



## **RETURN TO WORK AND COVID-19**

As the workplace begins to open, members should consider a consistent process for bringing people back to work. The Coronavirus pandemic is still with us and may be for quite some time. Although progress has been made in containing the spread of the disease, we are now seeing it re-emerge. Employers and employees must remain vigilant in maintaining precautions that have been in place for several weeks. The Fund's members are considered essential services, as such have maintained operations, though with limited staff in some cases.

As members consider resuming full operations, including returning staff to the office that have been working remotely, consider the following suggestions:

1. The status of the epidemic in your area of operation that may have hot spots where the disease is still spreading. If the virus is still spreading in your area delay resuming full operations. As you resume fuller scale operations consider the necessity of bringing everyone back to work at once. Employees who have worked effectively from home could be allowed to continue. Other employees could be brought back in phases or as maintenance, repair or supply needs arise. Other essential staff have already been at work and working under prevention protocols. These should continue and be extended to returning staff.
2. Consult general counsel (or outside counsel) and your existing internal policies on employment related issues such as an alternative work schedule policy that needs to be considered or employment agreements. Seek professional Human Resources guidance on any potential Employment Liability issues that could arise because of perceived preferential treatment, allegations of discrimination, refusal to return to work due to fear of infection or other medical issues, ADA, or FMLA issues.
3. Screen employees before they return to work. Test for the virus if possible and available in your area. An important caveat with testing is that some of the tests yield a high percentage of inaccurate results, both false positives and false negatives. Seek medical guidance when choosing a test.
4. Conduct a health screening questionnaire for recent illness or current symptoms. The Health Questionnaire provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is four questions and takes just a few minutes. It is included as an appendix. Don't allow infected workers to return until they have been clear of disease for the medically determined amount of time. Refer to local medical professionals or the CDC for guidance about when a previously infected worker can safely return to work.
5. Check the temperature of every employee each day prior to starting work or going into the field.. Take everyone's temperature every morning using an infra-red portable thermometer, if available. If not, the work supervisor or designated individual managing the screening process can ask questions about the

employee's health. If someone has a fever, exhibits symptoms, or complains of symptoms, send them home. Under standard prevention protocols, employees should be advised not to come to work if they are not feeling well or exhibiting any symptoms. Educate your employees about this requirement.

6. Continue use of personal protective equipment such as masks, face and eye protection, and gloves.
7. Continue stringent disinfecting routines in shops, offices, vehicles, mobile equipment, and all working facilities. Supply disinfecting wipes wherever needed. Sanitize commonly used areas such as entrances, reception counters, elevators, break rooms, locker rooms, and restrooms. Any surface that many people touch should be disinfected frequently.
8. Maintain social distancing, where possible, and use time separation for jobs that can be staged or divided between shifts.
9. Restrict access to job sites. Keep non-essential workers, vendors, and members of the public away. Family members should not visit job sites. Contractors who are not yet needed for the job should also be kept off site. Any non-essential meetings, trainings, or other events should be conducted virtually, if possible. Reduce the number of authority or district personnel on site like management, engineering, or supervisors not necessary for the actual work being conducted.
10. Continue separation at points where members of the public or staff congregate for conducting business. Also, limit the number of employees who can congregate in break rooms, locker rooms, and other high traffic areas.
11. Continue work from home for those who are not essential to maintain water operations until the threat of disease is significantly reduced.
12. Maintain frequent hand washing or use of hand sanitizer for all employees, including those in the field. Require visitors to maintain the same kind of personal protective usage as your employees. Signage outside your facilities should state the requirements for both visitors and employees.
13. Any employee claiming they contracted Coronavirus during the course and scope of their employment should be reported to the Fund immediately under the same process as any other alleged workers' compensation injury. Reporting forms and procedures are on the Fund's website at [www.twcarmf.org](http://www.twcarmf.org). Illness contracted in the course and scope of employment may be covered by workers' compensation.
14. Plan for how to close some operations or scale back to essential functions only if the spread of infection accelerates in your area. Monitor local health authorities, state, and federal advisories.
15. Document all maintenance, incident, and training programs related to the Coronavirus. Document procedures used to curtail operations and lessons learned.

## Appendix A – Medical Questionnaire

This is one basic questionnaire that can be used quickly and will determine if an employee or visitor can be allowed on site. Any “yes” answer should exclude the person from entering or interacting at your facilities.

### Health Questionnaire

SITE LOCATION \_\_\_\_\_

REASON FOR VISIT/TYPE OF WORK BEING PERFORMED \_\_\_\_\_

Form Should Be Completed Prior to Allowing Site Access for the First Time. Effective for all Employees and Visitors as of \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**PLEASE DECLARE “YES” OR “NO” (by marking in the appropriate box) TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

1. Have you had a fever a new or worsening cough, and shortness of breath within the last 24 hours?  
YES  NO
2. Has a household member had a fever, a new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, or tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 2 weeks?  
YES  NO
3. Have you had close contact with an individual who had a fever, cough and shortness of breath, or has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 2 weeks? (Close contact is considered closer than 6 feet for a prolonged period and/or being coughed or sneezed on)  
YES  NO
4. Have you traveled anywhere outside of this area in the last 14 days?  
YES  NO

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Employer or Purpose of Visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ACCESS GRANTED

ACCESS DENIED