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Is Your Small Business COVID-19 Ready?

What small business can do in the midst of the Coronavirus



Tips on keeping your workforce healthy and safe

Large companies throughout California and the nation are bracing themselves against the coronavirus. Amazon, Microsoft, Facebook, Twitter, and Google have asked workers to work from home, if possible.

But what can small businesses who don't have the same resources as tech giants do? Here are some common-sense guidelines to help stymie concerns and the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Important Link for more Information:

- [CDC asks employers to do all they can to slow virus](#)

What is COVID-19, aka the coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a group of viruses responsible for respiratory infections and the common cold. Named for their crown-like microscopic appearance, they also include more serious viruses like SARS, MERS, and COVID-19, the virus responsible for the global coronavirus outbreak the world is facing today. COVID-19 is more commonly referred to as “the coronavirus.”

Important Links for more Information:

- [Center for Disease Control & Prevention \(CDC\) Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [Center of Disease Control & Prevention \(CDC\) Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- [California Department of Public Health - COVID-19 General Information](#)

- [U.S. Small Business Administration – Guidance for Businesses & Employers to Plan and Respond to COVID-19.](#)

Workplaces are having to think about [coronavirus measures](#), too. Not sure where to start with your small business? We've got a checklist to help you keep your workplace safe from the coronavirus.

Know the signs and symptoms

Fever, lethargy, dry cough are the [most common signs and symptoms of COVID-19](#). Some individuals also experience aches and pains, nasal congestion, and a sore throat. About 1/6 of coronavirus patients become seriously ill and have difficulty breathing. Older people and those with existing health conditions are at a higher risk for developing these complications.

Mandate that sick or at-risk employees stay home

[Employees who are sick should stay home](#). Period. Coronavirus testing kits are still not widely available, and people who are sick — be it common cold or not — shouldn't be coming into the office. Make this policy clearly known and understood so employees don't fear retribution for their absence. Employees who have recently traveled to a high-risk area or who have had contact with a coronavirus-infected person should be barred from entering the workplace for at least 14 days while their risk of contamination is evaluated.

Important Link for more Information:

- [Coronavirus and discrimination](#)

Reassess Workplace Cleanliness

While there's been a maelstrom of misinformation and confusion surrounding the coronavirus, there's one thing health experts and leaders worldwide are on the same page about: washing your hands or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is the best way to prevent getting sick. Make it easy for employees to keep clean by placing hand sanitizer throughout the workplace and ensuring soap is well stocked.

Some Other Measures to Take are:

- Get rid of sponges and towels: These are a harbor for viruses and encourage transmission from person to person. Increase the frequency of cleaning: Especially of common fomites like door knobs, elevator buttons, and water taps.
- Anything people touch should be cleaned multiple times per day.
- Encourage employees to bring their own utensils: If your office doesn't have a dishwasher, utensils are a particularly virulent way to spread illness. Ask employees to bring their own.

Rethink Your Remote Policy

If you're not already a remote-friendly company, now may be the time to start. Collaboration tools and video calls make remote work a viable option for most office workers, and it's likely your team will be more productive from home rather than steeping in anxiety and frustration at having to come into the office.

We understand this isn't a viable reality for all SMBs — brick and mortar shops, construction businesses, and real estate firms, for example, but if and when possible, consider remote work.

Discuss Proper hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Review sanitary measures and place posters around the workplace reminding employees of [proper hygiene etiquette](#). This includes [coughing into your elbow](#), sneezing into a tissue and immediately disposing of it, and washing your hands for at least 20 seconds with hot, soapy water, or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Review your PTO and Sick Leave Policies

If the coronavirus continues on its current trajectory, as expected, it's likely employees will need time off to recover from an illness or care for others. Consider reviewing your small business' PTO and sick leave policies in light of this global health emergency, and don't require employees with respiratory illnesses to bring a doctor's note.

Important Links for more Information:

- [Labor & Workforce Development Agency - Resources for Employers and Workers](#)
- [State of California Employment Development Department - Support services to individuals and employers affected by COVID-19 in California.](#)

Postpone Business Travel to High Risk Areas

The CDC has already issued [level-3 warnings](#), “reconsider all nonessential travel” for China, South Korea, Italy, and Iran, but many companies and organizations are postponing all business travel indefinitely. The technology available to us in 2020 makes global communication and collaboration possible. SBOs can help reduce risk and put employees at ease by pressing pause on company travel for now.

Important Link for more Information:

- [Travel Precautions to Take](#)

Additional Business Resources

- [GoBiz - Business Resource Guide for Business](#)
- [OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)
- [CA Department of Public Health: COVID – 19 GATHERING GUIDANCE Guidelines](#)
- [CDC Resources for Large Community Events & Mass Gatherings](#)
- [CA Department of Public Health - COVID 19 Guidance Documents](#)

