

Ensuring the Safety of Township Employees and the Public

Gov. Tom Wolf has issued guidance for businesses that are permitted to operate during the Covid-19 pandemic. Townships were not required to close when Gov. Wolf and Secretary of Health Rachel Levine issued business closure orders on March 19, 2020. However, townships were told to reduce in-person operations and follow guidance provided by the Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control.

In the same way, townships of the second class and other municipalities are not required to follow the guidance document titled *Guidance for Businesses Permitted to Operate During the Covid-19 Disaster to Ensure the Safety and Health of Members of the Public* but are encouraged to develop their own safety procedures for their employees and the public based on this guidance throughout all phases of the reopening. Some key takeaways that townships may find useful from this guidance document are provided below.

Because Covid-19 is easily transmitted in group settings, it is very important to protect public health to slow the spread of the virus. Even asymptomatic people can transmit the disease. The virus can also spread if a person touches his or her mouth, nose, or eyes after touching a surface or object that has been contaminated.

Protecting Employees: Decontamination Plans

It is critical not only to have decontamination plans in place to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus but also to

communicate to township employees that there is a plan in place to ensure their safety in the workplace.

Consider the possibility that township employees may be caregivers for a family member who is in an elevated at-risk category for contracting the virus, or they may be in an elevated at-risk category personally. Having a virus mitigation and decontamination plan in place will ensure that township employees feel safe when returning to work in the office.

Townships should consider having a decontamination plan in place that includes the following:

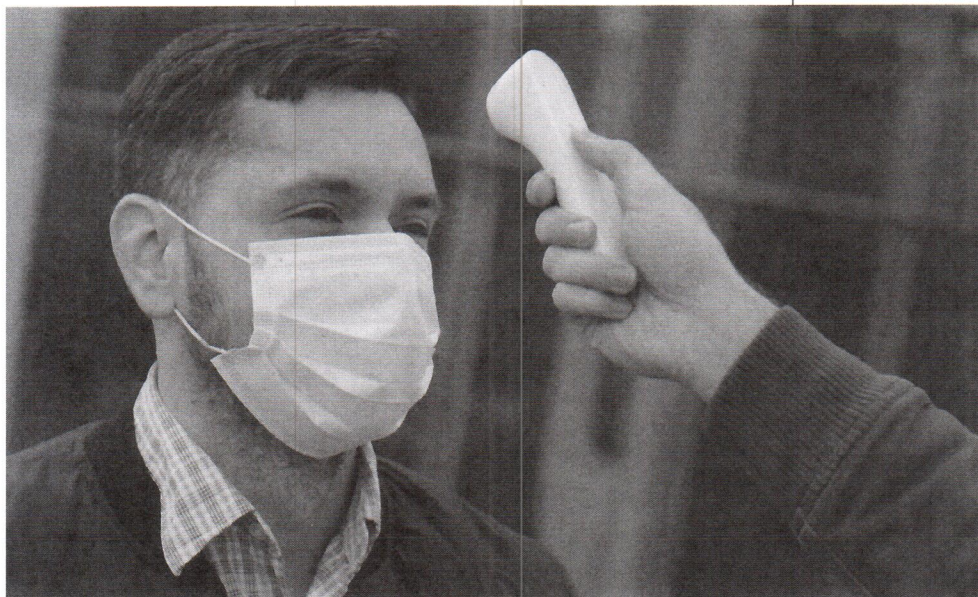
- Securing and decontaminating affected areas.
- Identifying employees who were in close contact (*within about 6 feet for 10 minutes or more*) with a person with a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 from the period 48 hours before symptom onset to the time at which the patient isolated.
- Taking each employee's temperature before they enter the business and sending home those who have a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Ensure that employees practice social distancing while waiting to have temperatures screened.
- Informing employees that if they have symptoms (*i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath*), they should notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Advising sick employees to follow CDC-recommended steps, including not returning to work until the CDC criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, in consultation with health care providers and state and local health departments.

- Implementing liberal paid time off for employees who do not return to work for the reasons set forth above, if possible.

Townships should also:

- Prevent large groups from entering or leaving the building by staggering work start and end times.
- Limit the number of people in

Townships should have a plan in place that includes the taking of employees' temperature before they enter work and sending home those who have a reading of 100.4 degrees or higher.



employee common areas, such as locker rooms or break rooms, and ensure that these areas are cleaned frequently.

- Provide non-medical masks for employees to wear at all times and make it mandatory to wear masks while on the work site. Employers may approve masks obtained or made by employees according to Department of Health policies.
- Make sure the facility has enough employees as applicable to follow these protocols and conduct business effectively and safely.
- Discourage non-essential visitors from entering the business premises.
- Communicate these procedures to all employees to ensure that everyone knows how to be safe.

Protecting Township Employees and the Public

Township employees should not only practice safety precautions to the extent practicable but also consider making adjustments to the way your township interacts with the public. This will help ensure their safety and make them feel comfortable interacting with the township.

Consider some of the following suggestions to townships from Gov. Wolf:

- Conduct business with the public by appointment.



Townships should consider requiring all members of the public to wear masks when visiting the township building.

- Modify office hours to ensure there is adequate time to clean and disinfect high-traffic areas.
- Install shields or other barriers to physically separate township employees from the public.
- Require all members of the public to wear masks when visiting the township building.

For more guidance, go to www.governor.pa.gov/covid-19/business-guidance/.

Other Resources

- www.pa.gov/guides/responding-to-covid-19/
- www.psats.org: Click on the COVID graphic.

Signage

- **DOH Reopening Business Flyer** — www.pa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Reopening-Businesses-Flyer-8-5x11-1.pdf
- **CDC: Stop the Spread** — www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/stop-the-spread-of-germs.pdf
- **CDC: What You Should Know About COVID-19** — www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/2019-ncov-factsheet.pdf

Quick Access to These Documents

To access these documents noted above, go to www.psats.org, click on the COVID graphic, and look for this fact sheet. You will find hyperlinks for all there.



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