

WELCOME BACK TO THE WORKPLACE

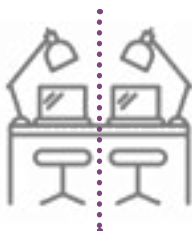
HEALTH, SAFETY, SECURITY & BUILDING SYSTEMS CONSIDERATIONS

Organizations around the world are adjusting to what many believe will be the new normal as workers begin to slowly transition back to an office environment. Many considerations ranging from janitorial protocols and operating building standards to social distancing requirements and utilization of space may permanently alter the way we interact with others in the workplace.

Building owners and tenants will find it crucial to develop a comprehensive plan that works for each asset or location. It will require a plan that helps address what will likely be, the most important question being asked: Do I feel safe at work? The action plan should have detailed phases and be clearly communicated to all building occupants along with additional recommendations of protocols to be implemented in each leased space.

The intent as we envision, is for stakeholders – landlords and tenants, to use a multidisciplinary approach and collaborate with key individuals to plan and execute on the return-to-work place strategy that is in their respective best interests. These individuals should include Risk Management, Legal, Human Resources, Financial, C-suite, Board and subject matter experts that provide unique perspectives.

While every building is unique, there are a few drivers or core areas that are paramount to every policy or procedures that may be put into place by landlords and tenants which will affect the total operation and create a stable pathway towards regaining 'normalcy'. These core areas will help ensure the health and safety of employees returning to work.



A GUIDE



PREPARE THE WORKPLACE

This includes the exterior of the building, common areas, services areas and leased areas. Each stakeholder will be required to respond to their areas of responsibility: Tenants have primary responsibility to ensure their individual, leased premises is prepared, while landlords should assume responsibility for building common and service areas including inspections of base mechanical systems.



CONTROL ACCESS

Policies or procedures should be implemented to help building occupants safely navigate the building in a thoughtful manner that not only satisfies the need to keep safety in mind, but also establishes controls that are effective.



CREATE A DISTANCING PLAN

Whether queuing in the lobby for elevator access or installing wayfinding and positioning floor markers to provide visual guidance – a meaningful system of navigating the building should be installed.



HYGIENE

Providing hand sanitizer at key locations throughout the building, sanitizing high touch areas and keeping select doors open are just some examples of the heightened emphasis on cleaning procedures.



COMMUNICATION

We are in this together. With so much information available via different channels, clear, concise and consistent communication will be required from all stakeholders, collectively. The goal is having everyone understand the message: The Why, How, Where and When.



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PREPARE THE WORKPLACE

OCCUPANT SAFETY AND WELLBEING

All stakeholders should examine individual responsibilities, and then work toward improving the physical environment for the benefit of their respective users. The implemented policies and procedures should aim to establish a uniformity of safety amongst everyone. That is, that safety and well-being is equitable among all groups: tenants, visitors, janitorial staff, delivery personnel, management staff and vendors.

BUILDING COMMON AREAS

- Hand sanitizer at entryways, touchless models preferred (if available)
- Create queues at high traffic areas using crowd control posts with physical distancing markers
- Utilize single use visitor identification peel and stick tags instead of clip-on or lanyard-hung tags
- Install clear personnel shields at security, reception or concierge desks and podiums
- Disable touchscreen functionality of common area monitors including e-directories
- Remove unnecessary lobby or common area furniture
- Provide masks to building occupants if they do not have one on their person (as available and as permitted by law)

MAILROOMS

- Building occupants should review current processes for inbound and outbound deliveries and develop a revised plan to align to COVID-19 safety precautions. Examples may include:
- Train personnel handling mail and parcels to wear PPE while handling mail, parcels and other deliveries
- Set new policies to minimize or eliminate the number of personal packages, e.g., Amazon, received at work
- Sanitizing the exterior of packaging

CONTROL ACCESS

LOBBIES AND ENTRY

The lobby experience should achieve several goals. First, it should establish a clear and understandable set of rules for anyone that enters the building. Properly achieved, building occupants should have a mental take away of an “oh, I get it” reaction. In other words, the combination of visual markers, cues, wayfinding, sanitizing stations and other measures should result anyone entering understanding not only the rules but what exactly is being attempted by the collective stakeholders (to stay safe in a controlled, efficient way). Despite new cultural norms, lobbies should still also strive to remain welcoming places.

- Install crowd control posts to create queuing areas with physical distancing markers as needed to assist with maximum flowtimes such as peak morning arrival, lunch and afternoon departure timeframes
- Consider the use of turnstiles to limit access to certain areas and to help manage elevator bank queuing
- Install hand sanitizer (touchless preferred, as available) at high traffic areas such as: stairs, elevator lobbies, freight elevator landings, mail room and all other building common areas
- Add wayfinding or floor markings to direct pedestrian traffic and ensure physical distancing
- Remove or rearrange furniture to promote physical distancing



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ELEVATORS

Elevators are challenging areas – there’s just no way around it. Each building will have to examine flow into and out of the different floors, particularly during peak morning, lunch and afternoon hours; and decide as to how the vertical transportation will be used.

