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News Release

U.S. Department of Labor | June 15, 2020

As More Businesses Reopen, Worker Safety and Health Remains U.S. Department of Labor Priority

WASHINGTON, DC – As more workplaces begin to reopen, the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is reminding employers that worker safety remains a priority amid both coronavirus and common workplace hazards.

In all phases of reopening, employers need to plan for potential hazards related to the coronavirus, as well as those stemming from routine workplace processes. Employers should be aware that the pandemic might increase employee stress, fatigue and distractions and should consider these factors in planning their employees’ return to work to ensure operations resume in a safe and healthful manner. Employers should also carefully plan before attempting to increase production or tasks to make up for downtime to avoid exposing employees to additional safety and health hazards.

As part of their reopening plans, OSHA recommends employers provide workers with “refreshers” on safety and health training and address maintenance issues they may have deferred during a shutdown. Employers should also revisit and update standard operating procedures and remember that exposures to hazards may increase during shutdown and start-up periods. It is important for employers to review and address process safety issues – including stagnant or expired chemicals – as part of their reopening effort. Employers also should remember that Section 11(c) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, 29 U.S.C. 660(c), prohibits employers from retaliating against workers for raising concerns about safety and health conditions.

OSHA is providing coronavirus-related guidance to help employers develop policies and procedures that address the following issues:

- [Workplace flexibilities](#);
- [Engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and personal protective equipment](#);
- [Training workers on the signs, symptoms and risk factors associated with the coronavirus](#);
- [Basic hygiene and housekeeping practices](#);
- [Social distancing practices](#);
- [Identifying and isolating sick workers](#);
- [Return to work after worker illness or exposure](#); and
- [Anti-retaliation practices](#).

OSHA's guidance for employers also includes frequently asked questions related to coronavirus in the workplace such as worksite testing, temperature checks and health screenings, and the need for personal protective equipment.

This guidance is intended to accompany the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' previously developed [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#) and the White House [Guidelines for Opening up America Again](#). Existing OSHA standards that apply to protecting workers from infection remain in place as employers and workers return to work.

Visit OSHA's [coronavirus webpage](#) frequently for updates. For further information about the coronavirus, please visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to help ensure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit www.osha.gov.

The mission of the Department of Labor is to foster, promote and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.

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