

# RETURNING TO THE WORKPLACE



**ACEC**

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES  
*of Illinois*



# PURPOSE

- The purpose of this document is to provide a compilation of best practices for return to work planning from consulting firms in Illinois. .

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Take your time – this is a marathon-not a sprint. If it is not broken-don't fix it. No need to worry about finding a solution for a problem that doesn't exist.
- Don't worry about normal, focus on safe and effective.
- Our goal with this document is to provide suggestions, guidance and tools that enable businesses to go beyond minimum requirements and demonstrates to their employees and clients that safety remains a guiding principle.



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2 | **WHO COMES BACK**

3 | **PREPARING THE OFFICE**

4 | **ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES**

5 | **TRANSPORTATION CONSIDERATIONS**

6 | **GATHERING AND SPATIAL PLANNING**

7 | **PREPARING THE EMPLOYEES**



# 1

# PLANNING THE RETURN

## a. PERFORM INTERNAL RISK ASSESSMENT OR ANALYSIS

- Review office operations. What work is essential to function as a business.
- Who is High Risk based upon CDC guidelines
- Consider internal operations. Are you able to adhere to CDC distancing recommendation

## b. ASSESS YOUR EMPLOYEES

- Conduct Survey - Page 5



# EMPLOYEE SURVEY

## EMPLOYEE SURVEY

1. How are you feeling with all the uncertainty in our current environment?
2. For planning purposes, please provide what you expect your status to be as of June 1, 2020:
  - Ready to return to office full time
  - Ready to return to office a few days a week; work from home the remaining days
  - Not yet ready to return, still have health concerns
  - Not yet ready to return, need school/summer childcare options to resume
  - If "not yet ready to return," what are the obstacles to you returning to work?
  - Please be detailed and include possible dates so we can plan
3. Information shared with employees related to COVID-19 has been:
  - Too little
  - Just right
  - Too much
  - Comment:
4. Employee communications related to COVID-19 have been timely:
  - Yes
  - No
  - Comment:
5. In this remote work environment, I feel connected to my team:
  - Yes
  - No
  - Comment:

6. In this remote work environment, I feel connected to my Leader:
  - Yes
  - No
  - Comment:
7. I can meet the needs of my clients and team members during my remote work arrangement:
  - Yes
  - No
  - Comment:
8. My productivity now compared to pre-COVID and this remote work arrangement has:
  - Decreased
  - Remained the same
  - Increased
  - Comment:
9. We cannot wait to see you!  
Assuming safety protocols, other precautions are in place (as outlined by the CDC) and local restrictions have been lifted, what is your readiness to return to the office?
  - Comment:

