



Food & Beverage Production: Returning to Normal Business Operations

As the stay-at-home orders issued by various jurisdictions around the country start to be lifted and your company begins the process of returning to the workplace, it is critical to take steps to reduce exposures to employees, vendors and your guests.

WHAT SHOULD YOUR ORGANIZATION BE CONSIDERING AND/OR PREPARING FOR IN ORDER TO GET BACK TO BUSINESS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE?

As you work to reopen or return your business location to “normal,” we have developed some bullet points that you may consider in your evaluation process.

Establish roles and responsibilities prior to reopening

- All parties, including owners, managers, employees, visitors, contractors, etc., should be aware of individual responsibilities prior to and during reopening.
 - Review and establish policies for: kitchens, dining areas and storage rooms, entry gate, reception, production floor, office areas, cafeteria/break room, restrooms, transportation/fleet, emergency response, communication, training/awareness, sanitize/disinfection, waste disposal, exit gate, etc.
- Review and modify policies on shift start/end, travel, sick leave, return to work, etc. The goal would be to minimize employee exposure to each other.
- Create a sense of safety and security in order to reduce stress/anxiety upon returning to the facility.
- Emphasize proactive communication and virtual support/training on continually changing protocols.
- Provide clear and concise information describing any process or procedures your company has implemented to protect your employees, customers and community moving forward.

Engineering controls

Engineering controls are designed to remove the hazard at the source, before it comes in contact with the worker.

Cleaning and sanitizing

- If the location has been closed, a thorough cleaning and sanitizing would be required. It is critical that chemical use instructions are followed to ensure sanitizing strength.
- Consider professional third-party disinfection services.
- Identify high-contact areas and increase the cleaning/sanitizing frequency of those areas; however, don't overlook the seldom-touched areas.
- Disinfect surfaces commonly touched by employees including doorknobs, handles, counters, etc. Continue regularly as a best practice using EPA-approved disinfectants.
- Please see Lockton's dedicated document.
- Thoroughly clean and sanitize equipment, machinery, tools and furniture after each use.
- Make hand sanitizer (of at least 60% alcohol) available for employees. Consider "touchless" sanitizer dispensers.
- Ensure replenishment of sanitizers, refills of soaps and adequate supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) is available.
- Check to ensure water is reaching 100°F at hand-washing sinks.
- Ensure adequate supply of individual hand tools and equipment in order to limit sharing.

Physical barriers

- Modify the alignment of workstations, so workers do not face one another. Consider using markings and signs to designate barriers.
- Consider physical barriers, such as strip curtains, plexiglass or similar materials, or other impermeable dividers or partitions to separate workers from each other. Sanitize after coughing or sneezing.
- Consider consulting with a heating, ventilation and air conditioning engineer to ensure adequate ventilation in work areas.
- Minimize air from fans blowing from one worker directly at another worker. Personal cooling fans should be removed from the workplace to reduce the potential spread of any airborne or aerosolized viruses.
- Consider touch-free methods for clocking in/out.
- Remove or rearrange chairs and tables or add partitions to tables in break rooms and other areas workers may frequent to increase worker separation.

Administrative controls

Administrative controls are frequently used along with existing processes where hazards are not particularly well controlled. This method for protecting workers is less effective than engineering controls as it requires significant effort by the affected workers.

Screening

- Verbal or written questionnaire for each employee.
- Temperature checks.
 - Note: The EEOC's Pandemic Preparedness Memorandum, states a company may take the temperatures of its employees (and visitors) before they enter the workplace.
- Notify those entering of temperature screenings in advance with the purpose to solely protect the employees and not to determine any other diagnosis, illness, impairment or disability.
 - Note: Temperature or symptom screening is not recommended as the sole method of workplace prevention.
- A qualified individual on staff or qualified third-party healthcare provider should conduct the screening.
- Screener must wear protective gear (e.g., face shield, gloves, gown), and preferably use a non-contact thermometer.

