



# Returning to Work Safely

Top recommendations from OSHA and the CDC for preventing the spread of respiratory illness in your workplace.

## Hazard Mitigation During the Pandemic

As the novel coronavirus pandemic continues to make its impact around the world, the nature of the workplace is changing. For the first time, many jobs that were not previously considered to be hazardous are being re-evaluated. Employers must determine the risk of employees contracting and spreading COVID-19, the dangerous respiratory illness that is caused by the coronavirus. Whether you are welcoming your workers back from telecommuting or have been given permission to reopen from your local government, you should have procedures in place that aim to prevent an emergence of COVID-19 in your workplace.

The following guidance, based on recommendations provided by OSHA and the CDC, can help employers reopen their business and ensure workers return safely during the ongoing pandemic. Employers should also stay up to date with requirements from their local governments and adhere to evolving mitigation measures as experts continue to learn more about COVID-19. By determining level of risk, implementing hazard controls, and conducting training on new procedures, workers can be protected from being exposed to illness in the workplace.



## Applicable OSHA Standards

Before the pandemic, workplaces were required to comply with applicable OSHA standards. While these requirements vary depending on industry, you must continue to comply as the pandemic continues. However, there are three OSHA standards in particular that are especially relevant for helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- **29 CFR 1910.132, Personal Protective Equipment**
- **29 CFR 1910.134, Respiratory Protection**
- **29 CFR 1910.141, Sanitation**

Employers also must continue to adhere to the General Duty Clause from the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act of 1970; employers have the responsibility to provide a safe and healthful workplace that is free from serious recognized hazards.

## Classifying Worker Exposure to COVID-19

One of the first steps you can take to protect workers is to determine their risk of exposure. Risk of occupational exposure to illness varies from lower, medium, and high to very high. The risk level your workers are in depends on the nature of operations, the industry you're in, and amount of contact with other coworkers or visitors.

Most workers in America classify in the lower level of exposure risk. Some workers, such as those in retail settings and international travel, will have a medium exposure risk. Workers in healthcare and morgues will be in the high or very high risk level. Once the level has been determined for your facility, you may then conduct a hazard assessment to select and implement appropriate control measures to prevent exposure.

## Conducting a Job Hazard Analysis

A Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) will help you review specific jobs or tasks in order to identify, and then address, safety hazards. This analysis typically goes hand-in-hand with classifying exposure. You might find yourself conducting a JHA for the first time, or adjusting your existing risk management program to address the coronavirus.

A JHA helps you identify risks in your workplace, including the transmission of illness, and understand which hazard controls will be most effective to implement. Ask yourself if the task at hand requires employees to put themselves at risk for contracting or spreading COVID-19—for example, they might come into close contact with the general public. What can be done to mitigate this risk?

### WORKPLACE RISK

#### Very High

Frequent exposure to people who have suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 during specific laboratory, medical, or postmortem procedures. Includes paramedics, doctors, nurses, laboratory personnel handling specimens, and morgue workers who perform autopsies.

#### High

Frequent exposure to people who have suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19. Includes hospital support staff, ambulance vehicle operators, and mortuary workers.

#### Medium

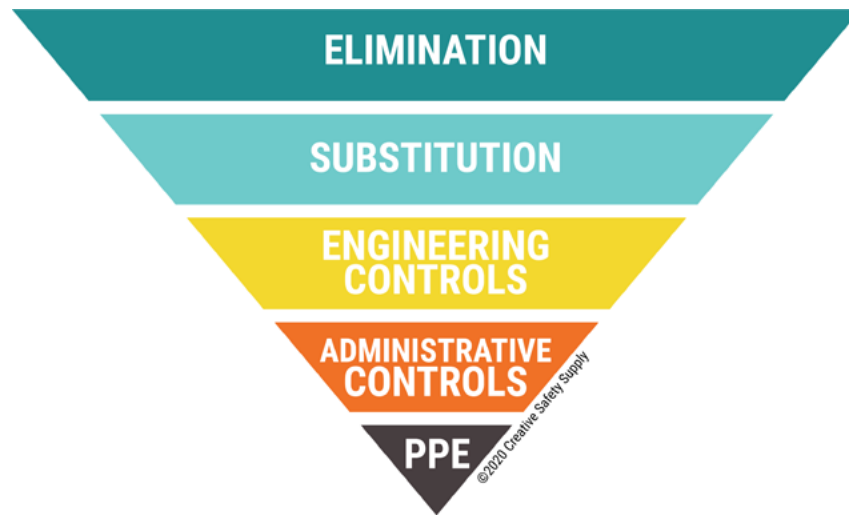
Close or frequent contact with other people. Includes retail workers, school teachers and other educational personnel, and workers in contact with international travelers.

