

9 Things Businesses Should be Doing Now to Prepare for Reopening

1 Develop a cleaning and sanitation plan.

To protect employees and customers, every business will need an enhanced cleaning plan. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta has issued **guidance on cleaning and disinfecting for businesses**. Many local companies also offer sanitation services. Consider designating one employee during each shift to oversee and enforce your company's cleaning and sanitation policy.

2 Develop a new operational plan.

Maintaining a safe environment and preventing a rise in infections will mean doing business differently. Identify any necessary changes in your store or office layout or the work plans for each employee. The Maryland Retailers Association has created checklists for both **retailers** and **customers** based on public health best practices.

3 Reorganize your workspace to support COVID-19 safety and distancing measures.

Design the layout of your business based on your new operational and sanitation plans. Calculate your maximum occupancy so you can adapt to mandated occupancy restrictions. Consider adding sneeze guards in front of cashiers or frontline workers, barriers between work stations, floor decals to maintain physical distancing, hand sanitizer stations, and health signage on COVID-19 safety practices. The CDC has free materials you can download, and local office supply chains and sign stores offer pre-made resources.

4 Purchase face coverings, sanitizer, and cleaning supplies before you reopen.

You will need face coverings for all employees. These can be cloth masks that can be washed daily. Surgical masks for health professionals are limited, expensive, and difficult to obtain. Hand sanitizers and sanitizer wipes are needed unless you chose another method of sanitizing surface tops several times a day. Gloves are not necessary for most employees in retail. It is better and safer for employees to wash their hands and use sanitizer frequently because gloves can become contaminated and transmit the virus.

5 Prepare for employee rehiring and a return to work.

Update your Human Resources policies and job descriptions based on your new COVID-19 operational plan. Educate yourself on new federal and state guidelines for unemployment and COVID-19 family leave policies.

6 Train staff on new operations and safety procedures.

Share your COVID-19 plans with staff members ahead of time. Consider hosting virtual webinars with your team, ask for their feedback, and answer any questions or concerns. Once they return to work, be sure all staff attend a formal training process and document the training for your records.

7 Communicate regularly with your employees.

Keep employees updated on new workplace policies and your plans for reopening. Learn about their concerns and hurdles in returning to work such as childcare and health issues that make them high risk. Identify how many former employees will be returning and how many more you may need. Share your expectations for the future and how they fit into your plans.

8 Communicate with your customers.

Show your customers and employees that you are doing all you can to create a safe environment. Let customers know about your new cleaning and sanitation policies as well as your expectations for customers to do their part to keep our community safe. Adjust your advertising campaign to reflect your current operating conditions. Use social media to communicate with your customers.

9 Revise your business plan.

Do not expect your business to quickly return to pre-pandemic levels. Build a new business plan around conservative estimates on cash flow. Identify ways you can control expenses, identify new and creative ways to increase revenue, and plan accordingly.