Reopening Safely
How to Resume Work with COVID-19

A Guide for all Organizations

Maintain X
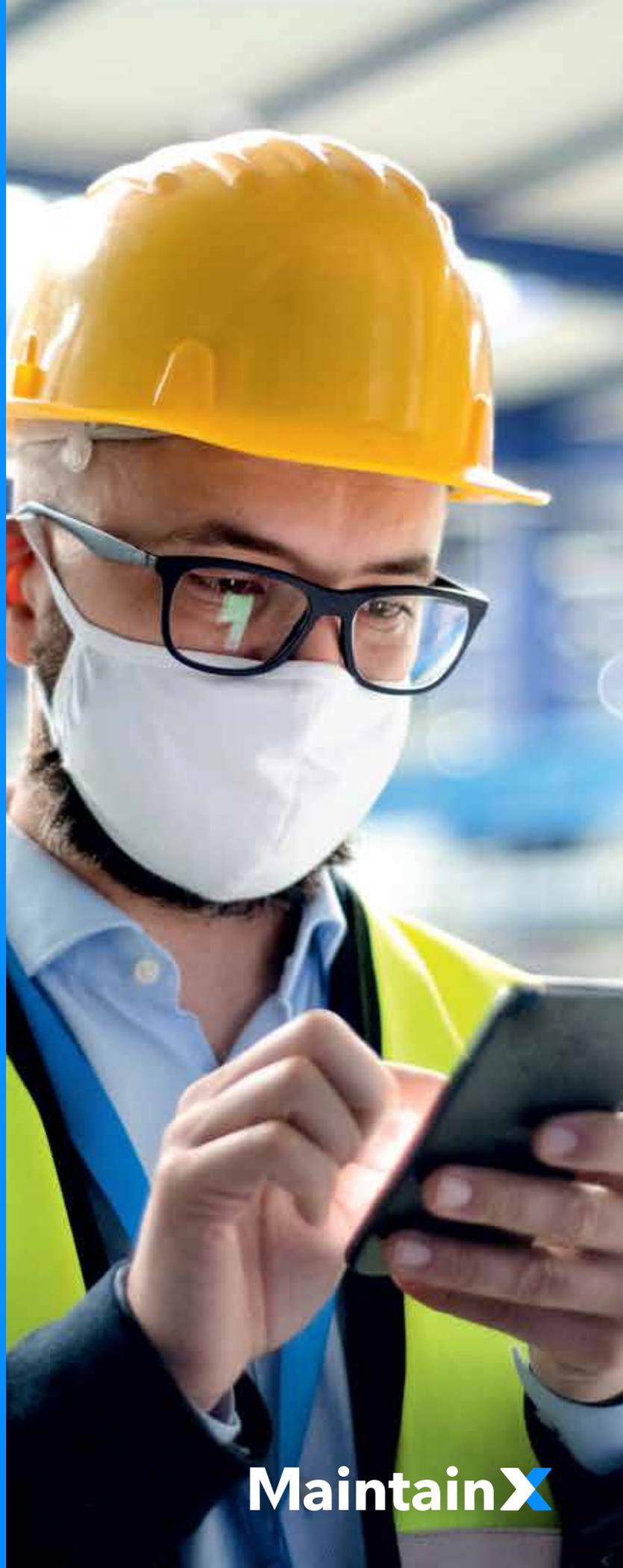
It's finally happening.

States are beginning to loosen the measures put in place to curb COVID-19. Businesses of all types now face the challenge of navigating new standard operating procedures to keep everyone safe.

However,understanding exactly which types of businesses can reopen and in what capacity remains confusing for many owners and operators.

Factors impacting
reopening timelines include

- The condition of current state-mandated stay-at-home commands. Check the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's digital resource center for details about your state's reopening plans.

- The capacity of your business location to enforce the CDC - recommended social distancing of six feet in between people.

- The level of required physical contact between your customers and staff members (e.g., hair salons with direct contact vs. restaurants with indirect contact).

