

Ergonomic evaluations and workplace social distancing

As employers prepare to get back to business, they need to know that employee worksites are properly set up to avoid injury and all work spaces allow for the appropriate distance between employees to reduce the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

As quickly installed remote workstations become more long-term for some of your workers, our experts can complete remote ergonomic evaluations for preventative care, and virtual ergonomic inspections for work-from-home employees. The evaluation of workstations and instruction on proper setup can be very helpful in avoiding repetitive motion and other claims.

We can also offer consultative services and support redesign of work areas, floors and operations to allow for additional distance between employees in the workplace. These services can also include the development of enhanced safety protocols for clients regarding contagious diseases.

Ergonomic evaluations

Businesses recognize the importance of using ergonomics as a tool to help reduce work-related injuries, and increase employees' comfort and productivity. To conduct a remote ergonomic evaluation, we begin by sending a survey to gather pertinent employee information such as symptoms, workstation measurements, etc. We request photographs of the employee seated and working at their workstation to be used during the consultation. We follow up with a phone meeting and help the employee make adjustments during the meeting when possible.

We will send a report summarizing changes that were made during the meeting, employee work habits that were discussed, and any remaining recommendations to be implemented. Our process is customizable, so if your business already has in-house ergonomic professionals, online self-evaluation tools or specific steps, we can create an approach that coordinates with your existing process.

Workplace social distancing

To help ensure the safety and well-being of employees returning to the workplace, employers will want to consider administrative controls, such as spacing between work stations, foot traffic management and scheduling. Other factors to consider include the availability of masks, wipes and hand sanitizers, isolation areas for those who become ill and ways to manage air quality.

To minimize the risk of COVID-19 exposure, a general industry employer would need to ensure several controls are in place. At a minimum, they should consider adding or implementing the following items.

Administrative controls

- Policies and procedures for symptomatic or exposed employees – This includes encouraging those who are sick to stay home
- Temperature screenings at the beginning of shifts – If the employee's temperature is below the recommended screening threshold from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, they would be able to enter
- Social distancing – This covers topics such as movement within the facility (i.e. one-way walking paths), training employees on when they can handle things virtually vs. in person, and determining if the distance between cubicles is acceptable or if there is a need to alternate cubicles or work schedules
- Mask use guidelines and training – This would include when to use them, how it should fit, how to put them on and take them off, and how often to wash and replace

- Glove use guidelines – This would cover when employees need to use gloves, and when and how to dispose of them
- Personal hygiene training – This includes hand washing, covering sneezes, etc.
- Cleaning/sanitizing schedule – Recommended items include computer keyboards, mice, phones, headsets and furniture; other factors to consider:
 - Establishing different procedures for shared workstations/ equipment or avoiding shared equipment altogether
 - Determining whether to clean with UV lights, sanitizing wipes, or both
 - Creating a plan for other high-touch areas like break rooms, refrigerators, door handles, elevator buttons, handrails, etc.
- Travel policies and practices

Engineering controls

- Social distancing – Factors to consider include the distance between employees' regular workstations; if they have cubicle walls or an open environment, if employees face toward each other or away from each other, if barriers or shields can be installed, and ways to ensure social distancing in meeting rooms and break rooms
- Masks – Determine whether you will provide these or allow employees to use their own

- Hand hygiene – Consider if new or extra hand sanitizer stations are needed in addition to the soap and water available in the bathroom
- Designated isolation areas – These offer designated rooms with closed doors for potentially sick employees
- Additional supplies including disposable wipes, tissues and no-touch trash cans
- Indoor air quality improvements may include:
 - Adding UV lights in the HVAC system to reduce microbes
 - Installing high-efficiency air filters
 - Increasing ventilation rates in the work environment
 - Installing physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards

It is important to note that buildings such as hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, clinics, certain laboratories, correctional facilities, homeless shelters and drug treatment centers may have more stringent requirements and more steps to consider than those listed above.

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Our ergonomic evaluations and workplace social distancing solutions are available a la carte or combined with other back-to-business services that Sedgwick offers. To learn more, contact:

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To learn more about Sedgwick's solutions, visit

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