

We want to get you back to working safely during COVID. As different parts of the world prepare to return to work we are starting to see examples of what returning to work will look like. Premier John Horgan announced on Wednesday a four phase plan to get British Columbians to a 'new normal.' The plan focuses on 5 core principles:

- Maintaining enhanced personal hygiene,
- Staying at home if sick, showing symptoms or recently traveled,
- Enhancing environmental hygiene for high touch areas,
- Safe social interaction with small groups in large areas, and;
- Physical modifications to rooms and the way people move within those rooms.

In other words, BC businesses have been given the green light to start making safe moves towards returning to work. So, what does a safe return to work look like?

Develop a plan:

The first step in working safely during COVID is developing a plan to ensure you are minimizing the risk of COVID-19 appropriately and communicating that plan to employees (this is a must!) While you are not required to submit your plans for approval by WorkSafeBC, you may be asked to provide them during a WorkSafeBC inspection.

Workplace Organization and Arrangement

Long gone are the days of hotdesking and after years of promoting the benefits of open office plans it's all being called into question.

Therefore, ways of maintaining a safe physical distance of 2 meters between workers and others must be implemented as a part of your return to safe operation plan for working safely during COVID. There are a couple of productive ways this can be achieved;

Office layout

Our client Aura Office Environments has surveyed leaders around the globe and is developing a [Post-COVID Workplace Program](#) that focuses on how to better design and layout an office while keeping you, your employees and clients safe. In their '[What does the Post-COVID workplace look like?](#)' blog they highlight several easily achieved solutions to maximize the distance between staff. For instance, reducing shared desking, separating workstations and adding barriers like partitions, plants or storage elements. Other creative ideas included are; placing mats on the floor indicating private and social space.

Alternating WFH schedule

A creative way to safely maintain an office culture without having to increase your office footprint is by alternating WFH days with different teams and/or departments.

Workplace Activities

Video Conferencing

In other words, maintaining the new enhanced culture of video conferencing and reducing meeting rooms is a simple way to ensure minimal physical contact.

Staggered Start Times

BC Transit ridership is down roughly 50 to 70 percent across the province but as employees return to work, those who haven't had to rely on transit while working from home will likely return to riding the bus or sky train.

Bike to work/Bike Storage

A recent study showed bike riding is up by 80%! Therefore it means more people might try biking to work. In addition to encouraging this behaviour, you as the employer need to work out what your policy is about bikes in the office. Understand their risk for the safety and hygiene protocols

Cleanliness

Handwashing

Provide visible, adequate and easily accessed hand-washing and/or hand-sanitization facilities on site for all employees and develop policies around when employees must wash their hands.

Office Cleaning

Similarly, implement a cleaning protocol for all common areas and surfaces, including washrooms, equipment, tools, common tables, desks, light switches, and door handles. Ensure those engaged in cleaning have adequate training and materials.

Unnecessary Items

In addition, it is important to remove any unnecessary tools or equipment that may increase the risk of transmission. For instance plates, cutlery, glasses and mugs in your lunchroom need to go, and yes that includes the beloved office Nespresso.

Check out our [Hygiene And Disease Prevention In The Workplace FAQs](#) blog for more information on Health and Safety in the workplace.

Communication

Signage

Post signage, such as occupancy limits and effective hygiene practices.

Policies and contracts

Create, review and update your policies and employment contracts to reflect the impacts of COVID-19 on your workforce.

Connect with BLANKSLATE to kick off your COVID-19 Return to Work Package.

The package includes:

A workplace inspection and recommendation on workspace usage that will allow employees to return to a safe working environment. Plus a review in-situ once employees have returned to work.

An HR Audit of your policies and contracts that are compliant to new requirements

A designed unique return to work strategy for your company.

An employee re-onboarding plan so returning employees know what to expect.

Flat rate of \$2200.00 + GST (10% if you sign up before 4pm May 15th 2020.)

Reach out immediately to izzie@blankslate.partners for more details and to be connected to your expert.

In conclusion, Stay Healthy!