#### Lower (Caution)

Little contact with coworkers and the public. Includes office workers, remote workers, manufacturing, and telemedicine healthcare workers.



## Workplace Hazard Controls



These controls will be selected as a result of your hazard assessment. OSHA's recommendations for infection prevention follow the framework of the Hierarchy of Hazard Controls. While it's most ideal to remove a hazard from the workplace, this cannot be done with the coronavirus and other illnesses. In this case, the best protective measures in order of most effective to least effective are: engineering controls, administrative controls, safe work practices, and personal protective equipment (PPE).

### Engineering Controls

These are controls that isolate employees from work-related hazards and don't rely on worker behavior. For preventing exposure to illness, engineering controls may include installing physical barriers such as clear plastic sneeze guards, or increasing ventilation rates.



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## Administrative Controls

These controls do rely on actions conducted by workers and employers. They involve changes to your work policy and procedures, including asking employees to temporarily work from home, implementing social distancing, and canceling non-essential travel.



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## Safe Work Practices

These practices are a type of administrative control that help guide safe operations. To reduce the intensity or duration of exposure to illness, you can promote personal hygiene, conduct a regular cleaning and disinfecting routine, and provide soap or sanitizer so employees may clean their hands.



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## Personal Protective Equipment

PPE is considered to be the last measure of defense against a hazard and should not take the place of other prevention strategies. The type of PPE required for your workplace depends on the specific job tasks and level of risk. It may include gloves, gowns, masks, goggles or face shields, and respirators. Please note that cloth face coverings are not considered to be PPE, as they are not meant to protect the wearer individually, but to protect those they come into contact with.



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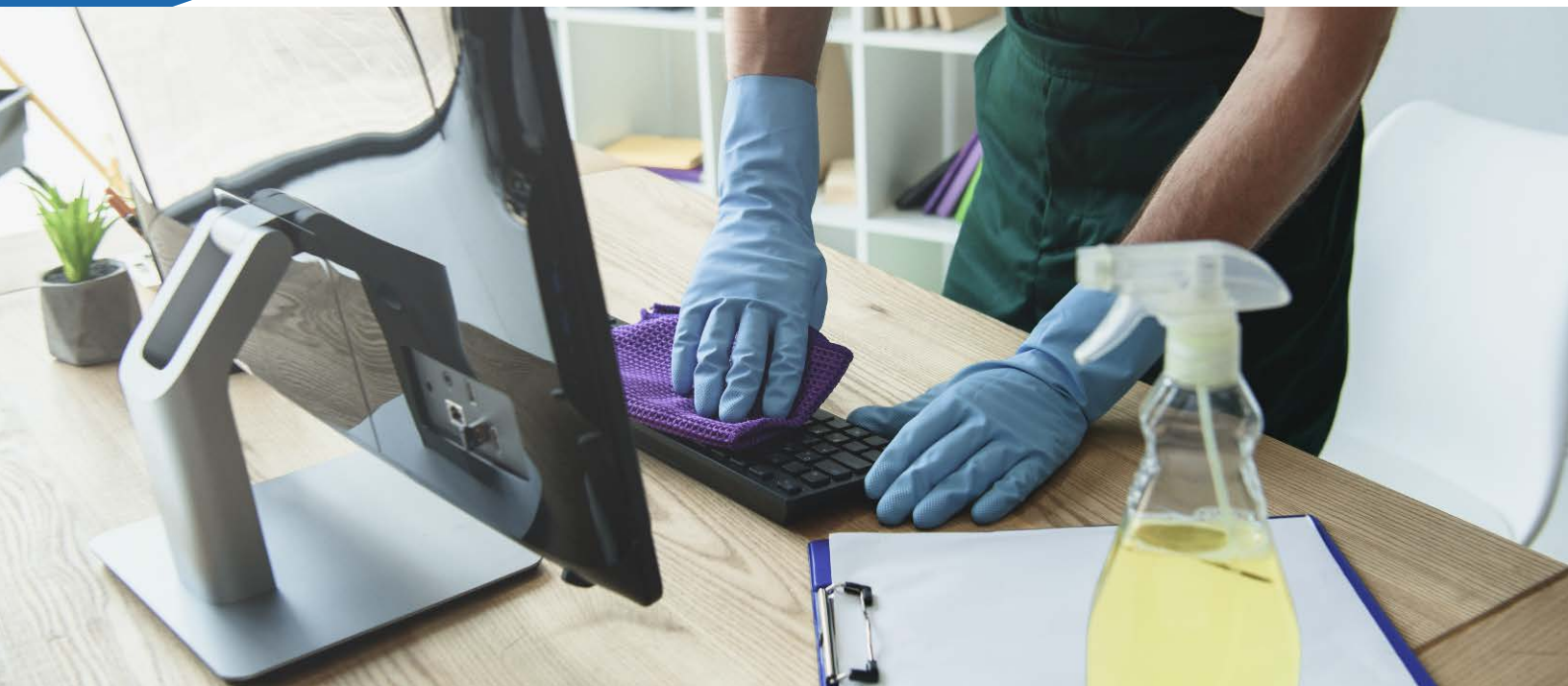
In most cases, a combination of control measures will be necessary to protect workers. These examples are intended to help you understand the guiding principles that go into reopening your facility, but they are not a full list of controls that may be appropriate for your workplace.

