

HR Insights

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COVID-19 Employer Information for Office Buildings

Office building employers, owners and managers can take proactive measures to create a safe and healthy workplace for employees, clients and other guests. This article shares COVID-19 [guidance](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Protect Employees

Employers should consider the following steps to protect their employees and other building visitors, while slowing the spread of COVID-19:

- Create a COVID-19 workplace health and safety plan by reviewing the [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#).
- Check the building for hazards associated with prolonged facility shutdown, ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase air circulation as much as possible.
- Identify where and how workers might be exposed to COVID-19 at work.
- Develop hazard controls using the [hierarchy of controls](#). Consider using a combination of engineering and administrative controls, explained further below.

Engineering Controls

Engineering controls isolate people from hazards. Consider the following example controls:

- Modify seats, furniture and workstations.
- Use methods to physically separate employees in the building, including work areas and common areas.

- Improve building ventilation based on local environmental conditions (e.g., temperature and humidity).

Administrative Controls

Administrative controls change the way people work. Consider the following example controls:

- Encourage employees who have symptoms of COVID-19 to notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Stagger shifts, start times and break times to reduce the number of employees in common areas.
- Post signs in parking areas and entrances that ask guests and visitors to wear cloth face coverings.
- Post instructions and reminders at entrances and in other strategic places about hand hygiene, COVID-19 symptoms, and cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces.

Educate Employees

Employers should consider the following steps to educate employees and supervisors about how to protect themselves at work:

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- Develop communication and training that is easy to understand, in preferred languages spoken or read by the employees, and includes accurate and timely information. Suggested topics include signs and symptoms of infection, staying home when ill, social distancing, cloth face coverings, hand hygiene practices, and identifying and minimizing potential routes of transmission at work, at home and in the community.
- Provide information and training on what actions employees should take when they are not feeling well (e.g., workplace leave policies, and local and state health department information).
- Remind employees and clients that the CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are hard to maintain. However, wearing a cloth face covering does not replace the need to practice social distancing.
- Post signs reminding occupants to minimize surface touching. They should use an object (such as a pen cap) or their knuckle to push elevator buttons.
- Consider adding supplemental air ventilation or local air treatment devices in frequently used elevator cars.

For More Information

Read the [CDC's Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#) for additional recommendations for creating new sick leave policies, and cleaning and developing employee communications to help protect employees and other building guests.

Contact us today for more COVID-19 guidance and resources to protect employees.

Source: CDC

The CDC has [posters available](#) for employers to download and print, some of which are translated into different languages.

Develop Special Considerations for Elevators and Escalators

Employers should implement special considerations if their building has elevators or escalators. Consider the following proactive measures:

- Encourage occupants to take stairs when possible, especially when elevator lobbies are crowded or when only going a few flights.
- Designate certain stairwells or sides of stairwells as “up” and “down” to better promote social distancing.
- Use floor markings in elevator lobbies and near escalator entrances to reinforce social distancing. Place decals inside the elevator to identify where passengers should stand, if needed.
- Use stanchions in lobbies to mark pathways to help people travel in one direction and stay 6 feet apart.
- Consider limiting the number of people in an elevator and leaving steps empty between passengers on escalators.