COVID-19: Important Health and Safety Considerations for Return to Work

Rev. 1 May 7, 2020

This guidance is developed to protect the health of NYC DEP employees as they return to work. It is intended to assist Bureaus with decision-making and develop suitable controls in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It should be used to assist you in the development of your larger Bureau plan for Reconstitution of your Operation.

Bureaus are encouraged to use this checklist and if necessary, develop checklists that are specific to their operations and risk conditions. In using this guidance, Bureaus are advised to consult DEP procedures on COVID19, agency-wide environmental, health and safety procedures, and any suitable industry best practice documents. This guidance will be updated as new information becomes available on COVID-19.

Items to Consider before Re-occupancy	Status
1. Building Systems	
Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Systems	
a) During low or no-occupancy, and prior to building re-entry, consider operating HVAC systems on a regular schedule, or at least a reduced schedule.	
b) Maintain normal and regular HVAC maintenance, including filter changes. To the extent practical, obtain engineering evaluations or HVAC professional guidance on recommended maintenance, changes in maintenance schedules, or filter or system upgrades or changes.	
c) Consider increasing exhaust and infusion of outside air for re-entry and perhaps as necessary following re-entry into office areas.	
d) Consult ASHRAE Position Document on Infectious Aerosols for operating heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems to reduce COVID-19 transmission.	
Building Water Supply Systems	
a) During low or no-occupancy and prior to building re-entry, consider flushing and cleaning water supply systems (e.g., fountains, faucets, hot water heaters, filtration systems, etc.) to avoid the accumulation of risk for growth and spread of Legionella and other biofilm-associated bacteria which can accumulate in as little as 3-5 days. For guidance, refer to CDC's Guidance for Building Water Systems, AIHA Recovering from COVID-19 Building Closures, and/or consult with a qualified third party, if practical.	
b) Continue to monitor and service all water systems, including hot water heaters, ice machines, filtration systems, etc.	
Elevator and Stairwell Operation	
a) Continue normal and regular elevator maintenance and implement cleaning protocols as described below under "Building Cleaning and Disinfection."	
b) Plan for more frequent and more thorough cleaning and disinfecting of stairwells and handrails in the event that there is increased stair traffic.	
c) Consider programming elevators to return to the ground floor for faster loading. To ease elevator traffic and wait times, consider opening stairwells and designate "up" and "down" stairwells.	

d) Consider elevator cab sizes, number of building floors, and daily number of riders when applying social distancing guidelines for elevator riders. If the elevator cab is not large enough to accommodate 6-foot spacing between occupants, consider limiting riders to 4 max. (one in each corner). Consider arranging for attendant(s) to monitor and assist with directing the foot traffic.	
e) Consider placing queuing marks in elevator lobbies to reinforce social distancing; using stanchions, floor decals, mats, etc. to control elevator traffic.	

2. Building Cleaning and Disinfection

a) Provide sanitizing stations or access to sanitizers in common areas where employees are likely to frequently visit.	
b) Consider cleaning and disinfection prior to building re-entry, if the building has been occupied or partially occupied. If the building has been empty, normal cleaning and sanitizing may be sufficient.	
c) Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfection in high density and high-touch areas, such as building and elevator lobbies; elevator interiors, buttons and surfaces; restrooms; furniture; fixtures; door knobs; switch plates; shared conference spaces; building and suite entrances; mats; handrails; turnstiles; counters; trash containers; and other frequently touched surfaces.	
d) Apply deep clean and disinfection in affected areas should an employee, contractor or visitor become ill or test positive for COVID-19; and has been present at the facility within the last 14 days.	
e) It is recommended that cleaning be done with an EPA-approved disinfectant. If using cloth wipes and other reusable cleaning materials (e.g. fabrics, textiles) these should be laundered daily. As an alternative, disposable cleaning wipes with disinfectant may be used. Consider implementing a protocol for the number or area sizes of surfaces or number of discrete items that should be cleaned with any one disposable wipe.	
f) Use a dedicated lined trash container for disposal of non-liquid cleaning supplies (i.e., cloth, wipes, gloves and body coverings). Consult with Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for safe disposal of disinfectants and other cleaning agents. Follow EPA and CDC guidance on disposing cleaning supplies. (Refer to NYC DEP's Hazardous Waste Management Policy)	
g) Consider having a COVID-19 cleaning program that incorporates CDC's Cleaning and Disinfection Decision Tool, and Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection, NYC DOHM COVID-19: General Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting for Non-Health Care Settings or protocol advised by a qualified cleaning service provider.	
h) Consider new or refresher training on cleaning protocols and proper use of disinfectants for DEP custodial staff. Provide training on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals used in the workplace. (Refer to DEP Hazard Communication/ Employee Right To Know Policy).	

