



HEALTHIER WORKPLACES | A HEALTHIER WORLD

# Reopening: Guidance for the Warehouse and Logistics Industry

Guidance Document

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## Overview

Small and medium warehouse and logistics companies have been very challenged during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many have been forced to lay off or furlough key staff members, which may complicate re-opening as states start to relax shelter-in-place and stay-at-home restrictions.

With such restrictions beginning to lift, warehouse & logistics owners are faced with difficult questions that must be addressed before reopening, such as:

- How can we protect our employees, customers and the public from the disease?
- How do we assure our employees, customers and the public that we are doing all we can to protect them from the disease?
- How can we minimize the risk of disease transmission in our warehouses and for those that deliver and receive our goods?
- How do we protect personnel that may be exposed to someone that is COVID-19 positive and what do we do to minimize the potential for the spread of the virus?

Measures can be taken to reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19 from touching surfaces or from person-to-person spread through respiratory droplets. Clear communication and utilization of social and digital media to educate employees, customers and the public on controls implemented for their safety are critical (i.e. post signs in lunchrooms, break rooms, employee check-in areas).

This document offers practical guidance for warehouse and logistics company owners to implement interim measures to reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19. It addresses the key questions above and also provides tips for employees and customers.

## What should an Employer do to protect themselves and their customers?

Company owners should continually monitor international (World Health Organization - WHO), federal (CDC), state, local and any industry specific guidelines for changes in recommendations, cleaning strategies, and other best management practices. Employers should also consider developing a team of professionals to monitor, assess, and implement new strategies as they become available. In addition, employers should consider the following strategies for reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission in regards to physical distancing, ventilation, enhanced cleaning practices, restrooms, personal hygiene, employee wellness, personal protective equipment, training, waste and laundering, and communication.

### General Tips to Consider to Return to Normal Business Operations

- Develop ongoing communications to your employees regarding the facts of SARS-CoV-2 virus, COVID-19 disease and measures to protect themselves/minimize the spread of the virus.
- Provide employees with face coverings, gloves, shoe covers and hand sanitizer and ensure employees are trained on the proper use and limitations of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- **NOTE: Face coverings primarily protect others not yourself.**
- **NOTE: If an employer chooses to provide an N95 respirator, please fully consider all the potential OSHA and other technical requirements.**
- If work gloves are to be used, each employee should have access to replacement gloves if theirs become soiled. Work gloves should be washed regularly on the highest temperature setting allowed for the work glove material.
- In alignment with CDC recommendations, face coverings should be worn while at work, properly maintained and cleaned.



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- Face coverings may not be required if you work alone in a separate single space, or when doing so would pose a safety or security risk. **(Note: Face coverings primarily protect others not yourself.)**
  - Wear gloves when loading/unloading trucks.
  - If possible, stagger shifts to isolate and compartmentalize staff. This will allow protection of others if a breakout occurs and reduces/limits the number of people who are exposed at shift change. Maintain a daily approved visitor log. This log should include the date, time, and contact information of the visitor. In addition, consider rotating jobs as well to limit exposure
  - Stop employees from randomly walking around the facility or buildings to reduce cross-contamination.
  - Discourage social gatherings or unnecessary discussions.
  - Encourage employees to raise issues or concerns and to identify other measures that can be put into place to further reduce the potential spread of the virus.
- ### Warehouse Facilities
- Complete a task-based review/mapping of the work areas to determine best strategies for physical distancing of at least 6 feet, and ensure staff have face coverings as necessary.
  - Consider holding any essential meetings virtually, telephonically or outdoors.
  - Reduce tasks requiring large amounts of people to be in one area.
  - Identify all high touch surfaces and ensure they are cleaned and disinfected on at least a daily basis and between shifts.
  - Where two-person jobs that do not allow for 6-foot separation are required, determine what additional PPE may be required besides face coverings.
  - Where individual workstations prevent 6-foot separation utilize plastic partitions between employees or where possible spread out the workstations.
  - Disinfect all shared tools, equipment and machinery (i.e. forklifts, lift assist devices) after each use and at the end of each shift.
  - Reduce the number of individuals in work areas to essential staff to complete the work. Temporary spaces (site/job trailers, etc. should be cleaned and disinfected daily).
  - Where essential tasks require customers, sales personnel and visitors to enter the worksite, they should be required to wear face coverings and to abide by physical distancing requirements when onsite.
  - Place signs at entrances and docks to remind delivery personnel of the safety requirements when arriving onsite.
  - No handshake greetings or friendly displays of affection.
  - Employee teams or identified groups shall clean and disinfect their shared workstations and equipment after each use or shift.
  - Ensure safety/toolbox talks have adequate spacing and only have one person notate who is in attendance.
  - Consider closing breakrooms, use barriers or increase distance between tables/chairs to separate workers and discourage congregating during breaks. Where possible, create outdoor break areas with shade covers and seating that ensure physical distancing.
  - Dining tables should be marked with “X”s to stop people from sitting close to each other.
  - Janitorial staff should disinfect eating areas hourly or as frequently as possible.
  - Reduce the number of people in company-owned vehicles or organized van pools.