- Create a queuing system with physical distancing markers to establish a controlled access point
- Install floor markers at the corners to signal riders where they should stand. It’s recommended that footprint markers be positioned with the toes pointing toward the cabin walls so that occupants have a visual cue to face away from each other
- Install signage to discourage the use of elevators and encourage the use of stairs which can be promoted as an added health benefit
- Work with the elevator maintenance vendor to explore the options on re-programming of the cab calling features to improve efficiency



CORE BUILDING SYSTEMS

Most buildings have experienced a severe decline in daily occupants or density, while some buildings may have been shut down with little preparation. A thorough pre-check, particularly of the entire mechanical and plumbing systems, should be performed to ensure all equipment is operating to its full potential.


Indoor Air Quality will also gain momentum as a conversation point for landlords and tenants as building occupants start to further self-examine the components of what constitutes a healthy environment. An excellent reference is provided in the [ASHRAE Position Document on Filtration and Air Cleaning](#). This comprehensive yet understandable document is based on empirical data gathered by OSHA and presented in a way that is concise, educational and can greatly assist in making decisions on what air filtration methods to employ. It can also provide some guidance on capital improvement plans.

- Core building HVAC filters should be replaced with the highest available MERV-rated filter as recommended by the equipment’s manufacturers. MERV-8 rated filters are recommended as a minimum standard wherever it can be used.
- Verify settings on the Building Automation/Energy Management Systems
- Check domestic water pump and system for proper operation
- Perform chemical balancing checks for cooling tower and chiller systems
- Check all refrigerant levels
- Inspect motors, fans, starters, assemblies, controls, oil levels, filters, wiring, gears and lubricate parts as needed
- Clean all coils – condenser and evaporator
- Power wash cooling tower louvers/fill to remove scale and buildup
- Verify fresh air intake amount corresponds to system design requirements
- Check timers

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RESTROOMS

 More emphasis on no-touch fixtures will be commonplace in order to minimize unwanted spread of bacteria, viruses and the like. Some buildings offer a full suite of automated fixtures including flushometers, lavatory faucets, paper towel and soap dispensers. While it may not be feasible for all plumbing fixtures to be changed, landlords may be faced with prioritizing capital improvements on areas not traditionally seen as critical to an asset's market positioning. However, the ability of promoting a building's suite of touchless features in restrooms may quickly gain traction.

- Increase the level of routine, daily cleaning as needed, to emphasize the sanitizing of high touch areas such as door handles, push plates, stall latches, non-automated faucets, soap dispenser and paper dispensers
- Eliminate all waste cans with lids and replace with open-top or auto-open receptacles
- Install hand sanitizer at doorways and counters
- Ensure all toilets have been flushed to circulate water and fill p-traps
- Install hand washing signs

EMPLOYEE LOUNGE / KITCHENS

Building occupants will need to establish protocols to address the functionality and maintenance of these high traffic areas. Tenants may need to look at scheduling lunch times like how schools navigate this: A/B schedule or A/B/C schedule to ensure a better people flow in and out these high use areas. Other factors may matter such as how glassware and utensils are cleaned and stored. Even picking out a spoon or forks from a drawer presents an issue of ensuring other utensils are not unwittingly touched. Did the person before me wipe and sanitize the push button on the coffee maker? Whose role is it to ensure the kitchen is kept clean and tidy and high touch areas such as counters sanitized throughout the day? Tenants will need to establish rules and explore assigning a 'kitchen ambassador' for the day or week as a way of rotating responsibilities. When returning to the office, a check of the areas will be required:

- Clean and sanitize all surfaces including appliances, horizontal surfaces, refrigerator, appliance and cabinet handles, appliance surfaces, appliance reservoirs, refrigerator shelves, door handles, light switches
- Check the water supply of appliances
- Provide hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes
- Change water cooler tank
- Reset pest control normal operational frequency
- Consider ordering individually wrapped recyclable disposable utensil



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CREATE A DISTANCING PLAN

WORKPLACE RECONFIGURATION AND SPACE PLANNING

An analysis of all areas within tenant specific spaces is recommended prior to reengaging employees in the physical location. Tenants can assign a Workforce Task Team (WTT) to examine all work areas and re-evaluate how areas will be utilized under a social distancing mantra. The WTT can establish policy of how employees will physically engage. The WTT can also help reconfigure areas to maintain functionality and efficiency of employees while ensuring that safety is the top priority. Recent modeling has shown that floor markers around workstations, reception areas, copy/mail rooms, along with establishing rules of movement can help employees feel safe in their working environment and still maintain an efficient workflow.

