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Bridget R. Penick

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Question of the Day: CDC Guidance for Office Buildings

Legal Update

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By Bridget R. Penick

Question

Is there specific guidance for employers to manage COVID-19 in office buildings?

Answer

Yes.

Late last week, the Center for Disease Control published COVID-19 Employer Information for Office Buildings, providing detailed steps for employers, owners and building managers to take in reopening and managing a safe and healthy office building in light of COVID-19 risks. This guidance dovetails with the evolving OSHA guidance, addressed in our June 2 Question of the Day.

The guidance covers the gamut between reopening and long-term maintenance and communication:

Create a COVID-19 workplace health and safety plan.

One size does not fit all, so develop one that is appropriate for your business, using the CDC's Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers as a reference point. Ensure you are also compliant with your state's requirements. Review it regularly, as guidances and restrictions are frequently updated.

Evaluate the building.

Check the building to see if it is physically ready for occupancy by ensuring HVAC systems are functioning, increasing outdoor air circulation if possible, and remediating any hazards that may have resulted from a prolonged shutdown, such as mold, pests or standing water.

Assess risks.

Identify how and where employees, contractors and guests may be exposed to COVID-19 at work. Include all employees, contractors and guests in communication plans.

Develop hazard controls: both physical space and people centric.

- Make physical changes to the workstations to maintain social distancing.
- Replace high-touch communal items.
- Improve ventilation.
- Follow cleaning guidelines.
- Encourage symptomatic employees to stay home and follow CDC recommendations on returning to work.
- Consider daily screening of employees.
- Stagger shifts and break times.
- Provide wipes, sanitizer and cleaning products.
- Consider supporting alternatives to public transportation.

Train employees and supervisors.

Make communication easy to understand, accessible in languages spoken and read by your employees. Post required and recommended signage.

Again, keep in mind the CDC, OSHA and state departments of public health are learning more about COVID-19 and updating recommendations and requirements frequently. Employers should designate one or more point persons to check for updated guidelines and revise policies and practices accordingly.

If you have questions regarding these obligations or others related to COVID-19, contact your Fredrikson & Byron Employment & Labor Attorney.

[View All: COVID-19 Employment Question of the Day](#)