

Phase Two Guidance Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Office Buildings

During Phase Two, the public and businesses must adopt behaviors and rigorous safeguards to reduce risk for all. **The following measures should be implemented to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission amongst employees, visitors, and the community.** For additional information, visit coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo.

No individual experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or recently exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19, should enter an office building due to the risk of exposing others. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include: fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or otherwise feeling unwell.

UPDATE: Mayor's Order 2020-127

- [Mayor's Order 2020-127](#), issued December 18, 2020, establishes temporary pauses in various activities from 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 23, 2020, until 5:00 a.m. on Friday, January 15, 2021, including immediately adjusting Mayor's Order 2020-126 so as to remove the percentage capacity and numeric caps on retail food sellers; and extends the Public Emergency and Public Health Emergency.
- The pauses imposed by Section III of Mayor's Order 2020-127 are time limited and all other regulations affecting those sectors remain in place and are not superseded. This Order supersedes any Mayor's Order issued during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency only to the extent of any inconsistency.
- **Starting December 23, 2020, non-essential businesses must implement teleworking to the maximum extent for their workforce, except for the in-person staff required to support minimum business operations.**
- **Non-essential businesses in office buildings should minimize visitors and in-person customer services.**

Everyday Prevention Measures

- **Employees should stay at home if feeling unwell** or if recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Employees should **practice social distancing**. Maintain at least 6 feet distance from other people when possible.
- Employees and any visitors **must wear a cloth face covering** at all times in all areas of the business where they are likely to come within six feet of another person.
 - Masks and cloth face coverings protect the wearer and protect other people.
 - Wearing a mask is not required when a person is in an enclosed office that no one else is permitted to enter.
 - For more information about mask wearing, see *Masks and Cloth Face Coverings for the General Public* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.
- Gloves should be worn only as indicated per routine job responsibilities
- Perform frequent hand hygiene (with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
 - Key times to perform hand hygiene include:
 - Before and after using the toilet;
 - Before and after putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings;
 - Before and after work shifts and work breaks;
 - Before and after services to each client;

- After handling belongings of other people; and
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

Considerations for Employers

- **Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace.** Conduct a thorough assessment of the workplace to identify potential workplace hazards that could increase risks for COVID-19 transmission.
- The office building employer, owner, or manager should create a [COVID-19 workplace health and safety plan](#) for their office(s).
- Include all employees in the workplace in communication plans — for example, management, staff, relief employees, janitorial staff, maintenance staff, and supervisory staff.
 - If contractors are employed in the workplace, develop plans to communicate with the contracting company regarding modifications to work processes and requirements for the contractors to prevent transmission of COVID-19.
- The [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#) has detailed recommendations that all employers can use to protect their workers and clients.
- Provide supplies to allow for frequent hand hygiene (e.g. alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol) at each workstation and in other easily accessible locations.
- Provide employees adequate time to wash their hands and access to soap, clean water, and single-use paper towels.
- Provide staff with face masks or cloth face coverings and instructions on their safe use.
- Implement leave policies that are flexible and non-punitive, and that allow sick employees to stay home. Leave policies are recommended to account for the following:
 - Employees who report COVID-19 symptoms,
 - Employees who were tested for COVID-19 and test results are pending,
 - Employees who tested positive for COVID-19,
 - Employees who are a close contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19
 - Employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members.
- Keep abreast of current law, which has amended both the DC Family and Medical Leave Act and the DC Sick and Safe Leave Law and created whole new categories of leave, like Declared Emergency Leave.
- Learn about and inform your employees about COVID-related leave provided through new federal law, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and all applicable District law relating to sick leave.
- Do not assume that workers who are over 65 have a disability for purposes of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Educate employees about COVID-19. Refer to coronavirus.dc.gov for more information.
- Office buildings that provide services to the public (e.g., non-essential retail) and employees (e.g., gyms, food retail) should follow setting-specific guidance available at coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo.

