



NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Interim Guidance for Owners, Staff, and Patrons of Businesses May 6, 2020

On April 23, 2020, Governor Cooper announced a [three-phased approach](#) to slowly lift ease restrictions while combatting COVID-19, protecting North Carolinians and working together to recover the economy. On May 5, 2020, Governor Cooper signed [Executive Order 138](#) to modify North Carolina's Stay At Home order and transition to Phase 1 of easing certain COVID-19 restrictions effective Friday, May 8 at 5 p.m. For more information, read the [FAQs](#) on the order and refer to the [Phase 1 Guidance](#). The modified order allows certain non-essential businesses to open, including clothing stores, sporting goods stores, book shops, houseware stores and other retailers. All businesses that re-open should follow the guidelines below when conducting business to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Guidelines for Conducting Business:

Any scenario in which many people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. All businesses and agencies that congregate people in an enclosed space should create and implement a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission at their facility. The guidance below will help public-facing businesses and agencies reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their communities. (Note: **items in bold are required** for retail establishments to open.)

- 1) Ensure Proper Operation of Building Systems Prior to Reopening
 - [Take steps](#) to assure that building water and water systems are safe to use and minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease and other diseases associated with water. With buildings being closed, a reduction in water use causes stagnant, or standing water which can increase the risk for growth of Legionella and other waterborne pathogens.
 - Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety or health risk to people using the facility.
- 2) Increase Social Distancing
 - Implement Structural and Physical Space Modifications to Enforce Social Distancing
 - Clearly mark designated entry and exit points; if a building has only one sufficiently sized entry/exit point, stagger entry and exit times if possible.
 - **Direct customers to stay at least six (6) feet apart from one another and from workers, except at point of sale if applicable.**
 - **Clearly mark 6 feet of spacing in lines and other areas where people congregate and enforce those limitations.**
 - **Post [signage](#) that reminds people about required Social Distancing (at least 6 feet apart).**
 - **Prominently provide, whenever available, alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) at entrances and exits and near high-touch areas.**
 - For high volume businesses, consider using acrylic or plastic shields at cash registers and providing assistance with routing customers through aisles in the store.

- Limit Density
 - **Limit occupancy of all operating establishments to no more than 50% of the stated fire capacity. Occupancy may need to be reduced beyond the 50% limit if needed to keep customers 6 feet apart.**
 - Retail businesses that do not have a stated fire capacity must limit customer occupancy to twelve (12) customers for every one thousand (1000) square feet of the location's total square footage, including the parts of the location that are not accessible to customers.
 - **Post [signage](#) about the reduced "Emergency Maximum Occupancy" in a conspicuous place.**
 - Continue remote working as much as possible and limit non-essential travel whenever possible.
 - Limit face-to-face meetings to no more than 10 workers.
 - Stagger employee shifts where remote working is not possible.
- Minimize Opportunity for Sustained Exposure
 - Develop and use systems that allow for online, email, or telephone transactions.
 - Where applicable, promote online, email, or telephone ordering, no-contact curbside or drive-through pickup or home delivery, and contact-free checkout.

3) Implement Hygiene Protocols

- Disinfect Surfaces and Common Areas
 - [Develop a plan](#) for cleaning and disinfecting in your establishment, including an assessment to identify high-touch areas.
 - **Perform frequent and routine environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas with an [EPA approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2](#) (the virus that causes COVID-19)**
 - Make disinfecting wipes and/or sprays that are [EPA approved against SARS-CoV-2](#) available for shared items (such as shopping carts. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for proper use and contact time, which is the amount of time the surface should be visibly wet.
- Implement Personal Hygiene Routines
 - **All employers should have their employees wash their hands or use hand sanitizer immediately upon reporting to work and frequently throughout the day.**
 - **Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers and assure soap and hand drying materials are available at sinks.**
- Other things to do to decrease the spread of disease, in addition to cleaning and disinfecting
 - Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
 - Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. If hands are visibly dirty, soap and water should be chosen over hand sanitizer.
 - Place hand sanitizer in multiple locations to encourage good [hand hygiene](#) practices.
 - Place [posters](#) that encourage staying home when sick, the importance of hand hygiene, and coughing and sneezing etiquette at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where employees are likely to see them.
 - Discourage handshaking