# 1

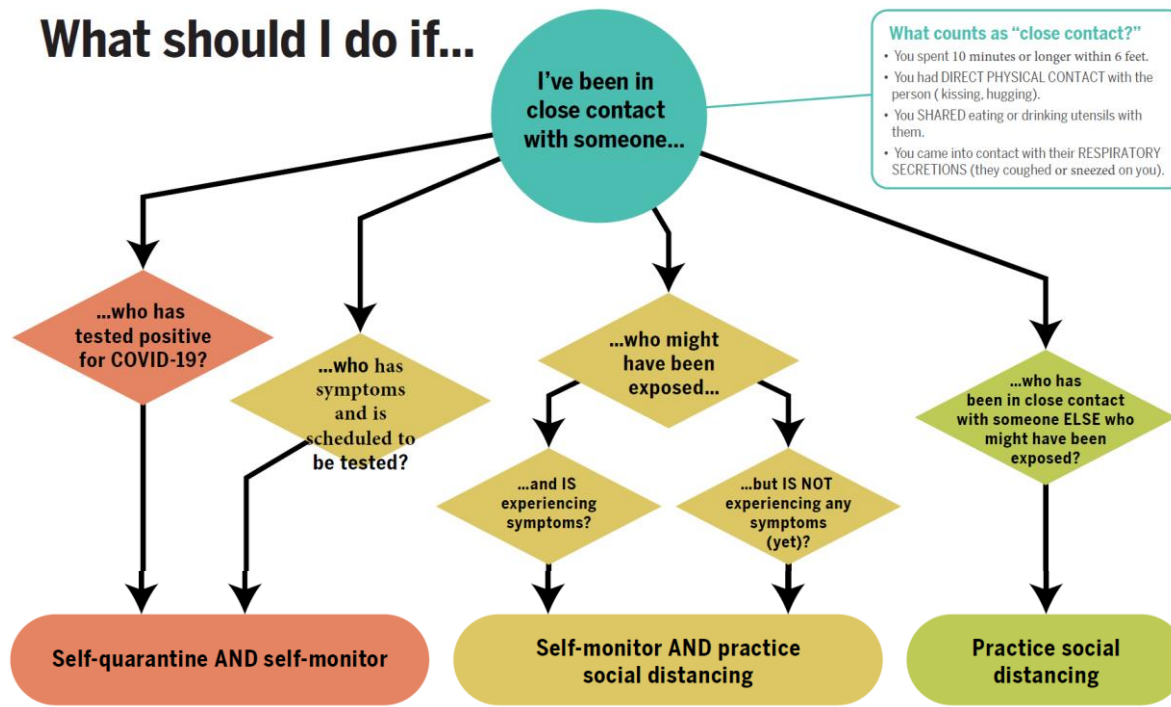
# PLANNING THE RETURN

## c. COMMUNICATION WITH EMPLOYEES RETURNING

- Expectations
    - Symptom Free
    - Maintain Social Distancing
    - Frequent use of hand sanitizer
    - Frequent cleaning of personal workspace
    - Face coverings encouraged when social distancing is not an option
    - Cleaning of common use areas
  - Self-Reporting:
    - Sick: Fever, shortness of breath, chills or muscle pain, temperature, cough, headache, sore throat
    - Contact: MIT Medical Chart - View Page 7
- Someone with symptoms, location with widespread and sustained transmission, first responder or frontline worker



## What should I do if...



## How do I...

### ...self-quarantine?

**STAY HOME** for 14 days.  
**AVOID CONTACT** with other people.  
**DON'T SHARE** household items.  
 Learn more at [medical.mit.edu/HowTo#self-quarantine](https://medical.mit.edu/HowTo#self-quarantine)

### ...self-monitor?

**BE ALERT** for symptoms of COVID-19, especially a dry cough or shortness of breath.  
**TAKE YOUR TEMPERATURE** every morning and night, and write it down.  
**CALL** your doctor if you have trouble breathing or a fever (temperature of 100.4°F or higher)  
**DON'T** seek medical treatment without calling first!  
 Learn more at [medical.mit.edu/HowTo#self-monitor](https://medical.mit.edu/HowTo#self-monitor)

### ...practice social distancing?

**STAY HOME** as much as possible.  
**DON'T** physically get close to people; try to stay at least 6 feet away.  
**DON'T** hug or shake hands.  
**AVOID** groups of people and frequently touched surfaces.  
 Learn more at [medical.mit.edu/HowTo#distance](https://medical.mit.edu/HowTo#distance)

### And practice great hygiene!

**WASH** your hands frequently • **AVOID TOUCHING** your face • **WIPE DOWN** frequently touched surfaces regularly

Learn more at [medical.mit.edu/HowTo#hand-hygiene](https://medical.mit.edu/HowTo#hand-hygiene)

If you experience any symptoms related to COVID-19 please contact your supervisor

# 2

# WHO COMES BACK?

CONSIDER EMPLOYEE COMFORT WITH COMING BACK TO WORK



## WHO IS ELIGIBLE & ESSENTIAL

- Classify essential and non-essential workers.
- Identify and understand those in high-risk categories, with childcare or transportation constraints and level of comfort to return
- Consider lower tiers of eligible employee, be not essential



## CONSIDER INTERVALS

- Consider what percent of employees should be coming back?
- Consider at what intervals should employees return?



## CONSIDER FACILITIES

- Consider social distancing with spatial density
- Consider staggering start and end times
- Consider altering the definition of work time to accommodate all shifts and locations



## CONSIDER FLEXIBILITY

- Continue to promote and encourage remote work
- Consider creating “core hours” for meetings
- Consider adjusting leave policies for those employees that need it



## BE PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE

- Be prepared for a relapse of COVID-19
- Anticipate being flexible and changing regulations

If bringing back teams fully is against current public health guidance remember to maintain communication.



