# COVID-19 Best Practice Information: Longer-Term Business Reopening

## Background

- States have begun to ease coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic restrictions on non-essential businesses, such as restaurants and commercial establishments. To ensure employee and community safety, employers who have decided to reopen are implementing a variety of social distancing, hygiene, and infection control measures, such as operating at reduced capacity and regularly sanitizing surfaces.

- This document discusses the strategies, supported by guidance from federal, state, and local governments, that businesses across various sectors can implement to protect employees and customers from COVID-19 as businesses begin phased reopening.

- The following is a list of key findings and considerations for jurisdictions and communities regarding ongoing COVID-19 operations across the country. These are best practices for consideration and do not constitute and should not be considered as guidance in any way.[1]

## Key Considerations

- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released Resuming Business Toolkit designed to assist employers slow the spread of COVID-19 and lower workplace impact when bringing employees back to work.[2]

- To prepare for a phased reopening, businesses around the world are exercising precautions, such as increasing sanitization of surfaces, limiting store capacity, and updating policies or changing store and office interiors to promote social distancing. [3]

- State and local governments have also relaxed certain permit policies and released sector-specific guidance to help businesses safely reopen.[4]

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[1] This document contains references and links to non-federal resources and organizations. This information is meant solely for informational purposes and is not intended to be an endorsement of any non-federal entity by FEMA, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, or the U.S. government.

[2] 2020 CDC, Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Resuming Business Toolkit, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/resuming-business-toolkit.html

[3] 2020 CNN, This is where all 50 states stand on reopening, https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2020/us/states-reopen-coronavirus-trnd/

[4] 2020 Eater Atlanta, Brookhaven Gets Creative With Its New Outdoor Dining Permit for the City's Restaurants, https://atlanta.eater.com/2020/4/28/21239850/brookhaven-georgia-temporary-outdoor-restaurant-operations-permit-covid19

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- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) developed "Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19." This document provides guidance for businesses of all types on ways they can prepare their businesses for reopening and actions they can take.[5]

# Lessons Learned Related to COVID-19 Longer-Term Business Reopening

## Physical Design Changes

- **Potential Best Practice**: Expanding outdoor seating can increase customer capacity at restaurants required to space out tables to adhere to social distancing guidelines.
  - To help restaurants that are operating with reduced indoor seating capacity, the city of Tampa, Florida, has closed several streets to allow businesses to expand their seating options outdoors.[6]
  - In Atlanta, Georgia, restaurants can apply for a "Temporary Outdoor Restaurant Operations Permit," which allows restaurants to use outdoor space, such as parking lots, as seating areas. The permit is free and lasts for 90 days.[7]
  - Lithuania's capital has opened 18 of the city's public spaces (e.g., plazas, squares, streets) for outdoor restaurant and café seating.[8]
- **Potential Best Practice**: To assist businesses that must adjust operations for reopening, the city council of Melbourne, Florida approved incentives that would waive special activity application fees for business promotions and building/fire prevention review fees for small business improvements of up to $25,000.[9]
- **Potential Best Practice**: Businesses have installed barriers in close-quarter areas to separate customers from employees and each other.
  - A bookstore in Italy has added plexiglass sheets to checkout stations.[10]
  - Some restaurants in the United States are planning to install plexiglass barriers between dining booths.[11]

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[5] 2020 OSHA, Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19, https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf
[6] 2020 CBS Tampa Bay, City of Tampa closing roads to help restaurants, retailers reopen, https://www.wtsp.com/article/news/local/why-are-the-roads-closed-in-tampa/67-64703ffa-5653-4d5e-8ed1-60b02fe3cff0
[7] 2020 Eater Atlanta, Brookhaven Gets Creative With Its New Outdoor Dining Permit for the City's Restaurants, https://atlanta.eater.com/2020/4/28/21239850/brookhaven-georgia-temporary-outdoor-restaurant-operations-permit-covid19
[8] 2020 The Guardian, Lithuanian capital to be turned into vast open-air cafe, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/28/lithuanian-capital-to-be-turned-into-vast-open-air-cafe-vilnius
[9] 2020 Florida Today, COVID-19: New outdoor seating at Melbourne restaurants offered to help recovery, https://www.floridatoday.com/story/news/2020/04/22/covid-19-new-outdoor-seating-at-melbourne-restaurants-considered-to-help-coronavirus-recovery/5163821002/
[10] 2020 Quartz, Italy's bookstores are figuring out how to reopen a business after a lockdown, https://qz.com/1839166/italys-bookstores-are-figuring-out-how-to-reopen-a-business-after-a-lockdown/
[11] 2020 The New York Times, As States Push to Reopen, Business Leaders Say Not So Fast, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/26/business/coronavirus-states-businesses-reopen.html

