Health & Safety Practices to Enable the Return to Commercial Office Buildings
As the economy reopens and New York begins the transition back to the office, it is essential the public have confidence that office buildings are safe. To that end, the real estate industry must adopt consistent practices to provide multiple layers of protection that are informed by issued guidance from public health authorities.

Recognizing that each building is different, critical to ensuring a safe and efficient return to office work is close coordination and consistent communication between building owners, their employees and representatives, outside vendors, tenants, and government agencies.

This document outlines the “best practices” being adopted by building owners and managers and clarifies issues that need to be addressed jointly with government to enable the safe reentry of buildings.
How are Property Owners Planning for Re-Occupancy?

- Social Distancing
- Cleaning & Hygiene
- Signage
- Building Operations
- Staffing
- Building Systems
- Coordination with Tenants & Vendors

Successful Re-Occupancy
Social Distancing

Space Out People

Building Owner Space
• Building owners and managers are working to enable social distancing in:
  • Building entrances
  • Lobbies
  • Public spaces + POPS
  • Visitor check-in desks
  • Elevators and stairwells
  • Amenity space
  • Bathrooms

Tenant Space
• Building owners and managers are working closely with tenants to ensure social distancing is maintained in tenant space including:
  • Cafeterias
  • Kitchens
  • Meeting spaces
  • Shared office spaces
  • Bathrooms
Cleaning & Hygiene

Community Hygiene

• Comply with Executive Orders requiring use of face coverings in building and tenant common space, including lobbies, kitchens, bathrooms etc.

• Ensure access to hand cleaning stations are frequently available

Cleaning

• Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfection, focused on high-touch surfaces

• Create cleaning schedules that reflect building occupancy

• Waste and recycling pickup will be coordinated for the modified needs of the building
Signage

Install Visible Markers

• Signage to be placed throughout building on topics including:
  • Stay home when sick
  • Proper handwashing
  • Cover your cough
  • Avoid touching face
  • Maintain social distance

• Mark appropriate social distances with signage in common queuing areas
Building Operations

Operational Changes

• Many critical building operational procedures are being altered to respond to this crisis including:
  • Packages, food, and other deliveries
  • Security and visitor check-in
  • Cleaning and disinfection protocols
  • Waste and recycling procedures
  • Elevator and stairs
  • Loading docks

• Procedures will be developed to safely enable construction work to take place in occupied buildings to limiting potential interaction between construction workers and tenants and keep all workers safe
Staffing

Staff Flexibility and Protection

- Building owners and managers will need to be flexible in staffing arrangements as buildings are reentered including relating to:
  - Security
  - Visitor Check-In
  - Cleaning and Disinfection
  - Engineers

- Provide masks, gloves, and appropriate PPE to employees
Building Systems

**Airflow**
- Inspect chill water coils, pre-heat coils intake plenums & intake dampers, reheat coils, and clean induction units
- Replace air filters and check all HVAC systems are operating properly prior to reoccupancy
- Adopt best practices on air filtration and humidity control

**Elevators**
- Check elevators alarms & communications are working properly
- Run each elevator up & down at least once week prior to reoccupancy

**Fire**
- Perform a test of the fire protection system. Check to make sure all devices are working
- Confirm all fire logs/records as well as tenant fire warden, deputy fire warden & searchers are up to date

**Plumbing**
- Inspect flushing of hot water at plumbing fixtures.
- Raise hot water temperature to 140 degrees if possible.
- Flush hot water at all sinks and showers. Run for 5-15 minutes
- Consider installing no touch equipment in bathrooms
Coordination with Tenants and Vendors

**Coordination**

- Building owners and managers are in close communication with tenants, vendors, and contractors about building health protocols to ensure strict adherence and success
- Tenants need to keep building informed of staffing plans and expected visitor arrivals
- Visitors/Contractors to the building must be informed of building entry protocols prior to arrival and comply with PPE requirements in order to enter

**Time**

- Success of protocols will require staggered arrivals to the office and a phased increase in allowable building density
Key Issues for Government

Enable Successful Reentry

• Provide time for building owners/managers to make buildings ready to return, including reconfiguring space and training staff on new procedures

• To ensure uniformity, government should temporarily control the pace of return to office work including:
  • Staggered arrival and departure times in order to control the flow of people into buildings
  • Ensure there is a phase-in of how many people can go back to office work at one time
  • Consider limits on in-person meetings, guests, and deliveries

• Develop uniform rules for operations of:
  • Privately Owned Public Space
  • Gyms
  • Cafeterias
  • Other amenity space in office buildings
Key Issues for Government Cont.

Health Practices

• Establish universal rules for temperature taking:
  • If temperature taking is required, it will raise significant operational and legal issues for building owners that must be addressed through clear government guidelines
  • Lack of clear guidance will cause inconsistent practices and unsafe behavior

• Clarify use of face coverings and other PPE:
  • Extend requirements to use face coverings as part of returning to work in office buildings
  • Employer requirement to provide, including for guests/visitors
  • If warranted, establish universal rules for a daily health questionnaire for all office workers

• Provide clear rules on whether and under what conditions a building owner or manager can deny access and the appropriate protocols to follow if needed

• Provide guidance on what to do when a person becomes sick at work
Key Issues for Government Cont.

Owner Liability
• Protect owners and managers from significant liability risks provided adherence to recommended public health guidance

Cleaning and Hygiene
• Provide guidance on proper cleaning and disinfection protocols to follow

Signage
• Provide uniform signage for consistency and clarity

Social Distancing
• Clarify social distance needed in certain settings

Construction
• Enable construction work in buildings to occur when tenants are not present through reasonable increases in the use of after hours variances