ARKANSAS STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF ARKANSAS

Business matters.

Return to work safely

Throughout the challenges presented by the COVID-19 public health emergency, the State Chamber/AIA's goal has been to strike a balance between safeguarding health and protecting Arkansas's economy. All Arkansas businesses are eager to get back to work.

However, the key to businesses returning to a semblance of normalcy is confidence both for employees and customers. If employees are highly confident that they can go to work each day without contracting the virus, they will feel confident about going to work. If employees do not feel confident in the precautions that their employer is taking, they will be anxious, and the overall work product and experience will suffer.

If customers are highly confident and see evidence that a business is doing its part to keep them safe and has a clean and sanitized environment, then they will feel confident about shopping, dining or frequenting that business. If not, they will not return, and businesses that fail that test may perish.

The State Chamber/AIA is emphasizing strong guidance to employers that it is up to them to establish these protocols. If they don't follow these suggested guidelines, or if they aren't as diligent as others, their businesses will suffer and could be in danger of closing.

COVID-19 PREVENTION BEST PRACTICES

Business matters.

Suggested best practices

Comprehensive federal guidance is provided by the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). State guidance is provided by the Arkansas Department of Health and the Arkansas Economic Development Commission.

https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html

https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus

https://www.arkansasedc.com/covid19

The following suggested guidelines can be replicated as general best practices, applicable to most workplaces. Industry-specific best practices are outlined on www.arkansasstatechamber.com along with some real-time success stories from companies who are getting it right for workers and customers.

## Personal protection and facilities cleaning, sanitizing

- Create training to review new safe-at-work requirements and guidelines for all employees.
  - If returning to work, training and orientations should be done on day one.
  - Make information available to employees about Personal Protective Equipment, disinfection measures, social distancing protocol, on-site health screening, signs and symptoms of COVID-19, self-quarantining and return- to-work policies, visitors and contractors screening, signage, time-off options and all other COVID-19-related safe workplace changes.
- Train employees on frequent hand washing; properly covering coughs and sneezes; refraining from touching the face.
- Clean and sanitize surfaces frequently.
  - Make wipes, sanitizer and cleaning products widely accessible throughout workplaces.

- Clean the break rooms and common touch areas (door knobs, etc.) after each shift or more frequently.
- Thorough cleaning of ALL shared surfaces throughout the facility at least once every 24 hours. This includes common spaces like bathrooms, conference rooms, lunchrooms, etc.
- Shut down production in the area where a COVID-19 affected employee worked (i.e. department, line, station) to conduct cleaning, as well as shut down and clean common spaces like bathrooms, conference rooms and lunchrooms, once notification of potential COVID-19 spread is suspected.
- Provide masks, shields, gloves, shoe coverings, coveralls, etc. if appropriate and available.
- Provide touch-free solutions
  - Touch-free time clocks.
  - Individual water containers for workers instead of large water coolers.
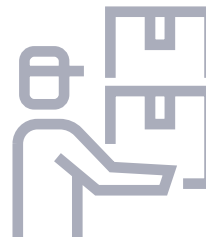
Social distancing
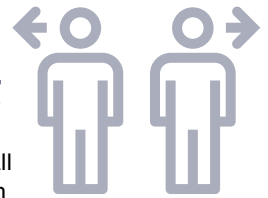
- Offer work-from-home options for all employees who can perform duties remotely.
- Change shifts.
  - Stagger shifts and start times to maximize distancing.
  - Allow 30-minute buffers between shifts if possible so that employees don't come into contact during transition.
  - Cross-train teams, so that teams can better stagger shifts.
- Provide visual markers on floors for six-foot distancing, per CDC guidance.
- Stagger breaks and lunch schedules.
- Offer lunch breaks in vehicles instead of shared cafeterias or break rooms.
  - Employees need to bring their own meals and be able to eat them without use of microwave.
- Restrict movement between departments and/or functions (e.g., don't allow traffic between production and office workspaces).
- Conduct phone/email/virtual meetings instead of in-person meetings, even when at office.
- Limit meetings to no more than 10 individuals, provided appropriate spacing is possible.
- Hold meetings in large spaces where people can spread out at six-foot intervals.
- Space out desks and workstations; construct temporary walls between workstations.

Vendor engagement

- Request health and travel assessments for vendors/contractors coming on-site.
- Separate contractors and vendors from the workforce (have them use separate bathrooms, entrances if possible).
  - Prohibit nonessential vendors and deliveries from entering facility.
  - Require deliveries to be dropped outside facility door, eliminating vendors from entering facility.

