COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR OFFICE SETTINGS

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LABORERS'
HEALTH & SAFETY FUND
OF NORTH AMERICA

The Laborers' Health & Safety Fund of North America (LHSFNA) recognizes that LIUNA affiliates and LIUNA signatory employers are committed to ensuring the safety and health of their workforce, including taking the appropriate steps to limit the spread of COVID-19.

This guidance provides actionable steps that employers and employees in office settings can take to lower the risk of exposure and maintain a healthy work environment. Within LIUNA, these steps may be applicable to workspaces that are primarily indoors, such as LIUNA Regional offices, Local Union halls, training centers, LECET funds or health and welfare fund offices.

Vaccines & the Workplace

Workplaces with Fully Vaccinated Employees
If a workplace can ensure all employees are fully vaccinated and the workplace is not open to outside visitors or people whose vaccination status is unknown, implementing the following guidance may not be necessary. If the workplace is located in an area with a high level of community transmission or if workers commute from such an area, it's recommended that facial coverings be worn indoors, regardless of vaccination status.

Workplaces with a Mix of Fully Vaccinated and Unvaccinated Employees
If a workplace cannot ensure all employees are fully vaccinated, or if vaccination status of employees, guests and visitors is unknown and/or mixed, the LHSFNA recommends implementing the measures in this guidance document.

Note: Depending on your workplace, implementing every step below may not be feasible.

Recommended Actions for Employers in Office Settings

Employers should develop and implement appropriate policies, in accordance with regulations and guidance released by federal, state and local agencies, provinces and territories as well as industry best practices. Employers should communicate these policies, protocols and procedures to all employees and provide instruction on how to follow them.

A list of U.S. state and territorial health department websites can be found here:

www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/healthdirectories/healthdepartments.html.

A list of Canadian provincial and territorial health care web resources can be found here:

www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-care-system/canada-health-care-system-medicare/provincial-territorial-health-care-resources.html

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Promote COVID-19 Vaccination

Employers, especially those in leadership positions, continue to play a vital role in providing a safe work environment, promoting risk-reducing behaviors and encouraging workers to get vaccinated. Please refer to the following Fund materials for more information:

▸ *COVID-19 Vaccines: Key Facts & Benefits*
▸ *Guidance for People Vaccinated Against COVID-19*
▸ *COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics*
▸ *What You Need to Know About COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates and Incentives,* July 2021 Lifelines

Conduct Workplace Screening and Assessment

Employers should consider implementing screening and assessment measures before allowing employees, visitors and vendors to access the workplace. Employers should monitor the workforce for COVID-19 symptoms and not allow symptomatic employees to return to work in person until they are cleared by a healthcare provider. Please refer to the LHSFNA's *COVID-19 Screenings and Assessments* for more information.

Attendance, Social Distancing and Travel

In-Person Attendance

It is recommended employers take a measured approach regarding employees' attendance in the office, particularly in areas where significant community spread is occurring. There are several ways to gradually implement employees' returning to work in person while keeping health and safety in mind. Suggestions include:

▸ Varying arrival and/or departure times
▸ Condensing work hours
▸ Creating a rotating schedule that allows fewer employees to be present in the office
▸ Establishing groups that are in the office at the same time
▸ Closing the lobby to the public

Vulnerable Populations

Special accommodations should be made for individuals who are at high risk for severe illness and complications from COVID-19. High-risk groups include adults over the age of 65 and people with pre-existing medical conditions such as cancer, chronic lung diseases, diabetes, heart conditions, overweight and obesity, chronic kidney disease, liver disease or those who are immunocompromised from transplants or from taking medications that weaken the immune system, like corticosteroids.

Allow these individuals to discreetly and confidentially identify themselves as needing certain accommodations, such as continuing to telework for a longer period of time.

Visitors and Vendors

Establish a policy that addresses visitors and vendors in the workplace. If feasible, hold them to the same screening and assessment measures that are implemented for employees. Consider continuing alternate forms of communication, such as phone calls and video conferencing, to limit the number of visitors and vendors arriving in person.