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- Encourage staff to wash clothes and personal face coverings daily on the hottest setting possible.

### Product Deliveries

- Consider installing barriers or plastic partitions in check-in areas to separate drivers from employees.
- Request that drivers remain in the truck while it is loaded or unloaded or designate a space for drivers to wait, with appropriate physical distancing, wear face coverings, etc.
- Provide a means to disinfect paperwork and pens as necessary when confirming deliveries. Consider placing final paperwork in plastic, disinfected folders.
- Establish an isolated area for all deliveries. Require delivery personnel to wear face covering and gloves when arriving at the site.
- Request delivery companies to supply you with the precautions they have in place to help ensure the protection of your employees (e.g., clean and disinfect the truck bed, employee health monitoring methods). Consider wiping down/disinfecting all materials upon receipt or isolating shipments for 24 – 72 hours, depending upon the type of material.

### Product Shipments

- Develop disinfectant procedures for all materials prior to loading on the truck.
- Disinfect delivery vehicles and equipment before and after delivery, carry additional sanitation materials during deliveries and use clean PPE for each delivery stop.
- Consider arranging for deliveries to be conducted with no personal contact.

### Delivery Drivers

- Wear face coverings when delivering and loading materials.
- Inform your employer if you are not feeling well.
- Practice contactless deliveries whenever you can.

Contactless deliveries allow you to leave a delivery at a doorstep, move back to a distance greater than 6 feet away while verifying receipt of the delivery with the recipient (if required), and try to do everything electronically whenever you can (e.g., in an app or over a phone). This eliminates the need for close contact between you and delivery recipient.

- Maintain a distance 6 feet or greater from others you might meet or need to speak to while making your deliveries.
- Limit contact with frequently touched surfaces during deliveries, such as doorbells or door handles. Use a foot, shoulder, elbow, hip, or forearm when opening doors, instead of hands, if possible.
- Avoid sharing scanners, pens, or other tools with customers.
- If you are wearing machine-washable work gloves normally worn for the job throughout your shift, do not touch your face with gloved hands. Remove them and wash hands before eating. At the end of the work shift, remove the gloves, store them for washing, and wash your hands. When doing laundry, wash gloves using the warmest appropriate water setting and dry them completely.
- For delivery drivers, normally accessible restrooms on routes (i.e., restaurants, coffee shops) may be closed. Employers should provide employees alternative restroom locations and allow time for employees to use them.

### Personal Hygiene

- Establish “before- and after- service” hand washing or sanitizing for all staff/driver interactions.
- Provide hand washing stations at employee entrances or hand sanitizer if not feasible.
- Provide hand washing stations or sanitizer at prominent locations throughout the facility.
- Provide delivery truck drivers with hand sanitizer.



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### Training

- Provide instruction and training to employees on how to:
  - Properly put on and remove gloves and other PPE.
  - Clean and disinfect surfaces with an EPA-registered product.
  - Correctly use face coverings and/or respirators and how to clean and maintain them correctly.
  - Frequently wash their hands for at least 20 seconds.

### Employee Wellness

- Have your human resources engage health and wellness programs.
- Revisit your leave or sick program to allow for time off and follow all HR Policies and HIPAA/other regulatory requirements.
- Monitor employees' wellness. If they are not feeling well have them stay home.
- Provide additional information for employee and family use (i.e., EAP).
- Screening and Temperature Check Tips for Employees
  - Employees can take their temperature at home or in the workplace and answer a medical questionnaire to evaluate their current physical state before entering any job site.
  - Employees, who monitor their temperature at home, should update their supervisor if they have a temperature exceeding 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit.
  - Any employee who has a temperature that exceeds 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit should be further evaluated for Covid-19 symptoms to determine their ability to access the workplace.
  - Per the medical questionnaire, any employee who answers "Yes" to any of the questions will be

sent to the secondary evaluation area, where the designated onsite nurse or contact (if available) will assess and determine if they are allowed on the job site.

