

Governor Baker announces four-phase approach to reopening Massachusetts

Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced a four-phase approach to reopening the Massachusetts economy amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, and published Mandatory Workplace Safety Standards that will apply across all sectors and industries once reopening begins.

The goal of the phased reopening, based on public health guidance, is to methodically allow certain businesses, services, and activities to resume, while protecting public health and limiting a resurgence of new COVID-19 cases.

Phase 1 will be “Start:” limited industries resume operations with severe restrictions

Phase 2 will be “Cautious:” additional industries resume operations with restrictions and capacity limits

Phase 3 will be “Vigilant:” additional industries resume operations with guidance

Phase 4 will be the “New Normal:” development of vaccine and/or therapy enables resumption of new normal

Businesses and activities that provided “COVID-19 Essential Services,” per Governor Baker’s March 23rd order, will continue to operate. Certain businesses and activities with a lower risk of COVID-19 transmission will open in earlier phases. Decisions and timing will be influenced by public health metrics for when the first phase of reopening begins, as well as when it is safe to move into concurrent phases.

CLICK HERE for more information about the four-phased reopening approach.

CLICK HERE for today's presentation from the Reopening Advisory Board.

Additionally, the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the COVID-19 Command Center, in consultation with the Reopening Advisory Board and based on feedback from industry, labor, and community coalitions, has developed Mandatory Workplace Safety Standards to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission as employees and customers begin to return to workplaces during the first phase of reopening. These Mandatory Workplace Safety Standards are applicable to all sectors and industries that will be open in phase one, and create new workplace requirements for social distancing, hygiene, staffing and operations, and cleaning. These standards are being released to give workplaces time to plan and prepare for reopening.

For social distancing:

- All persons, including employees, customers, and vendors should remain at least six feet apart to the greatest extent possible, both inside and outside workplaces
- Establish protocols to ensure that employees can practice adequate social distancing
- Provide signage for safe social distancing
- Require face coverings or masks for all employees

For hygiene:

- Provide hand washing capabilities throughout the workplace
- Ensure frequent hand washing by employees and adequate supplies to do so
- Provide regular sanitization of high touch areas, such as workstations, equipment, screens, doorknobs, restrooms throughout work site

For staffing and operations:

- Provide training for employees regarding the social distancing and hygiene protocols

- Employees who are displaying COVID19-like symptoms do not report to work
- Establish a plan for employees getting ill from COVID-19 at work, and a return-to-work plan

For cleaning and disinfecting:

- Establish and maintain cleaning protocols specific to the business
- When an active employee is diagnosed with COVID-19, cleaning and disinfecting must be performed
- Disinfection of all common surfaces must take place at intervals appropriate to said workplace

CLICK HERE for more information about the Mandatory Workplace Safety Standards.

In addition to these Mandatory Standards which apply to all workplaces, the Reopening Advisory Board is developing Sector Specific Safety Protocols and Best Practices that will detail how particular industries should operate upon reopening.

The Reopening Advisory Board is scheduled to provide its full report to Governor Baker on Monday, May 18th.