

Very soon, businesses will be re-opening. During this trying time, it is vital that each company take extra precautions to ensure the safety of their employees. As unfortunate as it is, this is the new normal. It is important to remember that these precautions will save lives. By maintaining social distancing and proper sanitation, we can stop the spread of COVID-19.

**Understanding COVID-19**

In order to fight this virus, first we need to understand what it is. The CDC advised that COVID-19 is an illness caused by a virus that can spread by coming into close contact with a person who has the virus. When an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, they leave behind respiratory droplets. Exposure to those droplets can cause a healthy person to contract the virus. Symptoms include fevers, drowsiness, shortness of breath, dry cough, aches and pains, nasal congestion, and sore throat. On average, it takes 5-6 days for someone who is infected to show symptoms, however it can take as many as 14 days for symptoms to show.

**How to avoid exposure**

* If you are sick or experiencing symptoms, STAY HOME
* Wash your hands frequently with soap, sanitizer, or another hand rub with at least 60% alcohol. We recommend once an hour
* Maintain a safe distance from other workers. The CDC recommends 6 feet between people
* Ensure each work zone has appropriate sanitation tools
  + Masks
  + Sanitizers
  + Gloves
* Avoid sharing tools, and make sure common tools are wiped down after each use
* Ensure that there is never more than 10 people gathered in one place at one time, including meetings. Utilize video or phone conferencing when possible.

**Cleaning and disinfecting your workspace**

It is imperative to consistently clean your workspace. Tables, chairs, doorknobs, counters, and anything else that is regularly used or touched can be a breading ground for COVID-19. Using soap, water, and other disinfectants regularly can stop the spread of the virus. It is recommended to spread the cleaning solution over an area and leave it there for one minute before wiping it away, allowing the solution time to kill any bacteria. For items like electronics, utilize wipes and other cleaning items that will not soak the item but still kill the germs.

**Daily questions we should all ask ourselves**

Here is a list of questions each employer and employee should ask themselves to start the day:

* Do I feel sick or under the weather today?
* Am I experiencing any symptoms including fevers, drowsiness, shortness of breath, dry cough, aches and pains, nasal congestion, and sore throat?
* Do I know if I have come into contact with anybody who has contracted COVID-19?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, do not go to work. Instead, consult the PA department of Health and CDC to determine the best way to get tested. It is recommended that you only return to work once the test comes back negative or you are symptom free for seven days.

**Being accountable for your business**

Safety is our number one goal. Safety for ourselves, our family, our employees, and every person we encounter every day. A great way to do that is to select one member per job site to become a “Virus Eliminator Coordinator”. We have attached a checklist for the “Virus Eliminator Coordinator” to utilize each day, ensuring that each business is safe and stopping the spread of the virus. This person will be responsible or teaching and enforcing social distancing rules and regulations. They will be responsible for ensuring that each person they come in contact with is wearing the appropriate gear, cleaning each common tool, gatherings are held to the appropriate number of people, and each business has the correct amount of cleaning supplies needed to stay diligent in their fight against the spread of COVID-19.

**PA Dept. of Health Building Safety Orders**

1. clean and disinfect hightouch areas routinely in accordance with guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in spaces that are accessible to customers, tenants, or other individuals
2. implement temperature screening before an employee enters the business, prior to the start of each shift or, for employees who do not work shifts, before the employee starts work, and send employees home that have an elevated temperature or fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.
3. employees who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home;
4. stagger work start and stop times for employees when practicable to prevent gatherings of large groups entering or leaving the premises at the same time;
5. provide sufficient amount of space for employees to have breaks and meals while maintaining a social distance of 6 feet, while arranging seating to have employees facing forward and not across from each other in eating and break settings;
6. limit persons in employee common areas (such as locker or break rooms, dining facilities, training or conference rooms) at any one time to the number of employees that can maintain a social distance of 6 feet;
7. provide employees access to regular handwashing with soap, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant wipes and ensure that common areas (including but not limited to break rooms, locker rooms, dining facilities, rest rooms, conference or training rooms) are cleaned on a regular basis, including between any shifts;
8. provide masks for employees to wear during their time at the business, and make it a mandatory requirement to wear masks while on the work site
9. where feasible, businesses should conduct business with the public by appointment only and to the extent that this is not feasible, businesses must limit occupancy to no greater than 50% of the number stated on the applicable certificate of occupancy
10. install shields or other barriers at registers and check-out areas to physically separate cashiers and customers or take other measures to ensure social distancing of customers from check-out personnel
11. designate a specific time for high-risk and elderly persons to use the business at least once every week
12. require all customers to wear masks while on premises
13. schedule handwashing breaks for employees at least every hour;
14. where carts and handbaskets are available for customers’ use, assign an employee to wipe down carts and handbaskets before they become available to each customer entering the premises.

**Understanding the phases of reopening**

Governor Wolf has outlined three phases of reopening businesses – red, yellow, and green.

Red phase: Life sustaining businesses only able to be open. Schools and childcare facilities closed. Stay At Home order in place. Restaurants limited to carry-out and delivery.

Yellow phase:

Telework must continue where feasible. Businesses with in-person operations must follow Business and Building Safety orders. Gatherings able to of 25 of fewer permitted. Retail allowable. Restaurants and bars limited to carry-out and delivery only. Indoor recreation, health and wellness, personal care services, and entertainment remain closed.

Green phase:

All businesses may open but must maintain CDC and PA health guidelines.

**Links for assistance**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/Reopening_America_Guidance.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/ReOpening_America_Cleaning_Disinfection_Decision_Tool.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

<https://www.governor.pa.gov/process-to-reopen-pennsylvania/>

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/SOH%20COVID-19%20Worker%20Safety%20Order.pdf>