- **Potential Best Practice:** Movie theatres are planning to reopen with "checkerboard" or alternate-row seating patterns to increase the space between patrons.[12]

- **Potential Best Practice:** A hospitality group based in Hong Kong has placed hand sanitizer and storage bags for masks on tables in restaurants.[13]

- **Strength:** The city plan in Ottawa, Canada discusses the potential permanence of interior and outdoor redesigns to allow for adequate social distancing beyond the immediate COVID-19 crisis. These changes include the extension of serving counters to protect workers and the expansion of sidewalks for customer seating and pedestrian traffic.[14]

## Technological Innovations for Worker or Customer Social Distancing

- **Potential Best Practice:** Industries that are gradually reopening are relying on technology or electronic systems to ensure minimal contact between employees.

  - To prevent potential disease spread in multiple-stall bathrooms in an Italian factory, yellow-and-green traffic light systems at entrances alert workers whether bathrooms are empty and safe to enter. [15]

  - In Antwerp, Belgium, port workers are wearing wristbands that vibrate to give warning signals if workers move within 1.5 meters (about five feet) of each other. These wristbands have previously been used to warn workers of approaching vehicles or an individual falling into the water.[16]

  - Restaurants are utilizing quick response (QR) codes in place of physical menus to ensure that there are minimal transmission possibilities between customers and staff.[17]

## Policy Changes

- **Potential Best Practice:** Some restaurants in Hong Kong are requiring customers to sign a Health Declaration Form and receive temperature checks before being seated. The Health Declaration Form allows restaurants to quickly contact customers in the event a confirmed cased is connected to the restaurant.[18]

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[12] 2020 Forbes, Analyst: When Movie Theaters Reopen, COVID May Bump Up Elusive Weekday Attendance, https://www.forbes.com/sites/sarahaswell/2020/04/27/analyst-when-movie-theaters-reopen-covid-may-bump-up-elusive-weekday-attendance/#54fed24d47f4

[13] 2020 Today, Separated by plexiglass? Experts discuss how restaurants will change, https://www.today.com/food/separated-plexiglass-experts-discuss-how-restaurants-will-change-t179836

[14] 2020 Ottawa Citizen, Dreessen: Let's use what COVID-19 has taught us to redesign our city, https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/dreessen-lets-use-what-covid-19-has-taught-us-to-redesign-our-city/

[15] 2020 World Economic Forum, Traffic light for bathroom break is new normal in coronavirus Italy, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/italy-coronavirus-industry-economy-lockdown/

[16] 2020 Reuters, Antwerp port trials wristbands for coronavirus social distancing, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-belgium-distancing/antwerp-port-trials-wristbands-for-coronavirus-social-distancing-idUSKCN22519X

[17] 2020 Hospitality Tech, QR Codes: One Solution to the Post-COVID-19 Dine-In Problem, https://hospitalitytech.com/qr-codes-one-solution-post-covid-19-dine-problem

[18] 2020 PMQ Pizza Magazine, Should Restaurant Guests Have to Sign a Health Declaration Form?, https://www.pmq.com/healthdeclarationform/

- **Potential Best Practice:** Libraries in Hong Kong have limited the amount of time that visitors can spend inside in order to allow for more visitors to use the library's resources each day and have adopted special opening hours, admission by sessions and limiting the number of people entering the library.[19] [20]

- **Potential Best Practice:** If space permits, offices can encourage a clockwise or one-way flow of foot traffic to minimize transmission. This practice has already been adopted by some hospitals.[21]

- **Potential Best Practice:** In Frankfurt, Germany, ice cream shops opened for takeaway service only, but customers are not allowed to consume ice cream within 50 meters (about 164 feet) of the stores to prevent crowding.[22]

- **Potential Best Practice:** In Texas, a "retail to go" model allows for curbside pick-up, where employees deliver purchased items to the backseats or trunks of customers' vehicles.[23]

- **Potential Best Practice:** In Minnesota, salons are staggering stylists' schedules and requiring customers to wait outside for their appointments to reduce capacity inside the salon.[24]

- **Potential Best Practice:** As theme parks begin gradual reopening, protective measures put in place include social distancing of guests, team members and performers, requiring facial coverings, limiting capacity, increasing cleaning/disinfection procedures.[25] Theme parks in Florida are considering replacing lines with a reservation system for guests to ride attractions at theme parks.[26]

## Government Guidance

- **Strength:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released reopening guidance for cleaning and disinfecting public spaces, workplaces, businesses, and schools in the United States and can be found here.