- Example Medical Questionnaire.
  - Have you, or a person you have been in close contact with, been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last 14 days? (Close contact is 6 feet or less for more than 10 minutes).
  - Have you experienced any cold or flu-like symptoms in the last 72 hours (to include fever, shortness of breath, cough, sore throat, or difficulty breathing)?
  - Have you traveled internationally or another hot spot (e.g., New York) in the last 14 days?
  - Reference [CDC guidance](#).
- Employer Response to positive case:
  - The employee shall be isolated to the area they are in currently and removed from the work site for a minimum of 14 days.
  - Engage HR immediately and enforce all applicable HR rules and regulations.
  - Any individuals working with the employee up to 48 hours prior to symptom onset, shall also be isolated and all parties will follow social distancing rules. Communicate and reinforce with employees, while maintaining PII and HIPAA requirements, that they may have been exposed and to closely monitor their health, temperature and current symptoms as identified by CDC.
  - Cleaning and disinfecting should be done immediately by trained personnel and they must wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including face coverings and dispose of gloves after use and wash hands and face when complete. Visibly dirty surfaces shall be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water PRIOR to disinfection.



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- For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70 percent alcohol, and EPA-registered disinfectants on [List-N](#) should be effective. Recommended bleach solution mixture for cleaning.
- Provide employees with additional PPE and monitoring (at the company’s discretion).
- Follow Critical Infrastructure Exposure Protocol.
- CDC interim [guidance](#).
- Best Management Practices [Protocols](#).

### Enhanced Cleaning Practices

- Select appropriate disinfectants – consider effectiveness and safety.
  - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed a list of products that meet EPA’s criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2.
  - Review product labels and Safety Data Sheets and follow manufacturer specifications.
  - Consider consulting industrial hygiene experts if additional advice is needed.
- Establish a disinfection routine – do not use wet rag approach (use disposable products instead).
  - Ensure disinfection protocols follow product instructions for application and contact time.
  - Contact surfaces, point of purchase, credit card payment station, paperwork confirmation areas, etc. should be disinfected after each customer. Consider contactless payment via cell phone or other means.
- Promote these practices to customers – make this visible on a sign.
  - Consider using a checklist or audit system to track how often cleaning is conducted.

### Ventilation

- Weather permitting, open truck bays to get fresh air into the warehouse and properly utilize ventilation system. Some ways to do this:
  - Maximize fresh air through your ventilation system.
    - Maintain relative humidity at 40-60%.
    - Ensure restroom is under negative pressure.
    - If you don’t know how, ask an HVAC professional and see [ASHRAE](#) updates for more information
    - Consider using portable HEPA filtration units for localized control.
    - If fans such as pedestal fans or hard mounted fans are used, take steps to minimize air from fans blowing from one person directly at another individual. If fans are disabled or removed, employers should remain aware of, and take steps to prevent, [heat hazards](#).

**NOTE: Contact an occupational health and safety professional or ventilation specialist for advice on how to best utilize ventilation systems.**

### Restrooms

- Ensure restroom facilities are under negative pressure.
- Doors to multi-stall restrooms should be able to be opened and closed without touching handles if at all possible.
- For single restrooms, provide signage and materials (paper towels and trash cans) for individuals to use without touching the handles, and consider providing a key so disinfection measures can be better controlled and disinfect after each use. Place signs indicating that toilet lids (if present) should be closed before flushing.
- Place signs asking employees to wash hands before and after using the restroom.



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- Provide paper towels and air dryers in restrooms.<sup>1</sup>
  - The WHO and CDC currently state that hands can be dried using a paper towel or hand dryer.
  - Due to current uncertainties surrounding the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, care should be taken when using a hand dryer or paper towel.
  - The use of touch or push hand dryers is discouraged due to possible surface contamination. If hand dryers are used, consider touchless devices.
  - Businesses and employers should work with HVAC professionals to ensure that bathrooms are well ventilated.
- Double efforts to keep bathrooms clean and properly disinfected.
- Provide for additional hand washing stations with soap and water in common areas and throughout the site.
  - Also provide hand sanitizer in vehicles such as forklifts and work-stations
- Provide Safety Data Sheets for cleaning chemicals and ensure employees are aware of the hazards of use.
- If advice is needed, industrial hygienists have expertise in selecting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and training.