3. Building Access

a) Consider the overall number of occupants who could potentially occupy lobby areas in relation to the physical layout and implement practical options to maintain social distancing (i.e., 6 feet) including, when entering/exiting work areas.	
b) Consider modifying building entry/exit protocols, configuration, number of entrances/exits to allow "in" and "out" foot traffic, to maintain established safe social distance (i.e., 6 feet).	
c) Consider who (e.g. building management, security or DEP staff) will be responsible for supporting entry/exit procedures in building lobby area to maintain social distancing (i.e., 6 feet).	

d) Consider establishing your temperature monitoring stations in locations that will allow for social distancing and free flow of employees in and through the station (one direction flow). Follow the DEP Temperature Monitoring Program SOP April 1, 2020, Rev 1.	

4. Social Distancing in Work Areas

a) Determine a safe number of occupants per work area and plan your social distancing protocol around this number. Establish floor occupation controls to ensure only allowed number of occupants are present at any given moment. Determine safe circulation paths and implement the social distancing protocol accordingly.	
b) Increase space in the lobby/office/common areas by removing/re-positioning/repurposing furniture.	
c) Unless otherwise constrained in doing so by City or State direction, limit/reduce occupancy by creating hybrid work protocol which, at a minimum, may include alternate office work days, alternate work sites, and working from home.	
d) Consider meeting/gathering options to maintain social distancing (i.e., virtual meetings, size/number of physical attendees, seating arrangements, etc.).	
e) Property tours (if/when required) – perform either virtual tour or before/after normal business hours and limit the number of participants.	
f) Establish controls that ensure social distancing in pantries, water fountain areas and other similar common areas.	

5. Face Coverings

a) Where social distancing cannot be maintained, instruct/advise employees to wear face coverings/masks according to DEP SOP on "Face Mask Use for Employees (COVID-19), May 11, 2020, 2020, Rev. 3".	
b) Stock enough supplies of face coverings/masks (i.e., N95, surgical masks and cloth masks) based on number of employees and employee work area risks (i.e. low and medium risks) to be distributed when needed, with consideration for increased demand associated with re-occupancy.	

6. Signage and Work Area Controls

a) Consider placing marks (e.g., paint, stencil, floor decals, etc.) on the floors of main entrance lobby, elevators, pantry, and break room to reinforce social distancing.	

b) Use clear and consistent social distancing markings and COVID-19 informational signage/posters.	
c) Consider displaying COVID-19 signage and posters (e.g., social distancing, wearing face covering/mask, handwashing, etc.) in building entrances and exits, lobbies, break rooms, and common areas (occupied by employees and non-DEP employees).	
d) Implement controls to limit employee sharing of common office supplies and equipment to the extent possible. Where not feasible, implement a cleaning and disinfection protocol or require the use of gloves (e.g. nitrile, latex) between individual employee use; or provide disinfecting wipes for employees to use between uses.	

7. Employee Communication

a) Maintain an ongoing communication approach to keep employees informed of public health related information and DEP procedures on COVID-19. This approach should allow employees to obtain a response to their questions and concerns. Refer	
to DEP procedures and other public health related documents at the following site: https://nycep.sharepoint.com/sites/OEHS-COVID19Information	
b) Consider communicating through an effective method determined by the Bureau any new procedures for entry/exit, use of common areas, elevator usage, parking, receiving deliveries, etc. prior to employee re-entry into the workplace.	

8. Contractor/Vendor/Visitor Access Controls

Communicate in advance (to the extent practical) DEP's social distancing and face covering requirements to contractors, vendors and non-DEP visitors prior to entry to DEP work areas.	

9. Workplace COVID-19 Monitoring

a) Routinely check the effectiveness of implementation of various Bureau COVID-19 response control measures in work locations and make adjustments for improvement as determined necessary.	
b) Monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 related symptoms (i.e. elevated body temperature based on DEP guidelines on "Temperature Monitoring, April 1, 2020 Rev. 0") of employees reporting to the workplace to determine if there is an increasing trend in employees showing possible COVID-19 related symptoms or illness and continue to make notifications as required	