Telework

Continue to permit telework among employees whenever it is possible and feasible to do so while maintaining continuity of business operations.

Social Distancing Practices

Social distancing (staying at least six feet apart) should remain a common practice as in-person attendance resumes and increases. One way to reduce social contact in the workplace is through the implementation of a "no congregation" policy. Support this policy by implementing changes in the workplace such as:

▸ Close common areas where employees are likely to congregate and interact. If this isn't feasible, limit the number of employees allowed in a common area at one time and enforce social distancing protocols.
▸ Adjust meeting, lunchroom or break area seating to eliminate gatherings of more than 10 people at a time and maintain social distancing. If this isn't feasible, employees should take steps to sit at least six feet apart from one another (e.g., sitting adjacent to rather than directly across from one another).
▸ Consider outdoor areas surrounding a workplace as viable meeting spaces or break areas (e.g. using a patio as an informal

> meeting area or place to eat). Outdoor areas provide increased ventilation, which may help reduce the likelihood of transmitting COVID-19. Maintain social distancing during outdoor gatherings.
> ▶ Identify high-traffic choke points, such as elevators, stairways and hallways, and implement distancing measures, such as only allowing a designated number of people in an elevator at one time.

In open office environments, increase the physical space between employees to a six foot minimum. If this isn't feasible, such as at a reception area, install physical barriers, such as clear plexiglass.

Continue to conduct all meetings virtually if possible. If meetings must take place in person, all participants should maintain a distance of least six feet from one another.

Facial Coverings in the Workplace
Facial coverings are not a substitute for approved personal protective equipment (PPE), including N95 respirators. The CDC and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) recommend wearing cloth face coverings in public settings (e.g., kitchens and break areas).

Facial coverings slow the spread of the virus and help those who may have the virus and not show symptoms from transmitting it to others. Facial coverings can be made from common household materials, such as a T-shirt or bandana. Cloth face coverings should:

▶ Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
▶ Be secured with ties or ear loops
▶ Include multiple layers of fabric
▶ Allow for breathing without restriction
▶ Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape

Employers should consider instituting a policy that facial coverings be worn in the workplace regardless of vaccination status, particularly if in an area with a substantial or high level of community transmission.

Travel
Employers should examine their travel policy and modify it based on the specific state or local guidance in their area. If there is significant community spread within a geographic area, non-essential work travel and work-sponsored conferences, trade shows, etc., within that area should be canceled until further notice.

Employers should take into account the circumstances along the travel route and at the destination of an employee's proposed travel. Employers should consult any travel restrictions in the destination area and be aware of state or local government policies that may be in place, such as mandatory quarantine upon arrival.

Cleaning, Disinfecting and Sanitation

Employers should arrange for cleaning and disinfection of high-traffic areas (e.g., kitchens and break areas).

Restrooms
Many office settings have contracts in place with cleaning companies for daily cleaning, including trash removal and restroom maintenance. If these services must be performed by an employee or employees, follow these best practices:

▶ Wear disposable gloves.
▶ Keep toilets clean, sanitary and operational at all times.
▶ Monitor waste removal and empty trash receptacles as needed.
▶ Monitor and replenish toilet paper, soap and paper towels as needed.

PPE
Employees should continue to follow all applicable policies and procedures for PPE that they would use for routine job tasks. When cleaning and disinfecting, employees should always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used. Additional PPE may be needed based on setting and product. Follow these best practices:

▸ Train employees on safe donning, doffing and disposal of PPE to avoid infectious disease transmission.

▸ Gloves and other single-use disposable items should be discarded after each cleaning.

▸ Immediately after PPE is removed, wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; use hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol when soap and water aren't available.

Ventilation

COVID-19 spreads more easily indoors than outdoors. Improving ventilation is a key engineering control that can be used as part of a layered strategy to reduce the concentration of viral particles in indoor air and the risk of virus transmission to unvaccinated workers in particular. Recommendations below are based on ASHRAE *Guidance for Building Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic*:

▸ Ensure the HVAC system(s) is operating in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and design specifications and conduct all regularly scheduled inspections and maintenance procedures.

