

New FEMA Kit Provides Framework for Reopening

By Nancy Cleeland

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The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has released an Exercise Starter Kit (<https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/188077>) to help companies discuss and work through how to safely reopen after weeks of coronavirus-related closures.

The kit, which includes a customizable slide show and facilitator notes, provides a framework for a virtual half-day workshop that would ideally involve representatives throughout an enterprise, from HR to security. The presentation could also be broken up into several smaller workshops focusing on various topic areas such as personnel and physical layouts. Its purpose is to develop a roadmap for a return to shared physical space that considers all likely contingencies and is flexible enough to respond to changing public health guidance and future waves of infection.

SHRM RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Coronavirus and COVID-19 (www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/Pages/communicable-diseases.aspx)

According to FEMA, the materials were designed with the following objectives in mind:

- Assess actions needed to safely return to full operations according to appropriate time-phased guidelines.
- Determine how plans, policies and practices may need to be adapted to safeguard the workforce during reconstitution, consistent with appropriate COVID-19 guidance and recommended community-mitigation measures.
- Identify potential mitigating measures or solutions to remaining risks or challenges that adversely impact our ability to perform all functions, including providing services to customers and the public.

The kit builds on the Guidelines for Opening Up America Again (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/>) issued by the White House in mid-April, which called for a three-phase approach to reopening and set "gating criteria" for moving from one phase to the next. The first phase, which includes sheltering in place for vulnerable individuals and bans on sit-down dining and crowds of more than 10, should not end under this plan until an area has had 14 days of a downward trajectory of COVID-19 cases. Any return-to-work exercise should begin with a review of that plan, FEMA said.

[Members-only form: COVID-19 Employee Self-Certification to Return to Work (www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/hr-forms/pages/covid-19-employee-self-certification-to-return-to-work.aspx?_ga=2.31529982.1919675920.1589205620-2001400392.1582295686)]

The bulk of the FEMA slideshow guides participants through a series of questions on personnel, facilities, communications and resources, covering topics that have become familiar in recent weeks. For example:

- Do we need to revise our human resources policies to accommodate new work arrangements, or to detail processes for sick employees or those with sick family members exposed to the virus or showing symptoms?
- What plans or protocols do we need to put in place to ensure the safety of our employees when reoccupying facilities?
- Do our plans incorporate the use and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) or other precautionary measures for staff?
- Will there be staff self-health evaluations?
- Will there be health screenings, such as taking temperatures or asking risk-based questions, upon arrival?

FEMA leaves the answers to workshop leaders to provide, but guides them toward online resources including www.Coronavirus.gov (<http://www.coronavirus.gov/>), which consolidates materials from FEMA, the White House and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The kit, which was created by the agency's National Exercise Division, was released to the private sector on May 13.

DOL Issues Guidance for Nursing Homes

In addition, on May 14, the Department of Labor (DOL) issued an alert with safety tips (https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__lnks.gd_l_eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDAsInVyaSI6ImJwMjppbGJjaylslmJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoimjAyMDA1MTQ1uMjE1MjcyODEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL2Nvb3R1bnQuZ292ZGVsaXZlcnuY29tL2FjY291bnRzL1VTRE9ML2J1bGxldGluYy8yOGJhMWE5In0.Ygh-5FWygvAMKIVip3vZyY9ADpfT8v7RtSermV7x9BPo_br_78671256575-2DI&d=DwMFAA&c=nQOnw6HHAeKBNxj23OXhOw&r=I8hrXaCtq0NkHyqxnGg12NWr9OdBLdbaR7syXgv_DkE&m=6OfrDi5CGf8BINLi0R4e jd1_FggSccBphkQWT47Qcw&s=eav2lffKpD-r3MmiKowWM7aOpJ4zWUsY7DjOODF9kk4&e) to help protect workers at nursing homes and long-term care facilities, which have been hot zones from COVID-19 illnesses and fatalities. The tips are:

- Screen workers and residents regularly for signs and symptoms consistent with the coronavirus. Send sick workers home or to seek medical care.
- Closely monitor and take additional precautions regarding employees and residents who may have been exposed to an individual with the coronavirus.
- Ask visitors to inform the facility if they develop a fever or symptoms consistent with the coronavirus within 14 days of their visit.
- Maintain at least 6 feet between workers, residents and visitors to the extent possible, including while workers perform their duties and during breaks.
- Stagger break periods to avoid crowding in breakrooms.
- Consider alternatives to in-person large group gatherings (e.g., staff meetings, resident activities).
- Continually monitor PPE stocks, burn rate and supply chains. Develop a process to decontaminate and reuse PPE, such as face shields and goggles, as appropriate. Follow CDC recommendations for optimization of PPE supplies.
- Encourage workers to report any safety and health concerns.

OSHA had previously published its [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf) (<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>), a document to help workers and employers protect themselves and their workplaces during the pandemic.

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