Customer engagement

- Offer curbside delivery instead of in-store pick up.
- Provide on-site services to customer's facility once their business is closed (after hours).
- Offer drive-through service only.
- Add plastic barriers/shields at registers.
- Ask customers to stay in their vehicles in parking lot while they wait.
- Offer call-ahead services for parts and service and lock door to walk-in customers.
- Conduct virtual sales calls.
- Limit the number of customers in the facility to ensure appropriate distancing, along with visual markers on floors for six-foot distancing, per CDC guidance.
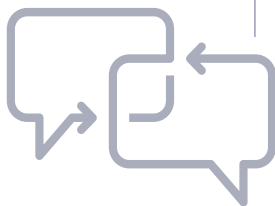
Travel policies

- Require a two-week quarantine for employees who return from outside of the country or a domestic COVID-19 hotspot.
- Consider an appropriate quarantine for employees required to travel out of state.

Monitoring employee health

- Conduct temperature or employee wellness checks at the start of shifts to ensure employee does not exhibit COVID-19 symptoms (fever >100.4 F, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing).
- Create a master schedule for all employees that shows when people may come in contact with others; use this for contact tracing in the event of a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 exposure.
- Create a response plan for employees who report or demonstrate symptoms at work; have recently been at work and tested positive or have been in contact with confirmed COVID-19 case; or have not recently been at work but have tested positive or have been in contact with confirmed COVID-19 case.
- Ask employees about their health status before they return to work from a sick leave (even if they were out with a headache), require certification by a health care professional of ability to safely return to work (particularly for those noted above).
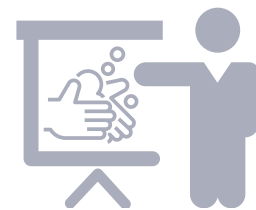- Offer a variety of leave options for employees who may have to miss work because of a COVID-19-related reason.

Employee and customer communications/ instruction/signage

- Post internal signage that can be used to alert or remind employees about guidelines and expectations and responsibilities. Post external signs on doors alerting visitors to restrictions on entry and movement in and around facility as well as any applicable guidelines and expectations.

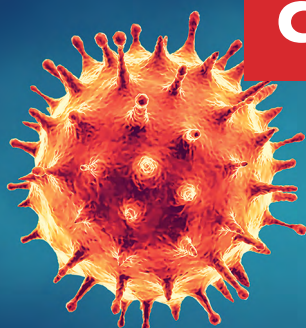## Communications/ Education/ Responsibilities

- Communicate and educate employees and management to carry out the plan and protocols, as well as clear direction on roles and responsibilities. For example:
  - Provide internal signage to alert co-workers to use another means to contact the person (phone, email, text).
  - Post signs on door to instruct customers/ visitors on business's safety protocols.
  - Provide remote workers with a list of free resources to stay healthy and active at home (i.e. ergonomic tips, stress-relief tools, fitness resources).
  - Provide pre-recorded safety training videos for customer-facing activities.
  - Maintain an up-to-date repository on the company's shared network that allows employees to access all COVID-19 documents, resources, and company protocol.

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Covid-19 questions?

The Arkansas State Chamber is here to help.

Our COVID-19 web page is updated regularly and includes resources to help your business through this crisis. For more information, click here.

Getting back to the office
(Professional Companies/Organizations)

As professional businesses prepare to return to the office for work, here are recommended best-practices guidelines for re-entry.

Companies should:

- Follow relevant CDC and State guidance on return-to-office dates and guidelines.

- Maintain flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic as team members juggle home schooling, childcare, and safeguarding their own or family members' health risks.

- Open in phases, gradually increasing to normal capacity as guidelines allow, to accommodate social distancing.

  - For worksite planning purposes, once date of return to office is confirmed, employees should be surveyed to learn who will be returning and when.

  - To reduce issues of social distancing in the office, group leaders should be authorized to rotate team members between office worksite and working from home.

  - Office workstations should be adjusted to ensure 6-ft. space between team members.

- Require an employee experiencing the onset of fever at work—or any symptom of illness—to immediately notify their leader, go home, and consult with their healthcare provider.

- Mandate that sick employees remain at home and not return to the office until they've been free of fever for 48 hours.

- Require a two-week quarantine for any employee diagnosed with COVID-19; notify co-workers while maintaining confidentiality of the employee; and deep clean employee's worksite.

- Provide "no contact" thermometer temperature check stations at the office while encouraging employees to be good citizens and to monitor their own temperatures prior to coming to work.

- Provide cloth masks for any employee who wants one.

- Require that employees wash their masks (and hands!) regularly.

- Continue to provide sanitizing products, such as hand sanitizer and wipes, throughout the workplace.

  - Encourage employees to sanitize commonly touched areas, such as coffee pots and refrigerator handles, both before and after use.

- Deep clean offices and workstations on a regular basis

- Practice social distancing in all aspects of the workplace.

- Limit gatherings in shared spaces, such as breakrooms and conference rooms, so as to comply with 6-ft. social distancing.

  - Remove and/or space out chairs in common areas and conference rooms.

  - Ensure virtual-meeting option for all scheduled meetings.

- Exclude visitors in the office during the first phase of workplace re-entry.