- The level of required physical contact between your staff members (manufacturing facilities, warehouses, etc)

- The prevalence of cases of COVID-19 within specific localities.

- Whether your company has a physical location.

Individual employees, customers, and partners will likely feel very differently about the prospect of returning to work. Some people may have comfortably switched to remote work situations, while others are missing the social aspect of working amongst peers.

The sentiments of team members within each of these groups will also vary from relaxed to fearful. For these reasons, businesses of all types must a). create strategic reopening plans that ensure all possible precautions are being met and b). Enhance connected-worker platforms to keep everyone in the loop as things change.

According to the CDC, businesses can reopen so long as they meet the following qualifications:

- They are located within an area that no longer necessitates significant mitigation.

- Reopening is in accordance with local and state ordinances.

- They are ready to protect employees, customers, and partners at increased risk of serious illness.

In this guide, we'll review the steps business of all types can take to reopen amidst lifted restrictions. This guide is split into the following sections:

01. Familiarize yourself with the recommended guidelines for your location and industry

02. Assess your unique business needs

03. Plan for success. Communication is key

04. Put your plan into action

01

Familiarize yourself with the right guidelines for your location and industry

If you haven't already, now is a great time to familiarize yourself with government-recommended safety and sanitation guidelines. Unsurprisingly, there is no shortage of available information about COVID-19.

Federal Resources

Individuals

Continue to adhere to State and local guidance as well as complementary CDC guidance, particularly with respect to face coverings.

- Continue to practice good hygiene

- Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, especially after touching frequently used items or surface

- Avoid touching your face

- Sneeze or cough into a tissue, or inside of your elbow

- Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible

- Strongly consider using face coverings while in public, and particularly when using mass transit

People who feel sick should stay home

- Do not go to work or school

- Contact and follow the advice of your medical provider

Employers

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Develop and implement appropriate policies, in accordance with Federal, State, and local regulations and guidance, and informed by industry, best practices, regarding:

- Social distancing and protective equipment

- Temperature checks

- Sanitation

- Use and disinfect of common and high-traffic areas

- Business travel

Monitor workforce for indicative symptoms. Do not allow symptomatic people to physically return to work until cleared by a medical provider.

Develop and implement policies and procedures for workforce contact tracing following employee COVID+ test.

Federal Resources
Opening up America again

President Trump has unveiled Guidelines for Opening Up America Again, a three-phased approach based on the advice of public health experts. These steps will help state and local officials when reopening their economies, getting people back to work, and continuing to protect American lives.

Guidelines for Opening Up America Again

Here you will find President Trump's three-phase reopening guidelines based on the advice of public health experts. While timelines of adherence have been left up to individual state governments, understanding the overarching plan will be helpful.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The CDC is one of the most widely referenced resources on COVID-19. In addition to providing basic guidance on how to reduce the spread of the virus, the CDC has developed coronavirus guidance for businesses and workplaces.

Coronavirus.gov

This is the White House's official coronavirus website, which acts as a hub for all official government resources for the American public and its businesses.

OSHA

Here you will find OSHA's recommended safety standards for returning to work. It's worth mentioning that these guidelines are neither standards nor regulations. There are no legal obligations concerning COVID at this time.