## Basic Hygiene

In many cases, protecting workers depends on basic infection prevention measures. These can include:

- **Encouraging respiratory etiquette (covering your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze)**
- **Encouraging basic hand hygiene (washing hands for at least 20 seconds) and providing hand washing stations for employees, customers, and visitors**
- **If soap and water aren't available, providing hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol**
- **Discouraging employees from sharing desks, computers, phones, tools, and other equipment**
- **Maintaining regular housekeeping practices**





## Cleaning and Disinfection Routines

The CDC has established recommendations for cleaning and disinfecting your facility. Cleaning with soap and water helps reduce dirt and impurities, while disinfecting with EPA-approved disinfectants effectively kills germs. One of the most important steps to protecting workers is to identify high touch surfaces and shared objects that should be routinely cleaned and disinfected. These may include doorknobs, elevator buttons, phones, keyboards, light switches, countertops, and equipment such as printers.



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## Social Distancing

The CDC recommends that people should keep a distance of six feet away from others, especially in indoor settings. COVID-19 mainly spreads when people are in close contact with each other (classified as within six feet) for a prolonged period of time. Incorporating social distancing in the workplace should accommodate space between coworkers, customers, and visitors.



You can limit the occupancy of your business so the number of people inside can safely social distance. Lay down floor markings or floor tape strips in areas where people tend to line up or congregate, to show them where to safely stand. You can also post directional signs for one-way pathways and implement other signage to remind people to maintain their distance.

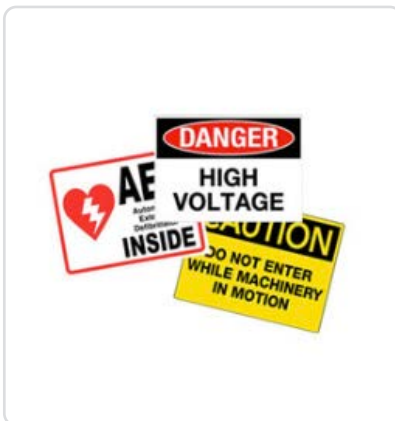


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## Identification and Isolation of Sick Employees

OSHA standards do not prohibit employers from screening or testing their employees for COVID-19. In fact, OSHA recommends a protocol for managing workers who may be ill and encourages practices for self-monitoring for symptoms. Employees should be familiar with the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and should refrain from coming to work if they're not feeling well. To prevent illness from spreading in the workplace, it's important to identify and isolate employees who are confirmed to be sick, or are potentially sick, so they do not infect others.





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## Training Workers for Reopening

As employees return, it's important to communicate about new rules, policies, and protections you have put in place. Workers should be informed of controls that are meant to protect them and what actions will be expected of them. This includes training on the risk factors, signs, and symptoms of COVID-19, and how they may be exposed to the coronavirus in the workplace. Employees who are properly informed and trained are much safer as they complete their tasks.

## Products to Help You Return to Work

Be mindful of the fact that as you reopen, day-to-day activities will most likely not be the same. Daily tasks, and workers' concerns, will be different, and every business must embrace these changes. Taking precautions and providing your employees with the supplies they need will go a long way in ensuring a safe and productive workplace.



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## Implement visual communication with LabelTac®.

Communication is paramount to a successful transition from being temporarily offsite back into the workplace. LabelTac® industrial label printers allow you to print out the communication you need. You'll be able to create customized labels and change your posted policies as you stay up to date with recommendations. With LabelSuite™ software included, LabelTac® printers make it easy to ensure workers and visitors understand best practices for preventing the spread of illness.