▸ Maximize the amount of outside air being supplied.

▸ Install air filters with a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) 13 or higher.

▸ Maximize natural ventilation in buildings without HVAC systems by opening windows or doors.

▸ When conditions allow, consider the use of portable air cleaners with High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters in spaces with high occupancy or limited ventilation.

Support Employees

▸ Encourage employees to support fellow co-workers in following the designated procedures, protocols and practices. Encourage employees to contact their supervisor if they have questions or concerns.

▸ Take opportunities to support employee well-being and resilience by helping to address potential behavioral health impacts, such as depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance use disorder and other mental and behavioral disorders.

   ▪ Provide frequent and comprehensive communication with the entire staff before, during and after the transition back to work.

   ▪ Provide resources related to physical, mental, emotional and financial well-being, including health care benefit information.

   ▪ Provide available employee assistance program (EAP) or member assistance program (MAP) information to support employees in addressing behavioral health and mental health disorders.

   ▪ Provide materials on bereavement, loss and grief to help employees cope with the loss of co-workers, family members or loved ones.

   ▪ Consider coordination of critical incident stress management services through your EAP or the LHSFNA if an employee passes away once staff begin returning to the office.

▸ Provide resources and a work environment that promotes personal hygiene. For example, provide tissues, no-touch trash cans, hand soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60 percent alcohol, disinfectant products and disposable towels for employees to clean their work surfaces at their discretion.

▸ Encourage workers to wear a mask regardless of vaccination status if they have a weakened immune system, are at risk for severe health complications from COVID-19 or live with someone who is immunocompromised.

▸ Encourage regular and frequent handwashing with available supplies and post signage encouraging these steps in restrooms.

▸ Provide hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol at building entrances and near elevators and stairwells.

Recommended Actions for Employees in Office Settings

Employees should follow the precautions, protocols and policies implemented by their employer. They are in place to maintain a healthy work environment for everyone in the workplace. Additionally, employees should continue to follow guidance from federal, state and local authorities.

Many of the precautions and practices that have been recommended to slow the spread of COVID-19 will still apply as employees return to work in person. Employees should continue to follow these precautions while in the office and any applicable practices that can be followed while away from the office.

▸ **Get vaccinated against COVID-19 and encourage members of your household to do the same**.

▸ Avoid close contact with people who are sick. **If you are sick, stay home, self-isolate and call your healthcare provider.**

▸ Self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 if you suspect you've been exposed and cooperate with the employer's screening and/or assessment measures.
▸ Practice proper hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
▸ Practice social distancing by limiting person-to-person contact within six feet, especially when indoors.
▸ When scheduling meetings, replace face-to-face meetings with virtual communication (e.g., conference calls, online meeting software, text messaging) as much as possible.
▸ The CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., kitchens and break areas). The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) also recognizes facial coverings as an additional protective measure. Facial coverings slow the spread of the virus and help those who may have the virus and not show symptoms from transmitting it to others.
▸ Non-essential work travel may not be permitted. Non-essential non-work travel should be minimized. When considering travel plans, take into account the circumstances for where you are, along the route and at the planned destination. Consult any travel restrictions in the destination area and be aware of any policies that states, provinces, territories or local governments may have in place.

Resources

Additional information and other guidance, such as the Fund's *Coronavirus & COVID-19* fact sheet, is available at www.lhsfna.org/index.cfm/coronavirus.

Please contact the LHSFNA at 202-628-5465 for specific questions or concerns not addressed above. The LHSFNA can develop return to work guidance tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of your workplace.

CDC – Coronavirus (COVID-19) – www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov

OSHA – Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace www.osha.gov/coronavirus/safework

NIOSH – Coronavirus Disease-2019 – www.cdc.gov/niosh/emres/2019_ncov.html

PHAC – Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) – www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html

CCOHS – Infectious Disease Outbreaks/Pandemics – https://www.ccohs.ca/outbreaks

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