State Resources
State by state business reopening guidance
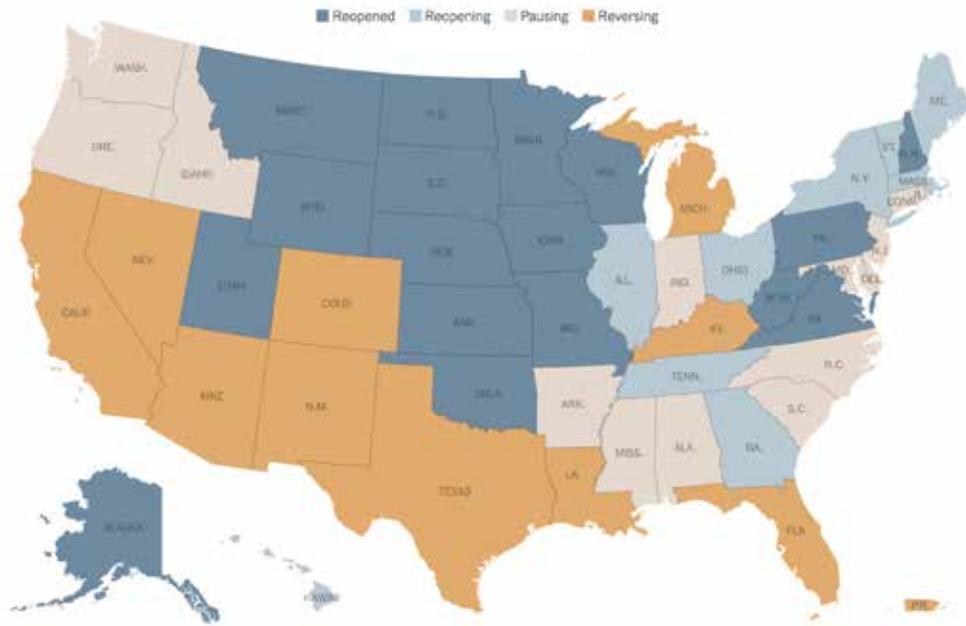
Credit: NYT 08/2020

U.S. Chamber of Commerce State-by-State

The U.S. Chamber has created an interactive map illustrating the most recent guidance, timelines, and reopening information for employers. It's color-coordinated, easy-to-use, and succinct.

Your State's Official Government Website

State governments are maintaining updated guidance and regulations on their respective sites. Just conduct a simple Google search.

Your State or Governor's Social Media Accounts

Several states and their governors run official accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and other popular platforms. Most of them do a great job of providing real-time updates on executive orders, guidelines updates, and statistics. Check for a blue "verified" checkmark next to the account name to ensure it's legit.

Local Resources

Depending on your state, you may also have individual county or city restrictions. This is most often the case in major metropolitan areas like New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. If your organization is situated in a highly-populated area, be sure to double-check your city or county's official Website in addition to your state Website.

Industry Resources

CDC Guidelines

This landing page allows visitors to filter A-to-Z sanitation guidelines for everything from Airlines to Veterinarians.

American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA)

The AIHA has released comprehensive industry guidelines for physical-contact workers like at-home service providers, construction workers, gyms, salons, retailers, and restaurant workers.

National Restaurant Association Reopening Guidelines

The Association has assembled a group of experts led by Larry Lynch, the Association Senior Vice President of Certification & Operations, from the Food & Drug Administration, academia, and the public health sector to draft guidance for restaurants that complement state government opening plans.

LEED Reopening Guidelines

LEED guidance outlines sustainable best practices for cleaning, workplace re-occupancy, HVAC and plumbing.

Assess your
unique business needs

During this time, each business has individual operational needs. From limited funding to supply-chain disruptions, you may be navigating unfamiliar challenges as you transition back to normal. Ask yourself these questions to begin formulating your business' reopening plan:

Do we need to modify our plan for staffing?

Did you have to layoff or furlough employees during the crisis? It may take a while to return to full capacity. Consider whether or not you should give the remainder of your pre-pandemic workforce minimal hours OR transition by only scheduling a few primary individuals for normal working hours until business picks up again. If you need to make new hires, onboarding and standardizing operations quickly has never been more important.

What employee concerns about workplace health and safety need to be addressed?

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Your staff is a crucial component of your business' recovery. Clearly communicate all newly developed plans and policies regarding employee health and take the time to answer any questions and concerns.

How have the needs of my customers changed?

Expect many of your clients to have limited disposable income at the moment. For this reason, think creatively about how you can best solve the challenges they face in a win-win manner. Some organizations may need to reposition their offers to better meet current needs.

Where are we right now?

Conduct a thorough assessment of what changes might be possible for your business based on your current and potential resources. Consider these factors:

Location

- Can your space be adapted for social distancing? How can your staff modify sanitation schedules to accommodate your business needs?

Products/Services

- How can you modify your goods to make your business more accessible to customers right now? Do additional sanitation measures need to be taken throughout these processes?