### Personal Hygiene

- Establish a “before- and after- service” hand washing or sanitizing for all staff.
- Provide hand washing stations at the front of the establishment or alternatively, hand sanitizer if not feasible.
- Provide hand washing stations or sanitizer at prominent locations and point of purchase.

### Training

- Provide instruction and training to employees on how to:
  - Properly put on and remove gloves.
  - Clean and disinfect surfaces according to product specifications.
  - Correctly use face coverings and/or respirators, how to clean and maintain.

### Waste and Laundering

- Single-use items and used disinfection materials can be treated as regular waste, following regular safety guidelines.
- Company supplied uniforms should be washed and dried on the highest temperature setting allowable for the fabric. If outside laundry service is used please work closely with them to ensure minimization of any spread of the virus.

### Customer Communications

- Communicate to customers what the establishment is doing to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
  - (e.g., disinfection routine, health policies for staff, and health & safety measures in place).
- Communicate that the establishment has the right to refuse service to anyone exhibiting symptoms or not following guidelines (e.g., physical distancing).
- Platforms for communication could include web-sites and indoor/outdoor signage, etc.

### What should an Employee do to protect themselves and the customer?

- Evaluate your [health constantly](#), if you are sick stay home. If you have a temperature stay home. If someone at home is sick, stay home. If you have allergies and sneezing, stay home. **NOTE: Employ-**

<sup>1</sup>NOTE VERSION CHANGE: In version 4 of this guidance document, in the section titled “Restrooms” it stated to disconnect or tape off the hand dryer.



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er HR Policies, HIPAA guidelines and other laws should be followed at all times.

- At all times, wear a face covering when out in public and maintain physical distancing.
- Wash your hands when you arrive at work and after touching your face or face covering and when you leave work.
- Let your employer know if you have concerns about the PPE that may be provided to you and that you are properly instructed on how to use it.
- Follow all company safety requirements and ask questions when unclear on any of the requirements.
- Attempt to delay the urge to sneeze or cough if possible; carry a disposable towel or handkerchief towel, so if you get the urge to sneeze or cough, cover your nose, mouth and mask with it and then, attempt to delay the urge to sneeze or cough, immediately leave the premises to wash your hands and face thoroughly before returning to work.

## Resources

- [National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [American Logistics Aid Network](#) (Supply Chain Intelligence Center)
- CDC Guidelines:
  - [What Grocery and Food Pick-Up and Delivery Drivers Need to Know about COVID-19.](#)
  - [What Mail and Parcel Delivery Drivers Need to Know about COVID-19.](#)
- Numerous wellness questionnaire examples are available online (e.g., [https://doh.sd.gov/documents/COVID19/BusinessScreening\\_Q&A.pdf](https://doh.sd.gov/documents/COVID19/BusinessScreening_Q&A.pdf))
- The EPA has developed a [list of disinfectants](#) for use against SARS-CoV-2.
- ASHRAE has a [list of COVID resources for commercial buildings](#).
- AIHA's Indoor Environmental Quality Committee developed these guidance documents about reopening and cleaning buildings after closures due to COVID-19: [Recovering from COVID-19 Building Closures](#) and [Workplace Cleaning for COVID-19](#).

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These guidance documents were primarily developed for those smaller business that don't have readily available occupational health and safety resources, and designed to help business owners, employers, employees and consumers implement science-backed procedures for limiting the spread of the coronavirus. They are subject to any local, state, or federal directives, laws, or orders about operating a business and should only be used if they do not conflict with any such orders.

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## About Occupational Health and Safety Professionals

Occupational health and safety (OHS) professionals (also known as industrial hygienists) practice

the science of anticipating, recognizing, evaluating, and controlling workplace conditions that may cause workers' injury or illness. Through a continuous improvement cycle of planning, doing, checking and acting, OHS professionals make sure workplaces are healthy and safe.

## Get additional resources at AIHA's [Coronavirus Outbreak Resource Center](#).

Find a qualified industrial hygiene and OEHS professionals near you in our [Consultants Listing](#).



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