Tenants will also need to consider the density of the physical office environment as firms stage a comeback to the traditional workplace. For example, existing office layouts may be used differently if a firm continues with a partial Work From Home (WFH) scenario.

1. Identify a Workforce Task Team or Point Person: Assign personnel whose goal is to define the new working environment. That is, Adapt work areas to ensure employees can be productive and efficient while keeping a safe work environment.
2. Analyze Space Utilization: Conduct an analysis of all office areas to find areas for improvement.
 - a. Can work areas accommodate a 6-foot area of distancing from co-workers and guests? What accommodations are needed to achieve this?
 - b. How do we manage flow at high-use areas such as lounges and conference rooms?
 - c. Do we implement a rule of movement inside the leased premises – always travel in a counterclockwise format?
 - d. Do we remove or limit the number of chairs/seats in conference rooms and lounges?

- e. What procedures need to be installed in areas such as mailrooms or copy centers?
- f. Do we remove phones from conference rooms and other general use areas and promote cell phone use only?
- g. Office Rules: Establish rules of conduct for everyone to adapt that puts health and safety first
- h. Signage, Decals and Communication: Install visual markers to assist with traffic flow and help social distancing modelling. Provide clear communications to all staff throughout the process.

Further items to consider:

- Remove chairs from large conference rooms
- Maintain unoccupied office or other unused areas locked
- Maintain a partial WFH schedule for certain employees
- Reduce or eliminate the need for in-person meetings
- Continue utilizing video conferencing in the physical workplace
- Repurpose small meeting rooms to an office for a single user
- Add safety shields or modular panels to systems furniture or other work areas to create physical barriers
- Implement a clean desk policy, especially in shared office environments
- Issue sanitizer and disinfection wipes for every workstation
- Limit the number of persons in every room and post the limit on the door
- Install occupancy sensors to automatically turn lights on/off.
- Remove non-essential door handles
- Remove non-essential doors
- Remove shared phones
- Install a mobile phone only policy
- Require every staff to personally own/use their own writing instruments
- Secure office supplies to limit handling

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HYGIENE: CLEANING AND SANITIZING

A greater emphasis on janitorial cleaning procedures will become more crucial given the current focus on health and safety. More demand will be placed on janitorial firms to demonstrate their ability to execute cleaning strategies based on more rigorous standards such as a [GS-42 Certification](#) [Green Seal Standard for Commercial and Institutional Cleaning Services](#). Requiring janitorial firms to quantify their expertise will help relieve landlords and property management companies from the burden of spending additional resources to ensure adequate standards are met.

Are cleaning staff trained on safety protocols and cleaning methods? Are the correct, effective chemicals being used to sanitize surfaces? Is there a heightened level of cleaning to periodically sanitize high touch areas such as elevator call buttons, door handles, etc.? Will janitorial staff wear masks or PPE while cleaning? Is cleaning staff being tested for fever?

Cleaning standards will be expected to be at the forefront in all building occupant's list of what they consider to be of highest importance. We recommend all stakeholders consider at WHO and CDC guidance as they strive to implement measures for the collective well-being.

- Ensure the use of CDC-identified sanitizing or disinfecting chemicals are used to properly clean and sanitize areas as recommended
- Material Safety Data sheets to be provided in both English and Spanish
- Ensure building staff including engineers, porters and security personnel are the tools available and training necessary to adequately maintain safe while using masks or PPE
- Ensure the janitorial vendors are adequately providing relevant training to staff: disposing of PPE, handling contaminants, use of sanitizing chemicals, etc.



COMMUNICATION

The COVID-19 scenario has left most everyone affected in one form or another. Many organizations and their employees are facing very stressful situations in adapting to an unprecedented and fluid situation. The sense of uncertainty creates added stress that many are not able to properly cope with. Certainly, managers were not prevalently focused on promoting well-being from a psychological perspective. And yet, business leaders are finding themselves in the position of trying to manage employees under a certain level of emotional or psychological distress. Key in countering feelings of ambiguity and instilling a sense of hope and safety, is to focus on communication. Providing all stakeholders with the adequate information so that they clearly understand, that we are all in this together and that we are all going to do what is in everyone's collective best interest is paramount as companies look to kick start the business operation.

Developing, communicating and implementing the plan to a path forward will help create a readiness to return to work and instill trust. Organizations will improve on a winning outcome by helping employees navigate these difficult times. It will require addressing fears, speculation and anxiety – and knowing that adequately dealing with difficult situations can only make the collective stronger.



Additional Resources: *Standard Operating Procedures: We recommend that owners and tenants refer to OSHA document 3990-03 2020, [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#) which features a comprehensive set of principles and procedures to help guide organizations on adapting or establishing a Standard of Operating Procedures in line with their respective corporate policies. This can help position firms to implement the policies that make sense for their business model.*

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