Budget

- How much capital do you have at your disposal and what is the most efficient way to use it? Digitizing your team can improve efficiency dramatically to help maximize headcount.

Supply Chain

- How have your vendor relationships changed? Will you need new vendors to help you through the reopening process? Communicate your guidelines with your vendors to maintain consistency with your Standard of Care.

Revenue Impact

- What is the scope of your COVID-related losses? How much will you regain once things are up and running? Efficiency matters across the board - make sure your assets are being maintained to avoid untimely breakdowns.

Plan for success.
Communication is key.

All modern businesses should be taking advantage of connected workforce systems. Today, the need for reliable, organized, and instantaneous communication is now more important than ever before.

Over the last several months, we have learned that recommended guidelines can change quickly. As you execute your reopening plan, your employees, customers, and vendors should know your action plan and how you will address updates. Here are some tips for enhancing communication with each of these groups:

Employees

Provide staff members with thorough, accurate information about changes to physical workplaces and new safety measures. Employees have easy access to documentation, as well as a clear understanding of your expectations for following new standard operating procedures.

For some organizations, typical employee communication methods like email chains, phone calls, and individual text messaging work just fine. Business owners wanting more streamlined and immediate communication should consider utilizing a business messaging app.

Business can use Enterprise instant messaging (EIM) apps like Slack, HipChat, and Lua can be used to upload important documents, segment communication into groups, and encourage the asking of questions as team members adjust to changes.Industry-specific chat apps may provide additional helpful features. For example, MaintainX's freemium task-management app allows operational managers to create safety and sanitation checklists, assign work orders, and track compliance across their team.

Before employees return to work, make sure to address:

- Actions to sanitize and prepare the workspace in their absence.

- Updated work practices for health and safety.

- New employee transition policies.

- Preferred methods for contacting management with time-sensitive questions and concerns.

Customers

While customers will likely be forgiving in regard to small inconveniences, they do expect transparency and timely updates as you move forward.

Follow these best practices to maintain good communication:

- Use multiple channels to ensure that your message is received by both customers and employees.

- Make customer interests a priority and directly address any concerns brought to your attention.

- Distribute a FAQ document outlining specific issues related to your supply chain, your health and safety practices, and potential risks to your customers so they feel more informed.

Vendors/Partners

Now is a great time to review and negotiate contracts with vendors and partners. Let people know what may need to be adjusted to meet new budgetary constraints and safety regulations.

Put your
plan into action

Once you have documented your reopening plan, activate your plan. Continually reassess the effectiveness of your efforts as your reopening plan rolls out.

No matter how prepared you are, new challenges will arise along the way. For this reason, regularly check in with your team members: How are they feeling about the new changes? Do they have any questions, concerns, or recommendations?

Remember, many of your employees interact with customers and vendors more often than you do. They may have unique insights into why a new safety protocol does or doesn't work as expected.

Here are some final tips you may want to integrate into your reopening process:

Distribute new COVID-19 standard operating procedures

A standard operating procedure (SOP) is a set of step-by-step instructions compiled by an organization to help employees execute routine operations. Document your new pre-opening tasks and procedures in the form of SOP checklists that outline, for example, how to deep-clean, what to clean, and how to implement social distancing protocols in specific areas.