# 3

# PREPARING THE WORKPLACE

## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE):

- Make personal protective equipment supplies available for the workforce depending on job assignment
- Begin ordering supplies now and consider alternate and localized procurement outside of traditional supply chains



MASKS

- Cloth masks
  - reusable or disposable
  - workers should use a face covering if they cannot maintain at least 6 feet of distance between themselves and others



GLOVES

- Single day use
  - often multiple required per day



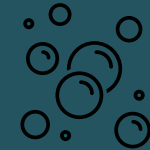
HAND  
SANITIZER

- Should be available daily and in abundance



SOAP  
AND WATER

- Should about be available daily and in abundance



ANTISEPTIC  
HAND WIPES

- Should be available daily and in abundance
- Or, disinfectant spray

# 3

# PREPARING THE WORKPLACE

## SOCIAL DISTANCING & PHYSICAL MEASURES:

### **Workers should always comply with 6-foot social distancing:**

- If social distancing is not possible, PPE measures should be adhered to.
- No visitors should be allowed in project offices.
- All progress meetings should be held via video conference.

### **Make special assessment of small workspace and use judgment for feasibility to continue work:**

- Provide tools to help workers mark out physical distancing spacing when performing job tasks.
- Require that workers maintain 6-feet when waiting to enter turnstiles, hoists/elevators, stairs and other shared spaces.
- Consider closing small breakrooms and limiting copy room to one person at a time.
- In offices of high-density personnel, consider identifying one-way walkways or clockwise walking perimeters.

### **Limit groups to the minimum required to accomplish tasks:**

- Prevent workers from congregating during pre-shift meetings, toolbox talks, and other similar gatherings.
- Segregate groups to reduce cross-exposure.
- Stagger schedules for job functions that put workers close together.

### **Disinfect high touch areas:**

- Equipment with multiple users such as doorknobs, computers, desks, printers, copiers and telephones should be sanitizer before and after use.
- Prohibit workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, work tools and equipment.
- Mail and paperwork from vendors or contractors should be handled with gloves at one desk in the office.

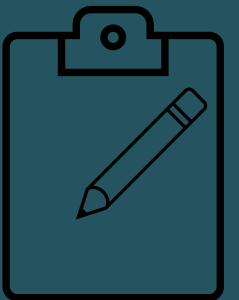


# 4

# ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES

## STRATEGIES THAT BUSINESSES COULD INCLUDE:

- Identify person responsible for monitoring the cleaning of common areas, consider posting tracking sheets like commercial entities
- Implement flexible worksites – Consider: telework
- Implement flexible hours – Consider: staggered shifts, alternate days, etc.
- Limiting nonessential travel
- Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices
- Increase physical space between employees at the worksite – Consider: partitions and removing standing desks
- Increase physical space between employees and customers – Consider: drive through, partitions
- Establish one-directional walking pathways where practical
- Office visitors/suppliers should wear face coverings and be screened for symptoms
- Develop policies for elevator usage with consideration to limiting passengers and outlining where they may stand.
- Implement flexible meeting and travel options – Consider: postpone non-essential meetings or events
- Consider a self check-in phone application like axiom or work care to monitor staff condition.



# 5

# TRANSPORTATION CONSIDERATIONS

## CONSIDER RESTRICTING MASS TRANSIT USE TO THE SITE OR OFFICE



- If mass transit use cannot be restricted require use of appropriate PPE on mass transit.



- Consider giving employees without cars alternative transportation options, such as rental car or stipend for parking



- Restrict ride sharing when possible.



- Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.

