

COVID-19 UPDATE

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4 CONSIDERATIONS ON REOPENING BUSINESSES SAFELY AFTER COVID-19

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How and when are we reopening our economy has been on the minds of business owners across Washington state. The feeling of guilt that accompanies this question is understandable. Lives are at stake and steps taken by states to slow the spread and help protect our hospitals were warranted.

However, not only do we need to ask the question of when is the appropriate time to reopen, we need the roadmap. Business has been instrumental in helping slow the spread and support our communities and will be essential in repairing our lives and economy.

But reopening your business in this environment comes with a fair number of questions. It is clear the government is not going to flip a switch and turn everything back to normal overnight. So, as you look to reopen consider these questions.

WHAT DOES REOPENING MEAN WITH CONTINUED STATE RESTRICTIONS?

This is probably the single biggest question to ask and has the most ramifications for your business in both the short and long term. States will be adding additional restrictions on worker and customer safety as they start to allow certain industries to resume work.

Understanding and implementing the new rules will be essential to successfully operating. States will focus on compliance with these measures, so it is important to do your homework and work with industry-specific associations while reviewing and revising your operations.

Proactively communicating with state government is crucial. Agencies making decisions that impact your business will not share the same operational knowledge as you. Working with them to address safety concerns in a way that allows your business to successfully operate will make the transition much easier.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT WORKERS?

Protecting your employees from Covid-19 will be essential in the new operating environment. Similar measures that have been implemented to keep the public safe should be part of your worksite safety plan. Social distancing, masks, and rigorous cleaning will be key factors for most businesses. Operationally, you should be asking yourself if you have the tools necessary to implement those changes. Employees should not be expected to provide their own masks or cleaning equipment, so implementing a plan now for securing those items will be critical. If your organization already has a successful remote work policy, plan on that extending even after your business has reopened.

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COMMERCIAL INSURANCE

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PERSONAL INSURANCE

RISK MANAGEMENT

SURETY



Make sure your paid time off and sick leave plan documents are updated and readily available for your staff. It will be important for your organization to communicate plan policies to your employees to care for themselves or members of their family who have Covid-19.

WHAT CHANGES CAN I EXPECT?

Expect the unexpected. This is a dynamic environment that will change along with the seasons. We are learning about the how this virus spreads and potential therapies in real time. It is assumed there will be bumps in the road and operations will need to adapt.

In fact, change will be the norm for a while, so don't be afraid to communicate that with staff. Employees will not just be impacted by changes, they will play a key role. Keeping communication open and honest will help facilitate staff buy in and champion new policies in their workplace.

HOW CAN I ADVOCATE FOR MY BUSINESS/INDUSTRY?

It is critical that your organization participate in the legislative process. This was important before the pandemic struck, and is especially crucial now. The more you can effectively communicate to lawmakers how your industry is impacted by the pandemic and how you can safely operate, the more likely that disruptions and regulations will be minimal.

If you are part of an industry organization, reach out to them, if they haven't already reached out to you. Get involved with their leadership and make sure you stay current on all the relevant rules and regulations. If you are not currently involved in an organization, reach out and find one specific to your industry. I always recommend joining groups that are active in policymaking on both the state and national level.