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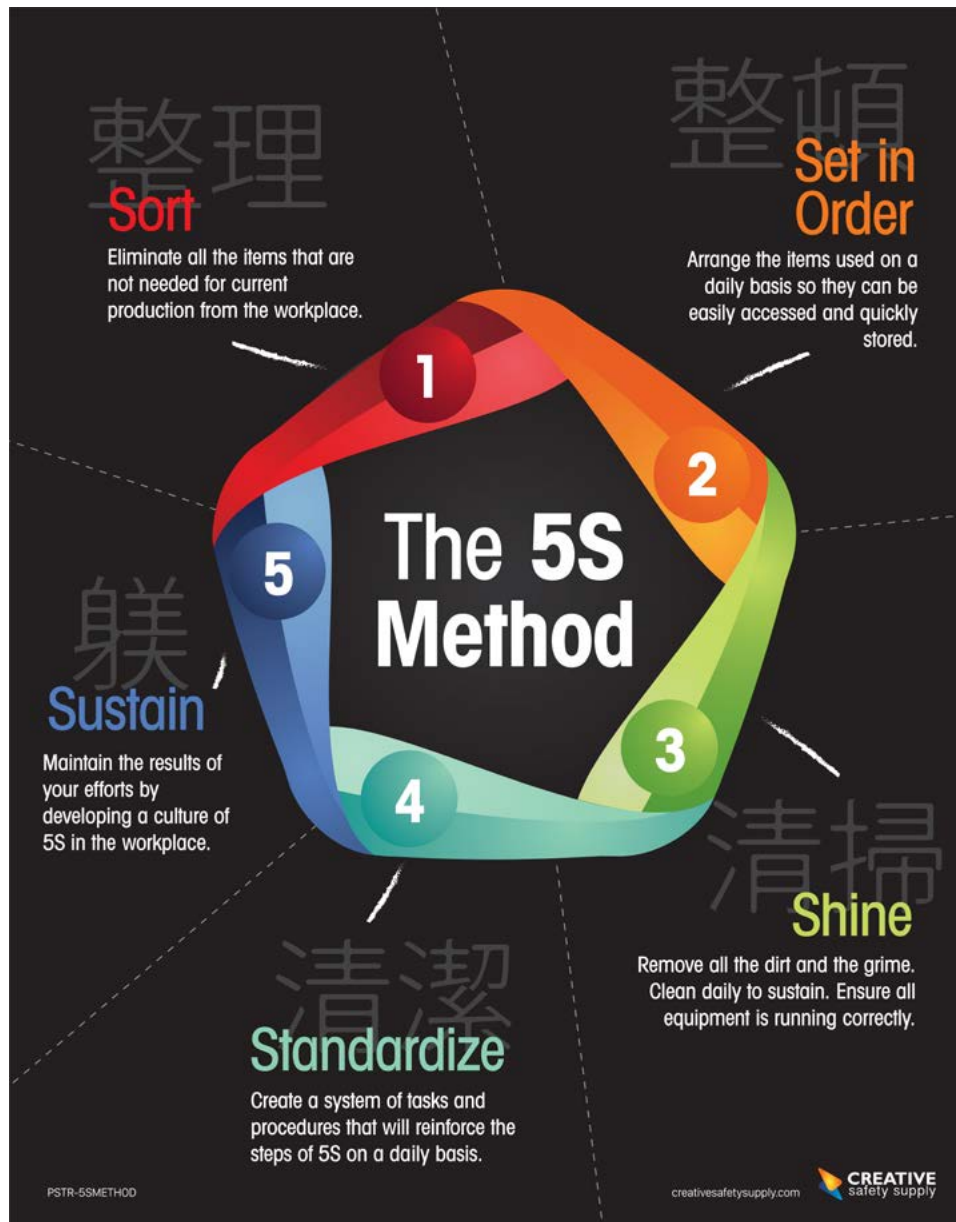
## Use SafetyTac® floor marking tape to maintain social distancing.

Floor tape helps you visually separate workstations, manage traffic, and enforce social distancing policies. SafetyTac® tape is designed with a low profile that won't cause tripping hazards yet holds up to both vehicle and foot traffic. It's a vital aspect to establishing a successful communication system for your returning workers.



## Incorporate Lean methodologies into your reopening operations.

As your business resumes operation, it's still important to focus on continuous improvement, organization, and efficiency. 5S is an effective Lean tool that helps you establish a cleaning routine for each worker or workstation. You can also use visual tools such as Kanban cards to identify and eliminate waste as your company makes its return.



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