COVID-19 so they're not confused or misguided. Please see this site for a full description of symptoms: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html

Questions you should consider:

- Has the landlord or property manager checked the HVAC system? It's a good time to keep the air clean.
- Will your building be thoroughly cleaned/disinfected before your employees enter?
- How often will the workspace be cleaned or disinfected once you're back to work?
- What chemicals will be used for cleaning/disinfecting?
- What surfaces (frequently touched/porous/non-porous) should be cleaned regularly?
- What are your expectations for employees cleaning their own areas?
- Do employees know how long the virus can live on surfaces?
- Do I need to provide gloves, face coverings, or other PPE?
- What is our plan for social distancing?
- What is our supply of hand sanitizer or other handwashing options, and how easily accessible will it be for employees? What is our guideline for how often/when employees should be washing?
- What is our plan for training/educating employees on how to courteously distance themselves and proceed with work?
- What is our communication system? What is our plan for meetings?

- What are our expectations for entering the building? Do we need to stagger our entry over a period of time? What's our plan for preventing areas where people might tend to congregate?
- What's our plan for walking through the building in order to maintain a safe 6-foot distance as people pass each other? How will we identify safe pathways and aisles, and areas to stand and wait (when looking to enter an area that is common for congregation)?

Risk reduction practices

These practices are recommended as you prepare to reopen:

- Assess the risks of COVID-19 exposure in your workplace, both for the workforce as a whole and for particular jobs or tasks.

- Allow telework or deliver services remotely where possible and postpone nonessential meetings or events.

- Increase physical space between employees at the worksite. You might need to redesign workstations, stagger shifts, or bring back only a portion of your staff at a time.

- Increase physical space between employees and customers. Use partitions, drive-through services, and curbside pick-up or delivery, and limit the number of customers allowed in the facility.

- Keep common areas such as break rooms closed or restrict the number of employees permitted in these spaces simultaneously to allow employees to maintain proper social distancing. Have employees eat at desks or individual workstations rather than in groups.

- Use signage and floor markings to manage the flow of traffic through the facility and provide visual cues to encourage people to maintain 6 feet of space from others.

- Ensure an adequate supply of soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and other cleaning and disinfection materials. Encourage employees to take frequent handwashing breaks and reinforce this message with signage or posters detailing proper washing procedures.

- Follow current guidance regarding the use of masks and face coverings, both for employees and customers or clients.

Providing employees with PPE

PPE (personal protective equipment) must be available, and in many cases it's now being used for employees who never needed it before. Specifically, most employees will be required to wear masks (and sometimes gloves) in the immediate future and employers will be responsible for providing a mask for every person.

OSHA has provided this video and poster to demonstrate how to properly wear and remove a respirator. These resources are also available in Spanish (video, poster).

Monitoring employee health and protection

In addition to keeping the physical space safe and clean, you also have to have procedures in place for handling employee health issues. For example, what if a member of an employee's household tests positive for (or has symptoms of) COVID-19? What if a member of your employee's household was exposed to the virus in their own workplace? You'll need leave policies in place so that you don't have employees bringing COVID from their homes into the workplace.

Taking employees' temperatures as they arrive at work and looking for other symptoms isn't enough; they need to know that it's mandatory to stay home under certain conditions.

Prepare to update, update, and update again

Again, facts about COVID-19, how it's spread, and its symptoms are evolving daily. What's considered safe today might not be safe tomorrow. There are so many unknowns that we all must be prepared to change our approach on a moment's notice.

There are guidelines from the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) for employers to follow as states and regions begin to reopen. You can download AIHA guidelines for your industry here: https://www.backtoworksafely.org/.

You can also review this reopening framework by the National Safety Council.

There are also new guidelines by the CDC and OSHA as you reopen:

- **Reopening Guidance** for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes

- General Business **Frequently Asked Questions**

- **EPA list of disinfectants** for use against SARS-CoV-2

You should also check guidance from your state officials regularly: Massachusetts, New Hampshire

Your employees will be a valuable resource for you to know how your processes are working; take their concerns seriously, especially if they feel unsafe or unprotected. Ask them what they are concerned or uncertain about and try to correct actions accordingly. Feedback should be requested at the same time every week and reviewed at the same time every week. Changes should be announced to the employees and the protocol should be updated in writing.

Additional safety related information can be found on the Cove Risk Services website. These resources are provided to members only as part of the Safety Awareness for Everyone (S.A.F.E) program.