**Is Your Company Prepared to Reintegrate and Resume Operations?**

*SOCMA Members Offer Guidance for Safe Return of Employees*

COVID-19, which was first recognized as a pandemic in March 2020, has tremendously impacted the way the fine and specialty chemical value chain is conducting business. Quickly designated as critical infrastructure and its employees essential, in mid-March companies across the industry made unprecedented decisions to ensure public health and safety by sending their admin, sales, engineers and R&D personnel home to telework. This move further reduced exposure to the virus for “essential workers” on their plant floors. By April 2020, the unparalleled decisions made by these companies helped define processes and procedures that are now part of the “new normal.”

As Shelter-In-Place orders are lifted across the country, companies within the specialty chemical value chain are now seeking safe and effective measures to reintegrate employees who have been teleworking back into the workplace. While understanding that operations cannot resume as they once were, industry thought leaders shared the following measures for companies to consider as they resume full operations within their facilities. This is also a perfect opportunity to evaluate and improve upon processes moving forward.

Below are **goals your company may consider to ensure health and safety of employees**, as well as **potential solutions and suggested actions you can take to achieve each goal.**

**The following information was shared by three companies of varying size and geographic location to ensure a wide representation of actions your company may consider.**

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| **Core Consideration #1: Employee Safety & Concerns** |
| **Goal** | **Solution + Action** |
| **Decrease employee fear, anxiety and uncertainty** | **Administrative Controls:** * Establish a leadership team, COVID-19 task force or utilize your HR department to ensure all federal guidelines are met and company policies reflect employee safety and health as priority.
* Establish or utilize existing employee assistance programs (EAP).
* Allow a special enrollment period for employees to receive health insurance.
* Implement social distancing guidelines and ensure continued adherence.
* Make readily available to all employees any company policies or guidelines that help to mitigate COVID-19 and other illnesses.
* Initiate a company travel policy and determine triggers for when to lift those restrictions.
* Review and confirm that you have ample supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) and establish a policy for your team.
* Retain a local doctor if possible for access to health-related questions and information.
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| **Safely reintegrate staff onto work premises**  | **Utilize a Phased Approach:** * Consider staggered shifts, work hours and departmental returns. (i.e. return of R&D, then admin, sales, etc.)
* Consider whether some teams can continue to telework for the foreseeable future.
* Be prepared to proactively step back a phase if health data suggests the need to do so.

**Screening Requirements to Enter Onsite:** * Require employee temperature screens (either at home or before entering the building)
* Monitor contact tracing
* Utilize a questionnaire for assessing risk of employee activities while away from facility.
* Utilize antibody testing (if or when available)
* Determine site visitor requirements
* Establish [**PPE requirements**](https://www.socma.org/covid-19-state-ppe-inventory-reporting/) for all employees and visitors; have necessary PPE available.
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| **Manage population density to ensure proper social distancing** | **Limiting access to** **onsite locations:*** Establish [**room occupancy limits**](https://www.socma.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Temporary-Maximum-Occupancy.docx) for bathrooms, breakroom, lunchroom and changing areas – restrict entry to 1-2 people at a time.

**Limit in-person interaction** * Hold virtual meetings and training for employees
* Make forms and other information available online
* Hold virtual customer meetings and facility tours
* Establish virtual interview and onboarding processes
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| **Core Consideration #2: Workspace Safety Measures** |
| **Goal** | **Solution + Action** |
| **Cleaning and Disinfectant Measures** | **Facility and workspace cleaning:** * Acquire additional stock of cleaning supplies
* Hire external cleaning services
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| **Physical workspace modifications**  | **Office structures:** * Modify open work areas and cubicle spaces to ensure social distancing requirements
* Further considerations may be necessary for non-chemical operations areas (administrative offices, labs, common areas such as breakroom)
* Installation of new directional signage

**Engineering Controls:** * Optimize HVAC systems for optimal air filtration and makeup
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| **Human Flow Patterns** | * Install signage to ensure employees understand and follow flow patterns
* Marking on the floor to demonstrate 6-foot social distance requirements
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| **Core Consideration #3: Long-Term Impacts** |
| **Goal**  | **Solution + Action**  |
| **Communicate, Educate, Protect** | * Maintain transparent communication with all employees
* Educate employees on [**COVID-19 changes**](https://www.socma.org/covid-19/), rules and regulations
* Develop a long-term system of tracking PPE inventory
* Maintain an active EAP program for employees to address long-term issues associated with COVID-19
* Remind employees that virus mitigation starts and ends at home and within their family circles.
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| **Conferences and In-Person Meetings** | * Adhere to domestic and international travel restrictions as well as internal company guidelines.
* Establish safety protocol for employees who are attending external events
* SOCMA’s [**Lead Sheet Program**](https://www.socma.org/commercial/lead-sheet/) and Capabilities Mapping Services offer solutions to the inability to currently meet safely face-to-face with customers and partners.
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| **Virtual Processes**  | **Training + Onboarding of Current and New Employees*** Consider virtual training and onboarding of employees.
* SOCMA’s [**Chemical Operations Training Tool**](https://www.socma.org/operations-manufacturing/training/) offers 24/7 access to ensure new and current employees receive training and education.
* Implement and accelerate cross-training of employees to ensure coverage across all departments where possible.

**Audits*** The entire process surrounding audits will be different. Begin preparing with technology and personnel as soon as possible.
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