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Returning to Work: Considerations for California Employers in a COVID-19 World

As California begins to reopen and employees return to the workplace, employers must consider new protocols to help safeguard the workplace related to COVID-19. This includes performing a detailed risk assessment and developing a return to work plan. Considerations include:

- **Determining whether all employees need to return to work.** Remote working is still highly encouraged by federal and local health authorities. If employees return, develop a plan to implement physical distancing guidelines.
- **Identifying where and how workers might be exposed to COVID-19 at work.**
- **Implementing measures and screenings to control the spread of COVID-19.** Employers may consider instituting temperature checks or health questionnaires upon employees' arrival to work. Employers may consider other measures such as requiring masks, limiting non-essential travel, increasing the physical space between employee work stations or setting up plastic shields between work stations, or staggering lunch and break times.
- **Providing personal protective equipment where appropriate.**
- **Taking steps to increase cleaning and disinfecting the workplace.** Also consider steps to improve ventilation in buildings.
- **Educating employees about the steps they can take to protect themselves at work.** This should include training on new health and safety policies and instructing employees to screen themselves for symptoms and to stay home if they have them.
- **Developing policies for when an employee has been exposed, is symptomatic, or tests positive for COVID-19.**
- **Being prepared to handle leave and accommodation requests relating to COVID-19 as well as** determining when employees should return to work after suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

California has provided [industry-specific guidance and checklists](#) intended to help employers develop. Local governmental bodies may provide further information and guidelines.

Additionally, the Center for Disease Control has several tools designed to assist employers as they reopen, including the Resuming Business Toolkit, which provides multiple tools to assist employers in "lowering the impact in their workplace when reintegrating employees into non-healthcare business settings." The CDC provides a Restart Readiness Checklist which is designed to help employers think through health and safety when resuming business operations.

Authors

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