# 6

# GATHERING & SPATIAL PLANNING

PHYSICAL DISTANCING IS MANDATORY



## SPATIAL PLANNING

- Re-assess facility capacity to comply with physical distancing procedures
- Establish single point of entry and exit, with directional signs
- Stagger people where possible – spatially
- Establish “Safe Distance Zones” around common gathering points consider floor markings or quadrants in open work areas
- Consider installing physical barriers: plexiglass
- Consider removal of extra seats and declutter furniture to facilitate effective cleaning
- Close water fountains unless touchless
- Limit office to 50% maximum capacity

# 6

# GATHERING & SPATIAL PLANNING

PHYSICAL DISTANCING IS MANDATORY



## GATHERING POLICIES

- Review all operational activities and services that occur in the workplace
- Consider closing or limiting use in public areas: kitchen, break rooms
- Restrict group size gathering to less than 10 people
- Eliminate or limit visitors and require management approval, including vendors
- Consider restricting travel and requiring senior management approval
- Travel to Level 2 & 3 areas (per CDC) should require 14-day self quarantine in accordance with local guidelines
- Consider tracking meetings, times, dates and attendees for 4 weeks

# 6

# GATHERING & SPATIAL PLANNING



## **SANITIZING & DISINFECTING:**

- Ensure appropriate and sufficient sanitation and hygiene facilities and supplies are plentiful at all sites
- Ensure an adequate supplies of soap/hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes/spray should be maintained
- Provide correct guidance on effective handwashing procedures
- Require that all workers wash their hands thoroughly upon arrival
- Regularly clean and disinfect shared tools and equipment
- Consider hiring a specialized contractor to disinfect office prior to return
- Provide training on the safe use of sanitizers and disinfectants

# 6

# GATHERING & SPATIAL PLANNING



## SUSPECTED INFECTION?

- If anyone is symptomatic, send them home immediately. Do not let them on the site and sanitize the office
- Workers must stay home if sick. They should not return to work until all the following are true:
  - It has been at least 10 days since symptoms started
  - Workers never had a fever or have not had a fever for the prior three days without use of fever reducing drugs such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen
  - Worker's overall illness has improved
- Consider closing the site if physical distancing or alternative measures cannot be maintained.



# 6

# GATHERING & SPATIAL PLANNING



## CONFIRMED INFECTION:

- If employee does contract COVID-19, they should remain isolated at home for a minimum of 10 days after symptom onset and can be released after feverless and feeling well (without fever-reducing medication) for at least 72 hours OR has 2 negative COVID-19 tests in a row, with testing done at least 24 hours apart.
- If an employee is identified as being COVID-19 positive by testing, CDC cleaning and disinfecting should be performed as soon after the confirmation of a positive test as practical.
- Where appropriate, notify employees who have been exposed.
- Any employee who has had close contact with co-worker or any other person who is diagnosed with COVID-19 should quarantine for 14 days after the last/most recent contact with the infectious individual and should seek a COVID-19 test at a state or local government testing center, healthcare center or other testing locations.
- All other employees should be on alert for symptoms of fever, cough, or shortness of breath and taking temperature if symptoms develop

# 7

# PREPARING THE EMPLOYEES

## WHY EDUCATE:

- To ensure 100% conformance & compliance
- To dispel myths
- To ensure alignment on policy, strategy and tactics

## TRAIN THE TRAINER:

- Designate matter experts to source, create and deliver content
- Nominate ambassadors to spot check and correct behaviors

## WHO TO TRAIN:

- All employees, leaders and executives
- HR and legal compliance officers
- Any subject matter experts and spot check ambassadors



# 7

# PREPARING THE EMPLOYEES

## TRAINING FORMAT:

- Many formats are available for live webinars with company trainers
- 1:1 in person as employees check in for work

## TRAINING TOPICS TO COVER:

- Employee RTW readiness via anonymous surveys
- Self reporting: signs, symptoms, risk factor distancing
- Respiratory etiquette and hygiene
- PPE care & cleaning
- Facilities cleaning & surface sanitization
- Leadership training (culture of pressure, empathy)
- HR and Legal guidelines training
- Face mask use and hand washing training

## ONGOING COMMUNICATIONS:

- Establish a regular cadence of communicating with employees
- Reinforce office safety plan, worker safety and personal responsibility
- Regular team updates on COVID response
- Publicly post information regarding potential symptoms
- Provide information and resources for temperature checks
- Identify additional areas of information and resources for employees





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For continual information please visit our website: [www.acecil.org](http://www.acecil.org)