

Office Workers

SAFE MODE: Guidelines for safer operations during the COVID-19 pandemic

As Philadelphia residents and workers restart economic and physical activities, they must do so safely—that is, in a way that prevents the COVID-19 virus from spreading from person to person. Everyone must take precautions consistently to protect not only themselves, but also their family members, friends, colleagues, and everyone else.

The precautions will vary by the activity and setting, but some general guidelines apply to all.

Safety Checklist



Masks

Block the virus from spreading from infected individuals by wearing masks and requiring others to wear them.



Barriers

Use sneeze guards or plexiglass screens to prevent respiratory droplets expelled by infected persons from reaching others.



Isolate

Keep people who might be carrying the virus safely away from others (ideally at home).



Distance

Maintain space between people to reduce the chance that one infected individual will infect others.



Reduce crowds

Decrease the number of people that an infected person could pass the virus to if other steps are not successful.



Handwashing

Reduce the spread of virus from one person to another from touching contaminated surfaces.



Clean

Remove respiratory droplets that may contain virus from surfaces that people may touch.



Communicate

Ensure staff, customers, and others taking part in permitted activities understand this Safety Checklist.

This Safety Checklist must be followed at all times. If an employee, customer, or participant develops COVID-19 infection or has a positive test, businesses and other organizations must take additional precautions to stop the virus from spreading further, as described in [Guidance for Essential Businesses and Organizations During COVID-19](#). Required precautions include calling the Philadelphia Department of Public Health at 215-685-6741 to report positive cases.

If employees or customers want to report possible health and safety violations in the workplace related to COVID-19, **please call 311**.

If you have questions or concerns about the applicability of these guidelines to your business, **please email business@phila.gov**.

Note that guidance in this document is subject to change. Please check back for updates.

This document is intended as a plain language summary of rules for reopening in the Yellow Phase and does not replace the need to follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

See also:

1. [Order](#) of the Secretary of Health providing for building safety measures, issued April 5, 2020.
2. [Order](#) of the Secretary of Health providing for business safety measures (to keep employees and customers safe), issued April 15, 2020.
3. [Guidance](#) issued by the Department of Health to the Construction Industry, issued April 19, 2020.
4. [Guidance](#) issued by the Department of State to the Real Estate Industry, reissued April 28, 2020.
5. [Other future applicable Department of Health \(DOH\) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) guidance.](#)

OCCUPATIONS

Office Workers

The following is intended as a plain language summary of rules for reopening in the Yellow Phase and does not replace the need to follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

See also:

[Order](#) of the Secretary of Health providing for building safety measures, issued April 5, 2020.

[Order](#) of the Secretary of Health providing for business safety measures (to keep employees and customers safe), issued April 15, 2020.

Protections Needed

Masks

- Provide masks for employees.
- Require employees and visitors to mask while on site except only:
 - As necessary for the employee to eat or drink during break times. The employee should be seated at least 6 feet from others when taking off mask.
 - When seated alone in a private office or in a cubicle whose sides extend above the head of the employee.

Barriers

- If the office remains open to the public, install plastic barriers between staff and the public.
- For workers in low cubicles and those who work in open office designs, install additional barriers if needed to extend cubicle walls above workers' heads and to separate those working in spaces with open designs.

Isolate

- Screen every employee for symptoms before every shift and prevent them from remaining on site if they have cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, muscle pain, or new loss of taste or smell.
- It is not necessary to conduct on-site temperature measurement for staff or visitors. If you measure temperatures, use a no-touch thermometer, and do not allow anyone with a temperature of 100.4 or higher to remain on-site.

- Have sick leave policies in place so that employees excluded from the workplace do not lose earnings.
- If an employee develops COVID-19 infection or has a positive test, businesses and other organizations must take additional precautions to stop the virus from spreading further, as described in [Guidance for Essential Businesses and Organizations During COVID-19](#). Required precautions include calling PDPH at 215 685-6741 to report positive cases.

Distance

- Adjust work assignments to ensure employees can stay 6 feet from each other throughout their shifts.
- If the office remains open to the public, use floor decals or other visual cues to encourage distancing.
- Use non-contact payment methods if possible.

Reduce crowds

- Remote work must continue where feasible.
- Stagger shifts when possible.
- During the Yellow Phase, limit entry to a maximum of 5 total persons for every 1,000 square feet of space in the facility.
 - Post this temporary occupancy limit publicly.
- Stagger employee break times.
- Substitute telephone or internet-based meetings for in-person staff meetings.
- If meetings must be held in person, during the Yellow Phase, limit attendees to a maximum of 10 and maintain at least 6 feet of distance between attendees.
 - Prohibit non-essential visitors.

Handwashing

- Place handwashing stations or hand sanitizer at entry and outside communal bathrooms for all staff and visitors with prominent signage promoting use.
- Give staff hourly handwashing breaks.

Clean

- Wipe down high-touch surfaces with disinfectant at least once every 4 hours. See [CDC guidance](#) for details.

Communicate

- Educate staff about symptoms and prevention of COVID-19.
- Post prominent signs at entrances and in employee break rooms:
 - Asking people who are sick or who have had contact with someone with COVID-19 within the past 14 days not to enter.
 - Encouraging people to cover coughs or sneezes.
 - Mandating physical distancing of at least 6 feet.
 - Mandating that all staff and visitors wear masks.