Is Your Workplace Ready to Reopen?

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As businesses start to reopen office spaces, employers are reimagining what the "new normal" in the workplace will look like. We're working closely with our partners to provide practical advice on how to welcome employees back safely, advising on things like local and federal guidelines, tweaks to daily operations and more. Read on for some of our best advice.

Identify Current Risks

The risks attributed to COVID-19 vary greatly depending on the type of business, its physical space, number of employees and location. For instance, companies centered in urban locations face the added risks of employees taking public transit and being in close proximity to others commuting to work.

Even the most mundane parts of our daily work lives are coming into question. Elevators, for example, are a real concern for city skyscrapers. Will employees be asked to take the stairs? If they cannot, what are the risks of taking an elevator with others? Are accommodations being made to comply with ADA regulations?

Employers need to assess whether it's worth the risk to bring employees back to the office, or keep them working remotely for now – or for good. For employers reimagining their workspaces and preparing for the return of employees, there are important protocols to mitigate the risk of spreading the disease.

Be Informed about City, County, State and Federal Guidelines

Most local governments are following the guidelines put forth by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), but many are also factoring in what works best for their particular populations. Employers are currently looking to figure out how they can implement safety precautions, including temperature checks at the door, sanitization, contact tracing in the event an employee tests positive for COVID-19, restroom monitoring, dispersing crowds in social areas like break rooms and conference rooms, among other measures.

Reconfigure Daily Operations and Develop a Team

Risk Strategies' division, Pro Safety, is an all-inclusive safety management company that has been working with businesses on risk assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to their Infectious Disease

Assessment Guide, business owners should consider these modifications to their workplaces:

- Set up check-in points for temperature checks and health assessments
- Create one-way directions for foot traffic and one-way entrances and exits
- Create physical barriers between employees to encourage social distancing
- Provide cleaning and sanitization stations
- Institute an individual or team responsible for frequent cleaning and sanitization at busy areas like restrooms, eating areas and workspaces

Once precautions are in place, the big question becomes: who will be in charge of enforcement? Employers need to consider who the responsibility lands on to make sure every employee is compliant. Many businesses will delegate this task to their HR departments. It's also worth asking the landlord or building management company what their plans are for safety measures and assigning ownership of compliance for the larger physical space so there is no room for confusion.

Continue to Reassess Your Risks

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a fluid situation and July is shaping up to be a turning point for many businesses as many states move towards reopening. As we continue through phased approaches, the risks may change, meaning operations and safety protocol will have to be continually assessed and modified as needed.

Want to learn more?

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