Employee safety

- Reeducate on proper, effective personal hygiene. Consider displaying signage or posters with various safety messages (post these on the wall, opposed to having handouts). For example, symptoms, social distancing, hand washing techniques (20 seconds), donning/doffing PPE, what to do if you're sick, etc.
- The CDC has several COVID-19 posters (in different languages) available.
- Communicate the importance of staying home if you are sick.

Social distancing

- Remind employees of social distancing in areas where they tend to congregate/bottleneck.
- Encourage single-file movement with a 6-foot distance between each worker through the facility, where possible.
- Designate workers to monitor and facilitate distancing on processing floor lines.
- Stagger shifts and break times or provide temporary break areas and restrooms to avoid groups of workers during breaks. Workers should always maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others, including on breaks.
- Consider wearable technology to track safe distancing of workers in real-time for immediate self-correction.
 - Note: Any advanced technology should be carefully evaluated for cost/benefit/risk/effectiveness, along with employee acceptance within company culture before implementing.
- Continue to promote social distancing through providing visual aids for separation on production lines and in common areas.

Personal protective equipment

PPE is frequently used along with existing processes where hazards are not particularly well controlled. This method for protecting workers is less effective than engineering controls as it requires significant effort by the affected workers.

Employee safety

- Reeducate on proper donning, doffing and disposal of masks. Explain the difference between disposal versus reuse.
 - Disposal
 - Reuse
- Reeducate on proper donning, doffing and disposal of gloves.
- Reeducate on proper use and sanitizing of protective eyewear.

Food safety

- Handwashing before/during/after contact with food or beverages, before eating, after toilet use, after coughing/sneezing/blowing nose, and after touching/donning/doffing PPE.
- Change gloves after touching face, after coughing/sneezing/blowing nose, and after touching/donning/doffing PPE.
- Clean physical barriers (such as strip curtains, plexiglass or similar materials) before/after using workspace and after coughing/sneezing/blowing nose.
- Reeducate on personal hygiene. Spend time showing all employees how to properly wash their hands. Most foodborne illness is directly related to inadequate handwashing.

Additional considerations

Guest safety

- Consider signage at entrances making guest aware social distancing practices are encouraged. In addition, signage should include the importance of guests to not enter if they have any symptoms of illness or COVID-19.
- Rearrange restaurant floor plans so tables are 6 feet apart to maintain social distancing. Signage should be added to cashier lines to maintain 6 feet social distance. Waiting areas should be eliminated so guests can't congregate. Encourage waiting in vehicle or outside maintaining social distance.
- Limit restaurant employees/guest interaction (host/wait staff). Educate the importance of social distancing.

Shipping/receiving

- Have routing instructions and plans to avoid deliveries through designated areas that will minimize contact with the larger building population.
- Require personnel handling cargo to wear PPE.
- Sanitize the exterior of packing where necessary.

Vehicles and fleet

- Sanitize frequently touched surfaces. Provide sanitizing wipes inside the vehicle.
- Avoid carpooling if possible and limit the number of people of in vehicles.
- Use PPE properly as outlined above.

Ergonomics

- Implement pre-/post-discomfort programs to assist in the transition back to work. Employees in more physically demanding roles may experience musculoskeletal discomfort or pain upon returning to work from long periods of furlough or work from home.
- Reduce high-force, awkward postures, static postures, repetition, contact stress, cold temperature, vibration, and rest/recovery time.
- Consider alternative, reduced touch methods to transport items versus manual hand-to-hand transfer (e.g., mechanical aids, automation, conveyor, etc.). This will reduce wasted motions as well as germ transmission.
- Reassess job rotation and eliminate possible infection risk factors. Limiting job rotation will reduce common touch points that are in frequent contact by workers, therefore reducing exposure risk to germs.
- Consider hiring third-party healthcare providers such as physical/occupational/massage therapists to help mitigate onset of musculoskeletal discomfort through mobility, strength and muscle conditioning upon resuming manual work after absence period.
- Consider wearable technology to monitor high-risk motions or for real-time training on posture/biomechanics awareness for self-correction.
 - Note: Any advanced technology should be carefully evaluated for cost/benefit/risk/effectiveness, along with employee acceptance within company culture before implementing.

Additional information:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Meat and Poultry Processing Workers and Employers
- Food and grocery