

**Alert | Health Emergency Preparedness Task Force:
COVID-19 – Reopening the Economy**



May 14, 2020

Massachusetts Announces Four-Phase Reopening Approach and Mandatory Workplace Safety Standards

On May 11, 2020, Massachusetts Gov. Baker announced a [four-phase approach to reopening the Massachusetts economy](#) in light of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Four-Phase Reopening

The phased reopening is based on public health guidance, and is intended to allow certain businesses, services, and activities to resume, while aiming to protect public health and limit a resurgence of new COVID-19 cases.

Phase One, the “Start” Phase, will allow industries with little face-to-face interactions to resume operations with severe restrictions.

Phase Two, the “Cautious” Phase, will allow industries with more face-to-face interactions to resume operations, but with significant restrictions such as capacity limits.

Phase Three, the “Vigilant” Phase, will allow for a loosening of some restrictions and conditions contained in the first two phases, if public health data is trending in the right direction.

Phase Four, the “New Normal” Phase, enables resumption of activities under the “new normal” framework, assuming the development of appropriate therapy treatments and/or vaccines.

The prospective length of each phase is currently unclear, as progression to the next phase is dependent on satisfying public health metrics. To the extent those metrics fall below certain thresholds, it could result in a reversion to a prior phase.

Mandatory Workplace Safety Standards

In conjunction with the announcement of the four-phase reopening, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health published **Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplaces** to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission as employees and customers return to workplaces. These safety standards are applicable to all sectors and industries that will be open in Phase One.

The Mandatory Workplace Safety Standards include the following elements:

Social Distancing

- All persons, including employees, customers, and vendors should remain at least six feet apart to the greatest extent possible, both inside and outside workplaces.
- Provide signage to promote safe social distancing.
- Require face coverings/masks for all employees.

Hygiene

- Provide hand washing capabilities throughout the workplace.
- Ensure frequent hand washing by employees and adequate supplies to do so.
- Provide regular sanitization of high touch areas, such as workstations, equipment, screens, doorknobs, and restrooms throughout the work site.

Staffing and Operations

- Provide training for employees regarding social distancing and hygiene protocols.
- Employees who are displaying COVID-19-like symptoms should not report to work.
- Establish a plan for employees who become ill at work, and a return-to-work plan.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Establish and maintain cleaning protocols specific to the business.
- When an active employee is diagnosed with COVID-19, cleaning and disinfecting must be performed.
- Disinfection of common surfaces must take place at intervals appropriate for the workplace.

In addition to these Mandatory Standards, which apply to all workplaces, sector-specific safety protocols and best practices will be forthcoming.

Internet/Phone Sales

The announcement of the four-phase reopening comes on the heels of guidance published on May 5, 2020, allowing certain non-essential Massachusetts businesses, such as flower shops and car dealerships, to bring back employees for Internet/phone sales only. Under the May 5 Guidance, facilities must remain closed to the public, employees may only be engaged in packaging and delivery/shipping of phone and online orders (not the manufacturing of products), employees must wear face coverings while on-site, and employers are directed to stagger shifts to help ensure social distancing. Any deliveries must be “no contact”; that is, items must be left in mailboxes, mailrooms, garages, lobbies, at doorstep, or similar no-contact drop-off points.

For more information and updates on the developing situation, visit [GT's Health Emergency Preparedness Task Force: Coronavirus Disease 2019](#).

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