Your frontline teams should have clear instructions on cleaning high-traffic areas. Consider using a smartphone task-management app that allows employees to sign-off on checklists, communicate with management in real-time, and leave auditable trails of SOP completion.
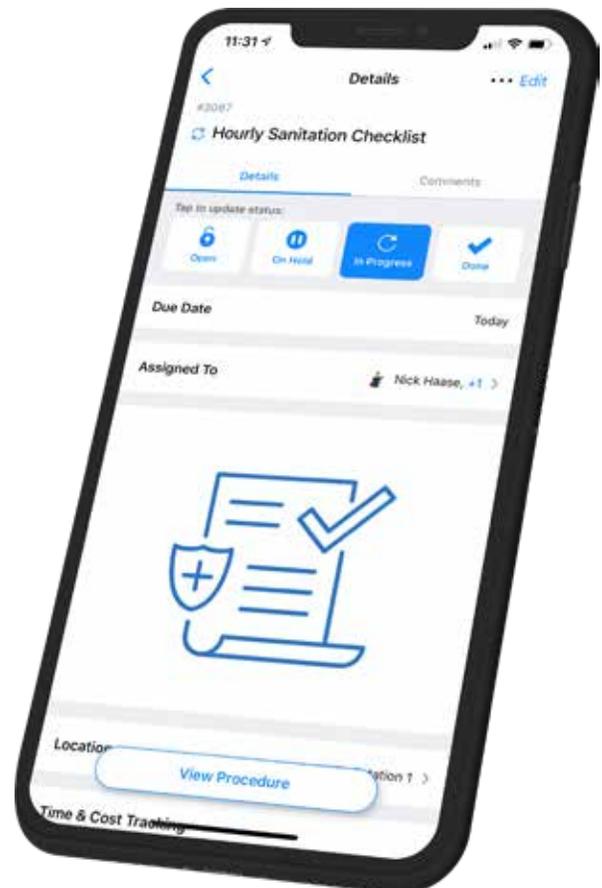
Require employee wellness checklists

While not presently mandated by legislation, some organizations are assigning employee wellness checklists. Provide team members with a self-attestation form to confirm they are not experiencing noted COVID-19 symptoms. Employees who may be experiencing symptoms should notify their supervisors according to predetermined procedures, go home, and contact their health care providers.

Right now, many organizations are providing free online COVID-19 checklist templates and management forms. For example, the law firm, Fisher Phillips, has dedicated a web page to downloadable documents and checklists for employers. You can modify these forms to meet your individual needs and requirements.

Ditch the daily paper checklists in favor of digital forms that you can access via smartphone. Not only is it easier to sanitize a mobile screen than a piece of paper, but task-management apps improve the likelihood of compliance with our digital audit trails.

MaintainX is widely used by companies of all sizes to ensure compliance with current guidelines and recommendations. The free-to-use platform allows managers to assign recurring checklists, monitor employee sign-offs, upload important documents to one place, and customize templates to meet unique company needs. Click here to download MaintainX for iOS or Android.

Track and Manage Your PPE Inventory

Ensure you never run out of PPE. Create alerts for when PPE is running low. Track PPE cost and quantity being used by user, team, location and sub-location. Ensuring that PPE supply is available will go a long way towards showing that your organization is taking appropriate safety measures to protect your team.

Encourage Socially Distanced Maintenance Coordination

Eliminate the need to print out work orders and pass around a clipboard. Digitize the process of requesting, coordinating and completing maintenance work orders. Coordinate on maintenance work all within the app with messaging and commenting on work orders.

Leverage Sanitation checklists with digital audit trails

Manage and maintain the Standard of Care across your operations that your employees and customers expect. MaintainX's digital audit trails ensure compliance and provide alerts when something goes wrong.

Conclusion

What's most important right now is clear communication between employers, employees, patrons, and vendors. With everyone operating differently to safety guidelines—both personal and municipal—it's important to standardize what is expected of those individuals interacting with others within the physical space of your business.

These are uncertain times. Companies that prioritize communicating transparently in a timely manner, listening to incoming feedback, and pivoting their business models toward win-win revenue opportunities will experience smoother reopening transitions than those "just winging it."

About MaintainX

The mission of MaintainX is to empower deskless workers via mobile-first solutions. MaintainX recognized the lack of digital solutions available for teams that do not spend most of their day behind a desk. Paper and clipboards are still used by nearly 100% of organizations across maintenance teams, inspection teams, safety teams and more - resulting in creating information delays that have been solved for deskbound workers for years but are leaving deskless workers in the dark ages of analog.

Our best-in-class platform empowers your frontline workers while improving plant safety, productivity and quality. MaintainX's connected worker platform is trusted by industry leading brands around the world. Get started for free today at www.getmaintainx.com.

MaintainX