

Best Practices for Life Sciences Essential Workers

**As of 4/21/20*

As part of [Massachusetts' Essential Services Order](#) issued on March 31, 2020, the Baker Administration deemed the life sciences including R&D, manufacturing, distribution, warehousing, and supply chain essential and allowed its employees to continue to work on-site as necessary, while still encouraging all employees who could work remotely to do so.

As essential parts of our industry continue to work on-site at scaled down levels and consider how to safely return more employees over time, MassBio has consolidated employer best practices to keep those employees who must work on-site as safe as possible. These were developed with a primary focus on the safety and wellbeing of our industry's employees, their families, and our community. We continue to advocate for all employees who can perform their duties remotely to do so.

The below are only meant as a guide and should be customized for your organization and employees. This is an evolving document and will be updated based on our community's feedback and the evolving science and information about COVID-19.

Thank you to all of the companies and individuals that have provided input for these best practices. If you have other best practices to share, please reach out to SupplyHub@massbio.org.

General Considerations:

- Position as 100% voluntary – each employee should consider if returning to the lab/office would put them or a loved one at risk (ex. If you live with someone who is elderly or has an underlying health condition, or you yourself do)
- Position as non-binding with no repercussions; employees can change their mind at any time and employer must protect against peer pressure
- Clearly outline which roles require working on-site and which can be done remotely
- Require employees to review and sign internal office and lab safety policy stating their return to work is voluntary and that they agree to abide by the required safety parameters
- Employee and their household should be free of any flu-like symptoms for 14 days before returning to work, maintain a normal temperature prior to traveling to work, and have had no recent travel to hotspots
- Employees and their household should continue to follow social distancing recommendations as outlined by the state of Massachusetts and localities, as applicable
- Provide information and relevant materials to employees about proper personal hygiene, social distancing, and other measures they can take to prevent the spread of COVID-19

Occupancy, Signage, & Record-Keeping

- Restrict access of office employees to lab or production facilities; segment office/support personnel to particular areas of the facility

- Determine and post the maximum number of people that can occupy a lab, conference room, workspace, cafeteria, restroom, or break room while maintaining social distancing and require that employees abide by these limits
- Reconfigure cafeteria to maintain social distancing, eliminate face to face seating, and limit number of employees gathering during mealtime
- Evaluate workstation arrangements to ensure that a 6-foot separation is maintained between employees whose desks are in close proximity or are sharing a table that is used as a workstation
- Ensure appropriate markings and signage for proper social distancing in labs, conference rooms, and common areas
- Use visual indicators for placement of chairs and workspaces to maintain required social distancing of 6 feet
- Post maximum number of employees on each elevator entry point
- Create a log for each conference room and lab; require users to record the date of meeting, the time of the meeting (beginning and end), names of participants, and certify that social distancing was maintained and/or who entered/exited the lab
- Ensure lab and conference room logs are present and available for logging of use and contact tracing
- Implement staggered breaks so that fewer employees use the break room at a given time and social distancing can be maintained
- When riding an elevator, direct colleagues to face the wall to avoid contact with others
- Before work and/or a meeting, take a social distancing 'safety moment' to collectively discuss what could be improved, what was done yesterday, and if any incidents occurred
- It may not always be positive to maintain social distancing in meetings, in which meeting participants should document where they were seated (i.e., who they are sitting next to) for the duration of the meeting
- If access through a facility is controlled by ID cards, re-enforce that each employee uses their own card to gain access and discourage holding doors open for employees to enter without swiping badges

Introduction of Staggered Work Schedule

- Institute staggered work schedules, especially in labs
 - AM/PM
 - Days of week
 - On week/off week (e.g. one week on, one week off)
- Keep the rotations consistent with the same people in each rotation/shift
- Ensure appropriate expertise in each shift to avoid overlap
- Encourage or require that any office work, data analysis, notebook recording, etc. be done remotely
- Consider not overlapping shifts to eliminate large gatherings during the shift change
- Pay particular attention to shift changes – sites should implement enhanced cleaning between shifts and controls so that personal contact between shifts is eliminated

Disinfection Measures:

- Mandate handwashing upon entering and exiting the lab, before and after eating, before and after physical meetings, after visiting the restroom, and upon entering the building
- Consider offering lanyard wallets to hold phones & badges
- Provide alcohol swabs and sanitizer across the lab and urge employees to clean phones, badges, and lanyards upon entering and exiting lab
- Create a schedule of increased disinfection of common spaces and frequently touched surfaces
- Clean all surfaces (tables, phones, door handles, etc.) before and after each meeting
- Implement a best practice for employees to avoid touching any surface with their hands, if possible (e.g. encourage use of forearm to open the door)
- Wash lab coats at least weekly
- Do not share goggles and disinfect at least weekly
- Implement enhanced cleaning between shifts and controls so that personal contact between shifts is eliminated

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Provide training to employees on what PPE to wear in their specific area and proper usage of PPE
- Masks required to be worn at all times (except while eating, drinking) to help protect others and help remind everyone not to touch their face
- Provide every employee with the proper PPE, including but not limited to masks, gloves, gowns, and reusable face shields
- Ensure adequate supply of PPE and hand sanitizer in all work and common areas for employee use (workspaces, entryways, restrooms, cafeteria, etc.)
- Ensure adequate supply (minimum 2 weeks supply) of PPE
- Re-asses reorder points weekly to ensure a continuous supply of PPE
- Ensure PPE is properly disposed of or sanitized after use
- Provide gloves for use in office space to avoid door handles and other frequently touched surfaces (consider making these gloves and lab gloves different colors to avoid confusion)
- Hands should be washed before and after mask adjustments
- N95 masks should be available for lab procedures in which a 6-foot distance cannot be maintained

Mandatory Temperature Monitoring & Sickness

- Implement mandatory temperature monitoring upon arrival and exit
- Send employees with temperatures over 100.0 degrees home wearing an N95 mask

Visitor Policy & Travel

- Do not allow visitors and guests onsite; only contractors for essential work
- Monitor to ensure only authorized personnel are accessing the facility
- Require that all employees enter and exit from the main entrance or a single-entry point
- Do not allow employees to use public transportation or Uber/Lyft
- Encourage employees to discuss transportation alternatives with HR

Helpful Resources:

- [World Health Organization](#)
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Massachusetts' COVID-19 List of Essential Services](#)
- [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidance on COVID-19](#) (contains guidance allowing employers to take employee's temperature during the COVID-19 pandemic)