



WORKING ON NEW YORK FORWARD

PEF OUTLINE OF CONTROL MEASURES

For Labor and Management Representatives

Returning to Work after the Pause NY for COVID-19

Governor Cuomo recently announced plans to begin the re-opening of New York (called New York Forward) – identifying areas to begin relaxing controls put into place to flatten the curve of the Coronavirus outbreak. The process for returning New Yorkers to work will be done in phases for both the public and the private sector. In each phase, restrictions will be relaxed for the identified sectors in counties determined to have met core factors to re-open.

The timeline for the re-opening will be fluid and areas may pause or revert between phases if infections spike. New York State has not publicly specified their plan for their own workforce, other than comments by Governor Cuomo that he will hold the State to the same standards for return that he is holding businesses to.

H&S and/or LM Committees are committed to working with management to prepare now for the safe return to work for New York State employees.

What follows is a summary outline to provide a framework for labor and management to discuss controls to lessen the chance of COVID exposure in the workplace.

The Governor's plan (available here [NY Forward Region Status](#) [Regional Guidelines to Reopen](#) and here [NY Forward Additional Guidelines](#)).

Phase 1 began on May 16, 2020. The next phases will gradually bring workers back beginning with the more essential in lower risk areas, and leading to non-essentials in lower risk areas. The Governor has said a two week monitoring period would be needed between phases.

We understand that agencies may be waiting for a template from New York State, but any plan delivered to agencies will still need to be tailored to their agency and individual worksites. It is crucial that Labor and management representatives begin now to plan for those worksites. By working together we can avoid the fear and confusion workers had in the beginning of the pandemic.

This document is designed to help PEF Leaders and Management representatives to discuss a comprehensive and effective plan to create a safe transition from working from home to the workplace.

We look forward to working with you on this vital safe return to work plan.

Plan Elements

As the Governor is requiring for businesses, a safe return to work plan should include:

- Adjust workplace hours and shift design as necessary to reduce density in the workplace;
- Enact social distancing protocols;
- Restrict non-essential travel for employees;
- Require all employees and customers to wear masks if in frequent contact with others;
- Implement strict cleaning and sanitation standards;
- Enact a continuous health screening process for individuals to enter the workplace;
- Continue tracing, tracking and reporting of cases; and
- Develop a plan for resurgence of the virus

RETURN TO WORK PLAN OUTLINE

H&S, Labor Management

1. H&S Committee or L/M Committee for pandemic planning and response
 - a. Establish workgroup and meet regularly
 - b. Resurgence Strategy

Phased in return of staff:

1. Identify locations and departments for phased in return based on prevalence and status of outbreak and recovery in that area, and level of essential/non-essential services.
Identify areas:
2. Utilize telecommuting as much as possible, especially for high-risk individuals
3. Stagger arrival and departure times and alternate work schedules to limit the number of people in the office at various times.

Screening – Test, Trace, Isolate

1. Provide for Testing of employees
2. Screening for Staff - self-screen, screen at work
3. Reasonable Accommodations for high-risk individuals
 - a. Set up work schedules, telecommuting, cohorting to protect high-risk
4. Vaccination Plan – for when one becomes available

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are worn to minimize exposure to COVID-19.

Provide appropriate PPE and training for staff. You will need to craft your plan for provision of PPE based on the specifics of your worksite and employee duties.

Engineering Controls:

Isolate employees from COVID-19 work-related hazards – such as:

1. Barriers and mail/package receiving areas for reception areas and customer service counters
2. HVAC systems – modify to provide better filtration, increased exchange and filtration
3. Cubicles – modify set up - 6’ distance between each
4. Cafeterias, lunchrooms, eating spaces – modify for social distancing
5. Meeting space – modify for social distancing
6. Purell Stations – Install at easily accessible and high traffic areas

Administrative Controls:

Changes to work policies, practices or procedures, such as:

1. Signage for masking, handwashing, visitor screening etc
2. Cleaning and disinfection procedures – based on EPA/CDC and NYS DOH protocols:
3. Receptionists/Call Centers -
4. Visitor Policy - develop comprehensive plan for visitors, vendors, and catered or delivery of food
5. Controlled movement
6. Training on exposure risks, control methods, infection control procedures, proper PPE wear, social distancing, resilience training

Individual Controls:

1. EAP
2. Peer-to-peer support groups
3. Social Distancing, Hand Hygiene, cleaning and disinfecting

Additional Considerations:

1. Group Activities/ Trainings

2. Provide alternate housing for COVID unit workers at no cost
3. Reporting
4. Field Employees – Develop procedures

Summary

The PEF Health and Safety Department and the Field Services Department are a good resource for you during this return to work process and for any other questions you may have. Staff can assist PEF committees and leaders to work with management to implement safety protocols.

The plan to reopen New York State, and the rest of the U.S. for that matter, will be an ongoing process. It is clear that a reopening does not mean a return to how things were. How we move about our work and our home lives has changed dramatically.

Union and Management will have to work together take additional steps to make our workplaces as safe as possible. Not just until we have a vaccine for this virus, but moving forward as well. We must have strong pandemic planning in the workplace for this and any future outbreaks.

Contact the PEF Health and Safety Department with any question at
HealthAndSafety@pef.org or 800-342-4306 Ext 254

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