SAFETY NEWS

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It is critical that we take the necessary steps to protect our workforce in all aspects of operations from the dangers of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). In order to do so, it's necessary to communicate with employees what they must do in order to enact preventative measures and make sure that employees are equipped with the necessary resources to be best protected while at work so that they may return home safe and healthy. The information contained in this document is not legal advice but rather some guidance and suggestions on how to accomplish this.

PLANNING
This is the most critical step to success in safely and effectively re-opening:

- All departments should have someone involved in the process of planning for re-opening so many concerns can be addressed at this phase.
- A risk assessment should be made of the workplace to identify areas where an increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 may occur.
- Review site or office layout to address potential areas where crowding may occur or an issue with social distancing.
- A plan to mitigate the exposure risk must be implemented. (i.e. moving workstations to accommodate social distancing, disinfect commonly touched surfaces, etc.).
- A written exposure control plan should be implemented to help address potential exposures and how the company plans to address minimizing or eliminating risk of exposure. A sample plan can be found in the COVID-19 resources on the home page of the SIBA website www.siba-agc.org.
- Set-up for screening should be carefully planned. It is important that employee’s privacy and confidentiality with health issues is maintained. It is the law. Temperature checks and short health symptom related questionnaires are being used in some places to screen employees and visitors. In some locations this may present challenges in setting up a check point that would allow for an element of privacy and confidentiality.
- Consider an isolation area for those that may fall ill and how to keep others exposure to those individuals limited.
- If workers are required to be closer than 6 feet of each other make plans to either provide masks to help prevent the spread of respiratory droplets or consider having smaller crews or splitting shifts up.
- Any employees that may be considered high risk, due to age or an underlying condition, need to be considered. It may be in their best interest to continue sheltering in place or working remotely.

DEVELOPING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Review leave policies and make any necessary changes to account for the potential of a COVID-19 related illness that may cause an extended absence for an employee. A policy and
procedure for reporting when experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms should be considered as well. Remember that any leave taken under the new Families First Coronavirus Response Act is job protected and the employee must be re-instated to their previous position.

- Ensure policies are flexible as the COVID-19 pandemic may limit employees being able to adhere to old policies. (i.e. doctors note for absence).
- In some cases, it may be appropriate to limit the number of visitors to the workplace. This needs to be communicated with external people, such as vendors or suppliers, that a company may do business with. If visitors are subject to screening, this should be clearly communicated through signage before they enter the facility, site or office.
- Lunches or breaks may need to be staggered to avoid congestion in communal areas such as lunch or break rooms. Some companies may choose to close these areas off to avoid potential congregating of groups too close together.
- If employees normally share a workspace and are not able to social distance at that workspace, separate them off if possible or ask them to wear a face covering when working in proximity. The sharing of tools, phone, or equipment should be discouraged.
- It is important to consider that things are changing daily and you may have to continually revisit policies and procedures to accommodate for it.

**COMMUNICATE**

With new information coming every day on what we know about COVID-19, it is important that we keep our employees well informed. We can do this by frequently checking reputable sources like CDC, WHO, or OSHA for new information.

- Review any changes in policies or procedures brought about by COVID-19 to all employees and ensure they understand them.
- Make sure any employees with concerns are given a resource to address those concerns.
- Ensure the changes that will be implemented do not discriminate or violate any state, local, or federal regulations.
- Anyone that the new changes may impact should be made aware, even those outside the organization, such as vendors, suppliers, subcontractors, etc.
- Ensure that there is an effective system in place to get out any new relevant information regarding COVID-19 to all necessary personnel in a timely manner.

**RESPONDING TO A CASE OF COVID-19**

- With the possibility of a case arising becoming more likely, you must be ready to respond if you are informed that an employee has been diagnosed.
- For guidance on how to legally handle the situation it would be best to consult with state and local health departments for more detailed guidance.
- Encourage employees to self-report if they are diagnosed or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Travel to high risk locations should also be noted.
- Once an employee informs you that they have been diagnosed, ask them to identify anyone else from the workplace that they may have been exposed to for a prolonged time.
- Those employees exposed to the infected employee should be reminded to carefully monitor for any potential symptoms that they experience. It may be necessary to quarantine those individuals if they cannot be kept away from non-exposed employees within the workplace. Follow CDC and WHO guidelines for when to quarantine.
- Remember when notifying others of their potential exposure to someone diagnosed with COVID-19 that the infected individual’s identity must be kept confidential.
- Follow Center for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) for when an employee should return to work after being infected with COVID-19.
- If an employee is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 but has not been diagnosed, consider having them self-quarantine. Refer to CDC guidelines or local and state health departments for
guidance on length of quarantine. Also consult CDC guidelines on when employee should be allowed to return to work.

PREPARING WORKPLACE FOR A RETURN OF WORKERS AND MAINTAINING A SAFE WORKPLACE

• If a workplace has been unoccupied for 7 days or more, routine cleaning should be enough to have everything disinfected as the virus in any case will not live longer than that on any surfaces.
• Clean with appropriate cleaners that are effective for proper disinfection. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for using the cleaner. Never mix cleaners, as this can create toxic fumes that can cause serious respiratory harm or even death.
• Ensuring, if there is not a means for employees to frequently wash their hands, that a sanitizing agent with at least 70% alcohol is available to employees.
• All surfaces should be disinfected routinely but those surfaces or objects which are commonly contacted should be more frequently disinfected. Those may include:
  o door handles or knobs
  o light switches
  o desks
  o sink faucet
  o keyboards
  o phones
  o tools
  o tables
• Discourage employees from sharing devices, tools, and work areas when possible.
• Encourage employees to stay home if they are sick. Remember to reinforce any new changes in leave policy so they will not feel pressured to come to work if sick.
• Consider installing physical barriers such as shields around work stations where feasible.
• Supply face masks for employees if they may encounter co-workers or customers in proximity closer than 6 feet.
• Employees should still wear any necessary PPE to keep them safe while doing their job. It is important that the face mask does not interfere with the function of their other PPE.
• If employees are wearing masks to protect them from potentially spreading respiratory droplets, it’s important to note that if they are wearing something tight fitting, such as an N95, they would need to be fit tested and enrolled in a written respiratory protection program, unless they were wearing this voluntarily, not required by employer, in which case the employer is obligated to ensure they are medically able to wear a respirator and provide a copy of Appendix D of OSHA’s respiratory protection standard which contains additional precautions. Currently the CDC is advising using N95 respirators to prevent potential transmission of COVID-19 for healthcare professionals only, due to the limited supply. The general public and other industries not directly in contact with infected individuals are encouraged to wear a cloth mask and, in some states, such as Illinois it is required under a governor’s order when in a public place where social distancing isn’t feasible.

Note: It is important to consider that new information and guidance on how to deal with Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is being released frequently. To stay up to date on the most current guidance and suggestions check back with reputable sources frequently. More is being learned every day and could affect some of the suggested practices.