Avoid Close Contact and Reduce Touchpoints

- Modify or adjust seats, furniture, and workstations to maintain social distancing of 6 feet between employees.
- Identify work and common areas where employees could have close contact (within 6 feet) with others and implement interventions to facilitate social distancing in these locations.
 - Install floor decals and visual markers as needed to promote physical distancing in

- the building, including in work areas and other areas such as waiting rooms, lobbies, meeting rooms, break rooms, parking lots, entrance and exit areas, and locker rooms.
- Replace high-touch communal items, such as coffee pots, water coolers, and bulk or buffet-style snacks and meals, with alternatives such as pre-packaged, single-serving items and automatic water bottle refilling stations, and allow employees to bring their own personal coffee pots or hot water heaters if it is safe to do so.
- Use visual cues to help prevent congregating in public areas. Remove chairs from waiting areas to ensure people do not sit close together or wait in groups.
- Consider implementing 'staff rotations' or 'staff shifts' for workers in commercial offices, grouping employees into A and B cohorts that use facilities at different times and don't overlap.
- Stagger break times as feasible to reduce the density of employees in common areas such as break rooms.

Screen and Monitor for Symptoms

- Perform screening of (e.g., symptom questionnaires) of employees daily, prior to entering the business, over the phone or in person. Screen visitors who are attending meetings or will have close contact with the staff.
 - For **Screening Tool Guidance**, visit coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance
- Employees and visitors who report symptoms or testing positive for COVID-19 must not enter the premises.
- Post signs in parking areas and entrances that ask guests and visitors to wear cloth face coverings, not enter the building if they are sick, and if possible, stay 6 feet away from employees.
- If an employee develops any symptoms of COVID-19 during the workday, there must be a plan in place for that individual to immediately isolate, notify their supervisor, and leave the building.
- Management must maintain a daily record of individuals who have been at the business for at least 30 days to facilitate contact tracing.

Building Considerations

- Consider making the following improvements to improve building ventilation (cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html):
 - Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors.
 - Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms).
 - Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.
 - Improve central air filtration to the highest compatible with the filter rack, and seal edges of the filter to limit bypass.
 - Increase ventilation rates.
 - Check filters to ensure they are within service life and appropriately installed.
 - Keep systems running longer hours, 24/7 if possible, to enhance air exchanges in the building space.
- Consult with a specialist to see what works for your building if activities are indoors, increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows or exterior doors if possible.
- If the building was closed for an extended period of time, remember to check HVAC systems

and ensure all water systems are safe to use. For more information, see CDC's Guidance for Reopening Buildings after Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html).

Clean and Disinfect

- Businesses should have a comprehensive plan for cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces (e.g., workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, printer/copiers, drinking fountains and doorknobs, restrooms) routinely throughout the day.
- For more information on cleaning and disinfecting workplaces and disinfectants that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19, see the CDC website [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html)

Establish a Plan for COVID-19 Exposure

- Establish a plan in the event an employee or visitor is diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Identify a point of contact at the business that an employee can notify if they test positive for COVID-19 and choose to disclose this information.
- If an employee chooses to report to the business that they are positive for COVID-19, the business should have a notification process to share the following with staff:
 - Education about COVID-19, including the signs and symptoms of COVID-19
 - Referral to the Guidance for Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19, available at [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov)
 - Information on options for COVID-19 testing in the District Columbia, available at [coronavirus.dc.gov/testing](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov/testing)
- Refer to the guidance "First Steps for Non-Healthcare Employers when Employees Test Positive for COVID-19" at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance)
 - A close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of a person who tested positive for COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes over a 24-hour period, during that person's infectious period.
 - The infectious period starts two days before symptom onset and typically ends 10 days after symptom onset (or test date for people who do not have symptoms).
- Businesses must notify DC Health when:
 - An employee who interacts frequently with visitors notifies the business they **tested positive for COVID-19** (not before results come back)
 - **AND**
 - The person was on the premises **during their infectious period**.
- Notify DC Health by submitting an online form on the DC Health COVID-19 Reporting Requirements website dchealth.dc.gov/page/covid-19-reporting-requirements:
 - Submit a **Non-Healthcare Facility COVID-19 Consult Form**.
- An investigator from DC Health will follow up within 48 hours to all appropriately submitted notifications. Please note this time may increase as cases of COVID-19 increase in the District.

These recommendations will continue to be updated. Please visit [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov) for the most updated information.

This document does not address laws relating to employment, benefits, privacy, disability, discrimination, occupational safety and health, or other topics. Consult an attorney on which laws may apply to your office and how to conform with them.