- **Potential Best Practice:** The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has released a Coronavirus Communication Toolkit for businesses to use as a messaging guide for communication with employees and the public. The Chamber has also launched an interactive map with information on state-specific reopening guidelines for businesses.

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[19] 2020 The New York Times, No More Jenga, No More 'Amen' as Cities Learn to Live With Coronavirus, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/02/world/asia/coronavirus-china-hong-kong-south-korea-australia.html
[20] 2020 Hong Kong Public Libraries, Latest Arrangements on Services of Hong Kong Public Libraries, https://www.hkpl.gov.hk/en/library-notices/re-openingof38venues_pbqnb4a5u61lktb84qssl02ec0.html
[21] 2020 World Economic Forum, 10 ways COVID-19 could change office design, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/covid19-coronavirus-change-office-work-homeworking-remote-design/
[22] 2020 World Economic Forum, Here's how different cities around the world are lifting lockdowns, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/lockdown-cities-reopening-plans/
[23] 2020 NBC KXAN, Texas stores embrace 'retail to-go' model as state loosens economic restrictions, https://www.kxan.com/news/coronavirus/retail-to-go-begins-friday-all-stores-can-sell-products-for-curbside-pick-up-delivery/
[24] 2020 NBC KARE11, Salons outline plan to safely reopen amid COVID-19, https://www.kare11.com/article/news/local/breaking-the-news/salons-outline-plan-to-safely-reopen-following-covid19/89-8870fe83-2953-4261-8f72-ee6e61307a02
[25] 2020 CNN, Universal Orlando's Reopening Shows Challenges Ahead for Theme Parks, https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/universal-orlando-reopening-theme-park-challenges/index.html
[26] 2020 MarketWatch, The future of Disney theme parks after the shutdowns — empty seats on Space Mountain and NO hugs from Cinderella, https://www.marketwatch.com/story/what-disneyland-and-walt-disney-world-could-be-like-when-they-reopen-after-coronavirus-shutdowns-prep-for-empty-seats-on-space-mountain-and-no-more-hugs-from-cinderella-2020-05-06

- **Potential Best Practice:** As part of the Responsible Restart Ohio initiative, the Ohio Department of Health has released documents for various sectors that detail operating requirements to ensure the safety of employees and the community as businesses reopen.

  - The five general protocols that apply to all businesses include 1) requiring face coverings for employees (also recommended for customers), 2) conducting daily health assessments for employers and employees, 3) maintaining good hygiene and social distancing, 4) cleaning and sanitizing surfaces throughout the work day, and 5) limiting store or office capacity to 50% of the fire code. These guidelines also suggest using appointments where possible to limit congestion in buildings.[27]

  - Guidelines for the manufacturing, distribution, and construction sectors include providing a stipend to employees for private transportation and reducing the pace of work to allow fewer full-time employees per assembly line.[28]

  - Guidelines for the consumer, retail, and service sectors include discontinuing self-service stations, maximizing available checkout space, increasing capacity for delivery and curbside pickup, and using contactless payments when possible.[29]

  - Guidelines for general office environments include closing cafeteria and gathering spaces, as well as dividing essential staff into groups with rotating shifts.[30]

- **Potential Best Practice:** The Alabama Small Business Commission Emergency Task Force and the Subcommittee to Reopen the Economy has released guidelines for reopening businesses across the retail, restaurant, manufacturing, health services, and entertainment sectors.[31]

  - Guidelines include marking any indoor or outdoor waiting areas to ensure social distancing guidelines are met, emailing receipts, and providing handwashing stations at construction sites.

Topics for the "Best Practices" series are generated from crowd sourced suggestions. Have an idea? Let us research it! Organizations and individuals can e-mail best practices or lessons learned to fema-cipsupport@fema.dhs.gov.

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[27] 2020 Ohio Department of Health, COVID-19 Responsible Protocols for Getting Ohio Back to Work, https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/Responsible-Protocols.pdf
[28] 2020 Ohio Department of Health, Manufacturing, Distribution & Construction, https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/Manufacturing-Distribution-Construction.pdf
[29] 2020 Ohio Department of Health, Consumer, Retail & Services, https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/Consumer-Retail-Services.pdf
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