

RETURNING TO THE OFFICE DURING COVID-19

As businesses begin to structure plans for recovery after the relaxing of government “Stay-at-Home” orders, comprehensive assessments of operations should be carried out to ensure the safest possible environment for employees as they start to return to the workplace.

EVALUATING WORKPLACE RISK¹

LOWER RISK EXPOSURE

Jobs that have minimal occupational contact with the public

- Remote employees
- Long-distance truck drivers
- Agricultural employees

MEDIUM RISK EXPOSURE

Jobs that require frequent or close contact with the public

- Retail
- Public transit operators
- School employees

HIGH RISK EXPOSURE

Direct contact with known or suspected COVID-19 cases

- Health care workers
- Health care workers treating COVID-19 cases
- Workers in health care facilities

VERY HIGH RISK EXPOSURE

Direct contact or exposure to bodily fluids of known or suspected COVID-19 cases

- Health care workers performing aerosol-generating procedures such as intubation
- Health care workers participating in invasive specimen-collecting
- Laboratory personal handling specimens from known or suspected COVID-19 patients
- Morgue workers performing autopsies on known or suspected COVID-19 cases

MANAGING WORKPLACE RISK²

Based on workers’ risk exposure, employers should develop and implement appropriate workplace safety policies informed by industry standards. When developing guidelines for employees and company properties, employers should follow federal, state, and local regulations and policies.



Employees should have appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including face masks and gloves, if indicated by local regulation.

- CDC guidelines recommend the use of a cloth face mask.



Social distancing guidelines should continue to be maintained.

- Restrict use of any shared items or shared office spaces.
- Space desks and individual seats at least six feet apart.
- When possible, continue to encourage telecommuting.



Sick employees should be encouraged to stay home.



Determine sanitation best practices for your employees and place of business.

- Employers should place posters that encourage good hygiene at the entrance of workplaces and in other high-traffic areas.
- Employers should provide soap and water for hand washing in the workplace.
- If soap and water cannot be made readily available for employees, alcohol-based hand sanitizers that are at least 60% alcohol should be provided.
- If an employee’s hands are visibly dirty, soap and water should be used instead of hand sanitizer.
- It is the employer’s responsibility to ensure that adequate supplies are maintained.



New cleaning protocols should, at minimum, include increasing the frequency with which workstations and common areas are cleaned.



Increase air ventilation rates.



Consider establishing employee health care checks as a daily routine.

- Temperature checks may be conducted on employees.



Establish consistent communications that address any new policies, procedures or processes for the workforce.



Reduce or replace face-to-face meetings with virtual communications whenever possible.



Ensure that managers are prepared to answer any questions from their direct reports about expectations or new processes.



Have communications drafted and ready to go in the event of a positive COVID-19 case within the workplace.



Workers who need to wear protective clothing and equipment should be trained on how to put it on, use it effectively, how to clean and care for it, and how to take it off correctly.



Employers should ensure that there is a clear procedure for employees to follow and report when they are exposed, diagnosed or are experiencing the symptoms of COVID-19.

1. <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/hazardrecognition.html>
 2. <https://www.fisherphillips.com/post-pandemic-faqs>