

Risk Management Guidance on How to Prepare and What to Expect when People Return to the Workplace



Having a plan to return employees to the workplace in a safe manner can be realised by following an approach that encompasses variables that may affect people's health. For the protection of your people, customers and visitors to your business, consider the following components that address policies, people and places.

Government/Regulation/Industry Standards

- Companies should monitor government, regulatory (including local occupational health and safety act/administration), accreditation and other standards as appropriate criteria prior to initiating repatriation and continuing operations
- Keep a logbook of actions on what your local government/authority has announced and how your company has implemented the change/s
- Keep all staff updated with regular updates on governmental COVID-19 management guidelines and adhere to the measures
- Monitor and adopt best practice approach, encompassing various countries' governmental requirements
- Be flexible when implementing the new requirements and be open to ideas and adapt quickly
- Conduct a risk assessment plan to identify and evaluate protective measures, along with any new hazards faced

Social Distancing/Process Workflow

- Form a multi-disciplinary employee team for input and participation in process improvement, specific to COVID-19 practices
- Continue work from home arrangement for employees not essential to onsite operations
- Reorganise the office workspace, reduce or eliminate shared workstations
- Consider converting walkways to one-way direction to reduce multiple touch points among staff
- Ensure staff based in office have the appropriate protective gear and are clear about the social distancing measures
- Stagger work shifts and break times
- Implement delivery precautions, such as non-contact deliveries

Communications

- Make sure you are clear on your communication channels, including via your senior leadership, and ensure all stakeholders are fully briefed on their role and fully informed
- Communicate regularly with employees, customers and suppliers on the company's plans and operations during this period
- Review organisation plans with Human Resources, Legal and the Business Continuity teams. Consider production resilience should the workforce be impacted
- Continually remind employees to:
 - Wash hands often or use hand sanitizer
 - Minimise touching face, eyes, nose and mouth
 - Use disinfecting wipes on surfaces touched
 - Stay home and report to their line manager if unwell
 - Self-monitor health and temperature before leaving home
 - Stay home as much as possible and only leave to get the essentials - food and groceries
 - Monitoring or assessing for anxiety, stress and strain related to COVID-19

Employees

- Implement the wearing of face mask and any other protective gear when employees are in public and when in the work premise
- Implement symptom monitoring whenever entering the building and throughout the day
- Plan for vulnerable employees and create a strategy to utilise their talent while keeping them safe
- Human Resources process to address impact of reintroducing employees back to the workplace:
 - Consider providing employee assistance programs, health and wellness programs to support employees' mental health and challenges related to COVID-19 exposures
 - Adjust leave policies, employee availability and hiring during this period
 - Monitor and communicate to employees suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases (on an anonymous basis to protect affected staff from added stress)

Facility / Work Premise

- Determine if visitors will be allowed in the facility
- Plan for adequate supplies of soap, paper towels, cleaning/disinfectants, hand sanitizers, tissues, et cetera, with continual re-supply throughout the business day
- Conduct increased periodic cleaning and disinfecting of the office space and high touch points including having disinfectant wipes available for employee use
- Alternate high touch items or rooms to allow cleaning and natural viability of decay rates
- Plan for deep cleaning protocol after a suspected / positive case is reported
- Identify possible cross contamination points for disinfection or removal
- Building / Facility Management:
 - Ensure maximum make up air and HEPA filters for HVAC
 - Use of physical barriers to augment or create partitions
 - Floor markings for perimeter zones at minimum safe distance according to local advisories
 - Small meeting rooms used for virtual meetings only with one person occupying the room
 - Large and medium sized meeting rooms used with multiple occupants while maintaining social distancing

Customers / Visitors

- Minimise any external customers and visitors to the premise where applicable, otherwise implement social distancing measures according to local advisories
- Modify customer flow patterns and/or access, minimise queueing, use physical barriers to implement social distancing
- Ensure customers/visitors wear a face mask when they are in the premise
- Encourage pre-pay online or self-checkout, continue self-pickup and/or delivery options

What can we take away from all this?

Necessity is the mother of invention. In times of crisis, temporary measures are quickly devised and put in place as a necessity to accommodate the exceptional situation, and these slowly become the future new norm as businesses start to incorporate some of the learnings during this pandemic into future business operations.

- ✓ Enable telecommuting to save time and improve work life balance
- ✓ Achieve cost savings from reduced office space
- ✓ Save the environment with reduced carbon emissions
- ✓ Accelerate adoption of technology
- ✓ Delivery of online training
- ✓ Improve business resilience and business continuity planning

Contact your local QBE business relationship person today for a discussion on the measures to protect your business

Hong Kong [Head of Agency and Bancassurance - Wendy Lee](#) • [Head of Broker Business & Client Engagement - Hannah Butt](#)
[Head of Strategic Partnerships - Christelle Poh](#)

Malaysia [Head of Agency Distribution - Kevin Choong](#) • [Head of Commercial Distribution - Amar Singh](#)

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