4) Monitor Workforce Health

- Employees should wear a cloth face covering when they may be near (less than 6 feet from) other people in the work setting.
- All employees should self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath. If they develop symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Establish and Enforce Sick Leave Policies to Prevent the Spread of Disease
 - Enforce employees staying home if sick.
 - Encourage liberal use of sick leave policy.
 - Expand paid leave policies to allow employees to stay home when sick.
- Have a plan in place for immediately removing employees from work if symptoms develop. Employees who have symptoms when they arrive at work or become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home. Employees who develop symptoms outside of work should notify their supervisor and stay home.
 - Designate a cleanable area with separate trash cans, tissues, and cleaning supplies for use by employees who develop symptoms during the workday if waiting to be picked up from work. Require symptomatic employees to wear masks until leaving the facility. A [cleaning and disinfecting procedure](#) should be implemented by designated personnel using appropriate PPE once the sick employee leaves.
- In most cases if an employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, you do not need to shut down your facility. But do close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the sick person
 - Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for other employees being exposed to respiratory droplets. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
 - During this waiting period, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in these areas.
 - Follow the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#). In addition to cleaning and disinfecting, employers should determine which employees may have been exposed to the virus and need to take additional precautions. Most workplaces should follow the [Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](#).
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Employees may have been exposed if they are a “close contact” of someone who was infected, which is defined as being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a person with COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time:
 - Potentially exposed employees who **have** symptoms of COVID-19 should self-isolate and follow [CDC recommended steps](#).
 - Potentially exposed employees who **do not have** symptoms should remain at home or in a comparable setting and practice social distancing for 14 days.
- Sick employees should follow [CDC-recommended steps](#). Employees should not return to work until they have met the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#) and have consulted with a healthcare provider and state or local health department.
 - Exclude any employee from work who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is presumed positive by a medical professional due to symptoms until the employee is cleared per CDC recommendations (below):
 - At least 10 days have passed since first symptoms AND

- No fever for at least 72 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine AND
 - Other symptoms have improved (e.g., coughing, shortness of breath)
 - If an employee was diagnosed with COVID-19 several days after working
 - If it has been **less than 10 days** since the sick employee used the facility, clean and disinfect all areas used by the sick employee following the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#).
 - If it has been **7 days or more** since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces in the facility.
 - Implement Systematic Symptom Screening
 - **Conduct daily [symptom](#) screening (standard interview questionnaire) ([English](#) | [Spanish](#)) of employees at entrance to workplace with immediately sending symptomatic workers home to [isolate](#).**
 - **Post [signage](#) requesting that people who are or have recently been symptomatic not enter.**
 - Provide Resiliency and Support Resources
 - Provide employees with information on help lines to access for information or other support in reference to COVID-19, including 211 and Hope4NC Helpline (1-855-587-3463).
- 5) Protect Vulnerable Populations by Identifying and Protecting Those at High Risk
Those at [higher risk of severe illness](#) includes [older adults](#) 65 years and older and people of any age with underlying medical conditions.
- Designate exclusive times to access services for [people at higher risk for severe illness](#), such as people 65 years of age or older.
 - Have conversations with employees if they express concerns.
 - Enable staff to self-identify as high risk for severe disease and reassign work to minimize face-to-face contact and to allow them to maintain a distance of six feet from others, or to telework if possible.
 - In workplaces where it's not possible to eliminate face-to-face contact (such as retail), consider assigning higher risk employees work tasks that allow them to maintain a 6-foot distance from others, if feasible.
 - By using strategies that help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, you will help protect all employees, including those at higher risk. These strategies include:
 - Implementing telework and other social distancing practices
 - Actively encouraging employees to stay home when sick
 - Promoting handwashing
 - Providing supplies and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for cleaning and disinfecting workspaces
- 6) Provide Education to Build Awareness and Combat Misinformation
- Post [signage](#) and other messaging to remind patrons and staff of physical distancing.
 - Use resources from a trusted source like the [CDC](#) or [NCDHHS](#) to promote behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19.
 - Provide workers with education about COVID-19 strategies, using methods like videos, webinars, or FAQs.

- Where appropriate (e.g. entrances to museums or entertainment venues), have messaging such as a short video emphasizing the importance of maintaining physical distancing and hand hygiene.

Additional Resources:

- CDC: [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- CDC: [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
- CDC: [Resources for First Responders and Law Enforcement](#)
- EPA: [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)
- FDA: [Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- HHS/OSHA: [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)
- DHS: [Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce](#)

For general information about COVID-19, refer to the [North Carolina COVID-19 website](#). More [guidance for businesses](#) related to COVID-19 is also available.