Protecting Your Workers From Coronavirus

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has impacted a number of businesses across a variety of industries, forcing them to rethink their daily operations to ensure the safety of their employees and the general public. This is no different for construction firms, where multiple contractors and tradespeople on a job site may be working in the same space at any one time. In these instances, just one misstep can lead to the quick spread of COVID-19, jeopardizing the well-being of workers.

To help slow the spread of COVID-19 and safeguard your staff, consider the strategies highlighted in this Construction Risk Insights.

COVID-19 Safety Tips for Construction Firms

When it comes to COVID-19, discouraging sick employees from reporting to work and encouraging social distancing are the two of the most effective methods for protecting your workers:

- **Discouraging sick employees from reporting to work**—Above all, any employee who is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, chills or fatigue) should stay home. Individuals experiencing such symptoms should also be instructed to consult guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on seeking medical care.

- **Encouraging social distancing**—Social distancing is the practice of deliberately increasing the physical space between people to avoid spreading illness. In terms of COVID-19, social distancing best practices for construction businesses can include:

  o Avoiding gatherings of 10 or more people

  o Keeping at least 6 feet of distance from other people

  o Hosting meetings virtually when possible

  o Limiting the number of people on the jobs site to essential personnel only

  o Encouraging staff to work from home when possible

  o Discouraging people from shaking hands

Beyond these recommendations, there are a number of specific job site and office precautions construction firms should consider. Specifically, to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, businesses should:

- Communicate key CDC guidance to their workers on how to stay safe from COVID-19. Helpful resources include the following webpages:

  o How to Protect Yourself

  o If You Are Sick or Caring for Someone

  o Frequently Asked Questions

Provided by Scott Risk Performance

- Post posters and other signage that encourage workers to stay home when they're sick and educate them on hygiene best practices to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Sample posters from the CDC can be found [here](#).

- Ask workers targeted questions regarding their current health before they enter the job site. If they answer yes to the following questions, supervisors should ask them to go home and not return to work until further notice:

  - Have you been in contact with a person who has tested positive or is in the process of being tested for COVID-19?

  - Have you or anyone you've been in contact with traveled outside of the United States recently?

  - Has a medical professional told you to self-quarantine?

  - Are you having trouble breathing, or have you had flu-like symptoms within the past 48 hours (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, chills or fatigue)?

- Instruct employees to practice good hygiene. Employees should clean their hands often, either with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water. Hand sanitizers should contain at least 60%-95% alcohol, and employees should wash their hands with soap for at least 20 seconds. It's also a good idea to strategically place hand sanitizer and hand-washing stations around the job site.

- Instruct employees to:

  - Avoid congregating, and keep their distance from other workers where possible.

  - Avoid sharing tools and personal protective equipment (PPE).

  - Clean reusable PPE per the original manufacturer's recommendation before every use. Used PPE must be disposed of properly.

  - Utilize disposable gloves as appropriate, and wash their hands after they're done with them.

  - Change their clothes before they get home. Dirty clothes should be washed using hot water and laundry sanitizer.

- Ensure the work environment is cleaned regularly. This can involve sanitizing doorknobs, keyboards, tools, reusable supplies and equipment.

- Avoid using a common water cooler. For increased safety, provide employees with disposable plastic water bottles or instruct them to bring their own.

- Avoid scheduling multiple tradespeople at once. This should help limit the amount of individuals on the job site at once.

- Sanitize portable toilets frequently.

- Avoid cleaning techniques that could generate bioaerosols.

Continued Safety

While the strategies highlighted in this document can help you protect your workers from COVID-19, it's important to follow CDC guidance at all times. For more information, click [here](#).

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