

Business Safety Precautions

NYS is requiring that each business and industry must have a plan to protect employees and consumers, make the physical work space safer and implement processes that lower risk of infection in the business.

In developing these plans, businesses will need to consider three main factors.

The first factor is protections for employees and customers. These include possible adjustments to workplace hours and shift design as necessary to reduce density in the workplace; enacting social distancing protocols, and restricting non-essential travel for employees.

The second is changes to the physical workspace, including requiring all employees and customers to wear masks if in frequent close contact with others and implementing strict cleaning and sanitation standards.

The last factor for businesses to consider is implementing processes that meet our changing public health obligations, like screening individuals when they enter the workplace, or reporting confirmed positives to customers. While these processes will vary from business to business, almost everyone will have to adapt, in some way or another, to our new normal.

To date NYS has not issued any guidelines as to the format of these plans, what they should contain, to whom they will be submitted, who will review/approve the plans, or any other guidance.

Below are guidelines and suggestions for mitigating the spread of the COVID-19 virus, developed by the CDC.

Social Distancing

Social distancing shall be required in all work places. This includes making accommodations for employee safety by meeting the minimum standards listed below.

1. 6-foot separation between work stations and/or physical barriers between work stations if 6-feet cannot be met.
2. Wearing face coverings or masks when not 6-feet apart
3. Wearing face coverings or masks when working with the public
4. No more than 10 employees for every 1500 square feet of space
5. No areas that encourage employee congregation shall be open for group gathering (i.e. break rooms, lunch rooms, conference rooms, etc.)

Public Access

Access to businesses facilities shall limit all public access. In cases where the public must access a facility they shall be required to follow social distancing requirements.

1. Businesses should limit the number of visitors/customers entering their facility.
2. To the extent feasible businesses should establish separate entrances and exits for employees and visitors/customers.
3. Businesses that are based upon customer visits to the facility should to the extent possible;
 - Implement curbside pick-up or meet customers at the door.
 - Require customers to wear masks when entering the facility and/or make disposable masks available to customers.
 - Inform customers of social distancing procedures of the facility.
 - Limit the number of customers permitted to enter the facility at one time in order to maintain social distancing.
 - Frequently clean and disinfect surfaces with which customers come in contact.
 - Install barriers between employees and customers where social distancing may be compromised.

Cleaning and Sanitation

1. All facilities shall be cleaned with disinfectant at the end of each work shift.
2. Cleaning staff shall wear personal protective equipment including face coverings and disposable gloves.
3. All trash and recyclables shall be removed from the work area and disposed after each work shift.

Basic Prevention Measures

Each Plan shall include standards and measures to encourage prevention of contamination and possible shut down as a result. The following measures shall be used in addition to any others that may be necessary based on the specific type of business.

1. Promote frequent hand washing or use of alcohol based sanitizers by workers and members of the public.
2. Provide resources and a work environment that promotes personal hygiene. For example, no-touch trash cans, hand soap, alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60 percent alcohol, disinfectants, and disposable towels for workers to clean their work surfaces.
3. Establish regular housekeeping practices daily or at the end of each shift including routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, equipment, and other elements of the work environment.

Workplace Measures

Each Plan shall include standards to protect employees and incorporate flexibility, creativity and ingenuity to keep employees safe. Based on the type of business and the individual needs of each business these standards may change. It is incumbent upon the business to provide a plan that provides all safety measures in the workplace to the greatest extent possible.

1. Implement telework to the extent possible.
2. To the extent feasible, implement a flexible work schedule (i.e. alternating hours/days or extra shifts) to reduce the total number of employees in a facility at a given time.
3. Implement social distancing to ensure employees and members of the public maintain a distance of 6 feet.
4. Reorganize workstations to maintain social distancing.
5. Utilize colored tape on floors and tables to maintain distancing.
6. Install physical barriers where social distancing is impossible to maintain.
7. Provide a face covering/mask for all employees and encourage them to use it at all times.
8. Require the use of a face covering/mask when social distancing is at risk or if employees interact with members of the public.
9. Minimize interaction with the public and implement safety measures for required contact with members of the public.
10. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily or at the end of each shift.
11. Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment.
12. Require workers to clean and disinfect their workstations daily or at the end of each shift.
13. Replace face-to-face meetings with virtual communications to the extent possible.
14. Limit travel and cancel nonessential travel to locations with ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks.
15. Increase ventilation rates in the work environment.

Administrative Measures

Each Plan shall include measures to be put in place at the administrative level to provide assurance to employees that the workplace is safe and their jobs are secure.

1. Employers should explore the extent to which they can establish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours or staggered shifts.
2. Employers should actively encourage sick employees to stay home.
3. Employers should ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with Delaware County Public Health guidance for employees impacted by COVID, as well as those dealing with sick relatives and/or children home from school.
4. Prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a critical step in protecting workers, customers, visitors, and others at a worksite
5. Employers should provide workers with up-to-date education and training on COVID-19 risk factors and protective behaviors.
6. Employers should inform and encourage employees to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
7. Employers should train workers who need to use protective clothing and equipment how to put it on, use/wear it, and take it off correctly, relative to the specific risk factors of their duties.