COVID-19 Re-Opening Guidance for Businesses

As businesses continue to operate and/or start back up, **it remains critical to both the state's public health as well as our economic health** that we all individually and collectively continue to follow guidelines that will minimize the spread of COVID-19.

Please watch for additional guidance from the AccelerateSC task force in the coming days.

The following link is to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s home page for Businesses and Employers as it relates to COVID-19](#).

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) also has a [Regulatory](#) businesses as well as links to more sp specific guidance.

To highlight a few key points:

1. There is currently no method for screening for asymptomatic infected people. **Screening of asymptomatic individuals with testing is not recommended** because the testing available at this time cannot provide assurance that someone will not become sick after the test is performed.
    a. The gold-standard test, called a PCR, is a snapshot in time that only tells whether the individual is infected at that time. Antibody tests currently available are not accurate and cannot guarantee protection from becoming infected again.
    b. DHEC recommends that only individuals with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 be tested for the disease.
    c. The safest approach is to assume everyone is infected and follow the recommended guidelines that are in place to avoid transmission of the virus.
2. Employees should be encouraged to wear masks or cloth face coverings, especially when in settings in which social distancing is not feasible. Cloth face coverings should be optional for employees with underlying respiratory illness, but if not worn, social distancing must be performed.
3. Continue to encourage telework when feasible with business operations. Consider alternate work schedules such as staggering start times or shifts for employees who are on site.
4. People who have symptoms should stay at home until symptoms resolve. Be sure your leave policies reinforce this as well as encourage self-isolation when symptoms are present.
    a. Employees should be considered sick if they have symptoms of acute respiratory illness like shortness of breath, coughing and/or fever of 100.4 °F or greater.
    b. Negative COVID-19 testing is **not** recommended or required for people to return to work. Even workers who were confirmed to have COVID-19 do **not** have to have negative testing to return to work.
    c. Instead, DHEC recommends that employees not come to work until 10 days have passed since their symptoms began **AND** they are free of fever (100.4° F [38° C] or greater using an oral thermometer) for 3 days without the use of fever-reducing medicines **AND** their other symptoms have improved.
5. As you develop your COVID-19 related processes, keep in mind the population of people who are at greater risk of contracting this virus and to having more difficulty in fighting it (those with pre-existing conditions like diabetes, heart or lung diseases, as well as the elderly).
6. Continue to follow the advice of public health officials, including:
    a. staying at least 6 feet apart or when that is not possible, wearing a cloth face covering or respirator,

b. frequent hand washing with soap & water or use of approved hand sanitizers,
c. regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (door handles, phones, keyboards, etc.),
d. removing frequently touched surfaces that can be removed (for example trash can lids), and
e. increasing ventilation air exchanges and percent outdoor air where possible.

Please see the CDC Guidance documents for other recommendations that may be applicable to your work environment, as well as for specific information on cleaning and disinfecting different types of work surfaces.

If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should monitor themselves for symptoms and may be recommended for a 14-day quarantine based on the DHEC Epidemiology team's risk assessment. Please reach out to DHEC (contact info below) if you have any questions about the plan for coworkers. If possible, the area where the infected individual worked should be isolated for 24 hours and then cleaned and disinfected. If it is not possible to delay access to the area, the workers who perform cleaning/disinfecting should wear appropriate PPE for protection against the cleaning materials and the virus. Refer to the CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidelines for additional information.

Please note: if your business is not affiliated with the healthcare industry, you are not required to hire a specialized company for cleaning and disinfecting your workplace.

As things re-open, there is more opportunity for us to be exposed. It becomes more important than ever that we continue and re-focus our efforts to minimize the spread of this virus.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to us at DHEC if we can be of additional assistance to you. For general questions concerning state interpretations of CDC's guidance documents related to COVID-19 (respirators, cloth face coverings, cleaning and disinfecting, etc.), please contact Fran Marshall by email at marshaf2@dhec.sc.gov. For questions regarding individual cases of disease (infections, investigations, testing, modeling, etc.), please call the DHEC Division of Acute Disease Epidemiology (DADE) Consultant On-Call at (803) 898-0861.

Important Links

CDC Home Page for Businesses and Employers	https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html
CDC General Guidance	https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html
CDC Cleaning & Disinfection	https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html
DHEC Resources for Businesses	https://www.scdhec.gov/infectious-diseases/viruses/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/businesses-employers-covid-19
DHEC Infectious Waste	https://www.scdhec.gov/environment/land-management/infectious-waste
DHEC Regulatory Relief Info	https://www.scdhec.gov/environmental-regulatory-assistance-covid-19