



COVID-19 has impacted many lives. Within our homes, communities, and places of business, the impact can be observed and felt. People are working to return to some activities that have been idled and many businesses are working to return to their pre-pandemic operations. Even essential businesses may be seeking to expand their operations, return furloughed workers and hire additional workers.

As research continues for potential treatments and vaccines, businesses are considering how to protect their employees and customers during what may be considered a “new normal.” First and foremost, CDC guidelines should be reviewed often and followed to ensure best measures are in place to control the spread of COVID-19. The CDC provides resources for specific industries and general guidance for all employers. *Those engaged in direct client services must continually review CDC COVID-19 resources.* Please refer to the following CDC guidance for businesses and workplaces: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>

In the interim, PMA Risk Control Services continues to provide assistance to those who are seeking to protect workers while maintaining business operations. While some changes in operations are to be expected, the goal is to help control our clients’ exposures as much as possible until suitable medical treatment is available. Outlined below are the “next steps” in the process for controlling safety and health:

1. Pre-planning and Ongoing Risk Assessment
2. Implementation and/or Reinforcement of Physical Distancing in the Workplace (including remote workers)
3. Personal Protection and Cleaning
4. Occupational Health and Wellness (including employee screening)
5. Communication and Education

On the following pages, PMA Risk Control has outlined practical steps that may be considered for operating in the “new normal.”

1 Pre-planning and Ongoing Risk Assessment

A PMA Risk Control Services consultant is available to meet with you remotely and/or onsite to discuss operational plans.

Some suggestions for an initial meeting include:

1. A “first step” virtual meeting to review controls to define needs and objectives (and assess controls already in place);
2. A structured risk assessment that covers COVID-19 exposures;
3. Investigation into options for protecting workers;
4. Methods for preparing facilities in cases of reopening;
5. Cleaning and sanitizing procedures; and
6. Returning workers and plans for hiring new workers, if applicable.

2 Physical Distancing in the Workplace (Including Remote Workers)

Where possible, employers are encouraged to have employees work remotely and use conference call and online meeting options. Once this option is maximized, then the work begins on how to protect workers onsite. Our Industrial Safety and Ergonomics team is available to assist you with suggestions for physical distancing in the workplace. For office workers, we continue to recommend proper workstation setup as outlined in the following resources:

- *Guide to Setting up a Safe, Healthy and Productive Home Office*, click [here](#).
- *Ergonomic Considerations in Setting up a Home Office Workspace*, click [here](#).
- *Wellness Strategies for Working from Home Tip Sheet*, click [here](#).



However, there are supplemental recommendations; for example, office workers need to work 6' apart and wear a surgical, dust or cloth mask per CDC guidelines. Use of barriers such as plastic shields between workstations or panels may offer some protection. These barriers are impacted by optional sit/stand workstation configurations and the stature of the individual worker. Our Industrial Safety and Ergonomics Team is available to assist you.

As for other areas of the business, our team can also conduct a virtual or physical survey. The survey will include:

1. Identification of areas where employees may work in close proximity. Our team will offer ideas on how to maintain physical distancing between employees through workstation/work area modifications.
2. Review of common areas (e.g., break rooms, meeting rooms, smoking areas, restrooms) and suggest how to utilize these spaces safely.

3. Evaluation of travel-through facilities and identification of where distances may be compromised. This includes elevators, stairwells, aisles and entrances and exits. Suggestions will include recommendations to limit exposure from proximity to others.

3 Personal Protection and Cleaning

Following CDC Guidelines and other best practices, our Risk Control Services team can offer guidance on personal protective equipment (PPE) and proper cleaning and sanitizing of the workplace.

1. Personal protection options may vary depending on the physical environment. A risk assessment will help identify suitable PPE guidelines including hand washing procedures, wearing of masks, gloves and physical protection for employees required to clean and sanitize with chemicals.
2. As for cleaning and sanitizing, our Risk Control Services team, including our corporate certified industrial hygienist (CIH), can provide guidance on best practices based on CDC and other relevant resources including OSHA.



4 Occupational Health and Wellness (Including Employee Screening)

PMA Risk Control Services also offers various occupational health and wellness resources to help employers prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect workers. Our corporate certified occupational health nurse (COHN) and your risk control specialist can provide telephonic consultation to discuss options concerning returning workers and hiring new employees. The topic of screening and even pre-placement evaluations can be confusing. There are costs tied to these activities and careful decisions need to be made by employers.

The process starts with knowing what you can do from a health and safety standpoint, what current CDC COVID-19 guidelines are suggesting, and best practices within this area. Our occupational health nurse can advise as to the benefits and considerations for employee screenings including:

1. Understanding what you are screening for as well as how to decide on self-screening, screening by another employee or using a third-party;
2. What to do with the information gathered;
3. Information on third-party resources for onsite employee screening; and
4. HIPAA documentation and recordkeeping considerations.

Another important function of occupational health is medical surveillance, which includes pulmonary function and other testing of specific types of PPE including respirators.

Our Employee Wellness team can offer the following assistance:

1. Education on employee health risk factors (e.g., comorbidities and lifestyle) and their impact on workers' compensation claims;
2. Strategies for older workers and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions who might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19;
3. Coping with stress tied to the workplace in the midst of COVID-19;
4. Planning and integrating employee health actions with ongoing safety and health efforts; and
5. Employee surveys and leadership forums on managing employee health.

5 Communication and Education

Our goal is to help assist you in navigating the “new normal,” and our risk control consultants can help you along the path. We also have on-demand information available, including:

- COVID-19 content available via PMA's website response center at <https://www.pmacompanies.com/covid-19-response>.
- PMA's Organizational Safety Institute® events and Safety Source COVID-19 resources via Websource®: <http://websource.pmagroup.com>
- CDC educational materials at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>

Should you have any questions, contact one of our risk control representatives for assistance or email us at heretohelp@pmagroup.com.

PMA Companies has a track record of success in collaborating with clients to create and implement effective risk management solutions. We are proud of our longstanding commitment to protect the health and safety of our employees and clients and we're here to support you during these challenging times.