

Employee Safety

# An Employer's Guide to Improving Safety in the Workplace

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Now more than ever, it's essential to adhere to *safety protocols* to keep ourselves, our families and our coworkers safer in the workplace and at home. But how do you know if you're doing enough? Businesses should take as many precautions as possible to help mitigate spread and reduce the risk of an outbreak in any place of business. Here are some of the questions you should answer about creating a *safer workplace* for yourself, your employees and your families.

## Is my workplace sanitary?

There are *several factors* you should consider in determining whether employees may safely work in-person in your office or warehouse. Questions to ask include: Is there proper ventilation? Do you provide access to cleaning products throughout the workplace? And how often is your workspace thoroughly and professionally cleaned?

If you think your workplace is lacking in any of these areas, implementing new protocols can give you more confidence that employees are working in an environment that is doing its best to keep them protected. The CDC recommends conducting a hazard assessment of the workplace, as well as daily health checks, in order to safely resume business operations. Cleaning with both soap and water as well as household disinfectants can keep surfaces sanitary – cleaning surfaces with soap and water reduces the number of germs, dirt and impurities on surfaces, while disinfecting kills germs on surfaces.

The *EPA* has a list of approved disinfectants for use on both hard and porous surfaces – these include bleach solutions containing 5.25% and 8.25% sodium hypochlorite and alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol. Be sure to place extra emphasis on surfaces that are touched repeatedly by many people throughout the day, such as door knobs, sinks and light switches, and take safety precautions when using cleaning supplies by wearing a mask and gloves.

## Is my workplace conducive to social distancing?

For many industries such as healthcare, food service and certain retail environments, working from home simply is not possible. Therefore, adapting the workplace to be more conducive to social distancing can be an effective way to help make the environment more comfortable.

An approach can include adjusting work schedules to limit the number of on-site employees, limiting the number of visitors in the workplace, marking one-way arrows on the floor to guide traffic, and adjusting seating arrangements in office environments to provide more separation. Encourage employees to be aware of their personal space when riding elevators, walking up and down stairs and interacting with coworkers around the office.

## What happens if an employee gets sick?

Due to industry and local guidelines, your work policies have likely changed in more ways than one. Be sure to have clearly stated guidelines in place if an employee gets sick – know how to clean the office,

send other employees home to self-isolate if necessary, and clearly communicate your company's healthcare policies to all your workers.

Having a well-organized policy in place prior to an employee getting sick is essential to getting back on track. Screening employees regularly with temperature checks can help identify potential exposure, and knowing which employees to send home right away can help prevent others from getting sick. Additionally, employees should notify their supervisor if they have been in contact with a person who has become sick.

Ensure that any employee who has been sent home to isolate after **contact** or diagnosis is cleared by their healthcare provider prior to going back to work. Currently, the CDC's **criteria** to discontinue home isolation include at least 10 days passing since symptom onset, at least 24 hours passing since resolution of fever without medication, and other improvement of symptoms.

## What personal protective equipment can help protect my employees?

Providing the appropriate personal protective equipment for your employees, customers and guests can help minimize the risk of spreading disease. Depending on the type of work your employees perform on a daily basis, the **personal protective equipment** they will need to perform their jobs safely will vary.

For some PPE products, there are multi-use and disposable options, so it's helpful to determine what PPE solutions are preferable for your workplace. Providing multiple personal protective solutions that can work in conjunction with one another, such as masks, gloves, and face shields, can also help minimize your workers' risk of exposure.

While wearing a mask has become the norm across the country, **not all masks are created equal** – selecting face covers that meet a minimum endorsed by a health authority can offer a greater level of protection than a homemade cloth mask. In several industries, from food service to medical to warehouse workplaces, gloves are also an important resource to use when interacting with people and products.

## How can I best communicate with my employees that we value their safety?

As the social landscape changes throughout the country and around the world, keeping an open line of communication with your employees is vital to slowing the spread and maintaining a healthier work environment. Your city, state and federal guidelines may all vary, so ensuring that your business guidelines are clearly outlined and updated when necessary can help keep you and your employees on the same page in regard to safety in the workplace.

Let your employees know that you're listening to their concerns – actively encourage your sick employees to stay home and provide adequate information in regard to health benefits and other relevant resources. Additionally, recognize that those with sick family members may need to stay home to take care of their families, so plan options for working from home in the event of a family illness.

Being able to answer all of these questions will not only help you keep your business on track, but will give your employees peace of mind knowing that their workplace is taking their health and well-being seriously.

Want Honeywell's help in making your workplace safer? Explore their **family of personal protective products** and learn how they're helping you keep workers protected.

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