

# TIPS ON IMPROVING WORKPLACE SAFETY DURING COVID-19

Department of Accounting and General Services

Public Works Division

September 17, 2020

# COVID-19 History

- ▶ In late 2019, an outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus was first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China and has become commonly identified as COVID-19.
- ▶ On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern; and on January 31, 2020, the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a public health emergency for the United States.
- ▶ Governor Ige issued his initial Emergency Proclamation for COVID-19 on March 4, 2020. The Governor has issued subsequent emergency proclamations due to the continuing COVID-19 situation.
- ▶ Considering the evolving COVID-19 situation, protecting the health and welfare of our State employees, clients, visitors, and the greater community is our utmost concern.

# Purpose of this Document

- ▶ The purpose of this document is to provide low cost and simple tips that are easily implementable for offices and work places to limit the transmission of COVID-19.
- ▶ This document is suggestive and not intended to be an official and complete guideline.
- ▶ For official guidance on the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 see the websites and agencies that are listed at the end of this document.

# Workplace Preparations for COVID-19

- ▶ Purchase hand sanitizers, gloves, face shields, tissues, wipes, cleaners, digital touchless thermometer, signage, removable floor tape, motion detector, sneeze guards such as plexiglass, plastic sheeting, shower curtains, corrugated plastic, etc.
- ▶ Identify travel paths for visitors and identify options to control visitor travel path to minimize office impacts and to retain social distancing.
- ▶ Plan to limit walk-ins if necessary by pre-scheduling appointments. This will lessen the number of people in the waiting area and surroundings.
- ▶ Plan to assign a call-in number for visitors in the parking lot so that visitors entering the office can be controlled.
- ▶ Plan to identify one-way ingress and egress paths to limit shoulder-to-shoulder travel past each other.

# Implementing Workplace Safety

- ▶ Provide sanitizing and tissue stations with signage.
- ▶ Provide signage to educate occupants on the three **W**'s, including respiratory etiquette:
  - ▶ **W**ear protective face coverings.
  - ▶ **W**ash hands often.
  - ▶ **W**atch your social distancing.
- ▶ Provide signage sharing proper hygiene techniques (e.g. handwashing, sneezing/coughing, etc.).
- ▶ Provide signage reminders to workers to wear personal protective equipment when in the office and when close to others, practice social distancing in office areas, when taking the elevator, in meetings, during lunch break, etc. It may be necessary to stand farther apart if the other person is speaking louder than normal speech.
- ▶ Use removable tape to mark the floors to identify social distancing lines. Identify the six feet separation distance to regulate visitor travel flow.

# Implementing Workplace Safety

- ▶ Provide signage reminder to workers to wear a face shield with a mask when social distancing cannot be maintained, to avoid touching your face with unwashed hands, and avoid sharing items or touching common high-touch surfaces. If sharing is necessary, sanitize the shared items between uses and conduct frequent hand washing.
- ▶ Install physical barriers/sneeze guards/service window in the office entry area to create awareness of social distancing and to provide a barrier when six feet of distancing cannot be maintained.
- ▶ Establish daily standard operating procedures:
  - ▶ Conduct no-touch temperature checks before entering the workplace.
  - ▶ Conduct daily self-certifications for symptoms before entering the workplace.
  - ▶ Conduct cleaning of common touch area surfaces - tabletops, door knobs, handles, common tables, chairs, break and lunch areas, microwave, coffee maker, team rooms, entrances, refrigerator, etc. while using disposable gloves and cleaners.
  - ▶ Observe the designated travel path and path markings with 6 feet separations to avoid large groups and to limit exposure to other employees.

# Implementing Workplace Safety

- ▶ Establish measures to assist employees.
  - ▶ Use logs to record staff and visitor temperatures and office cleaning.
  - ▶ Adjusting/stagger workstation seating to enhance social distancing if areas of six feet separation do not exist.
  - ▶ Reduce the density of employees and/or increase spacing of furniture.
  - ▶ Implement the use of barriers or shields when/where six feet separation is not possible.
  - ▶ Conduct virtual meetings. If meetings must be in-person and there is no suitable meeting room, consider meeting outside of the office space while social distancing and wearing a mask and shield.
  - ▶ Avoid meetings or gatherings in areas with limited ventilation for long periods of time.

# Implementing Workplace Safety

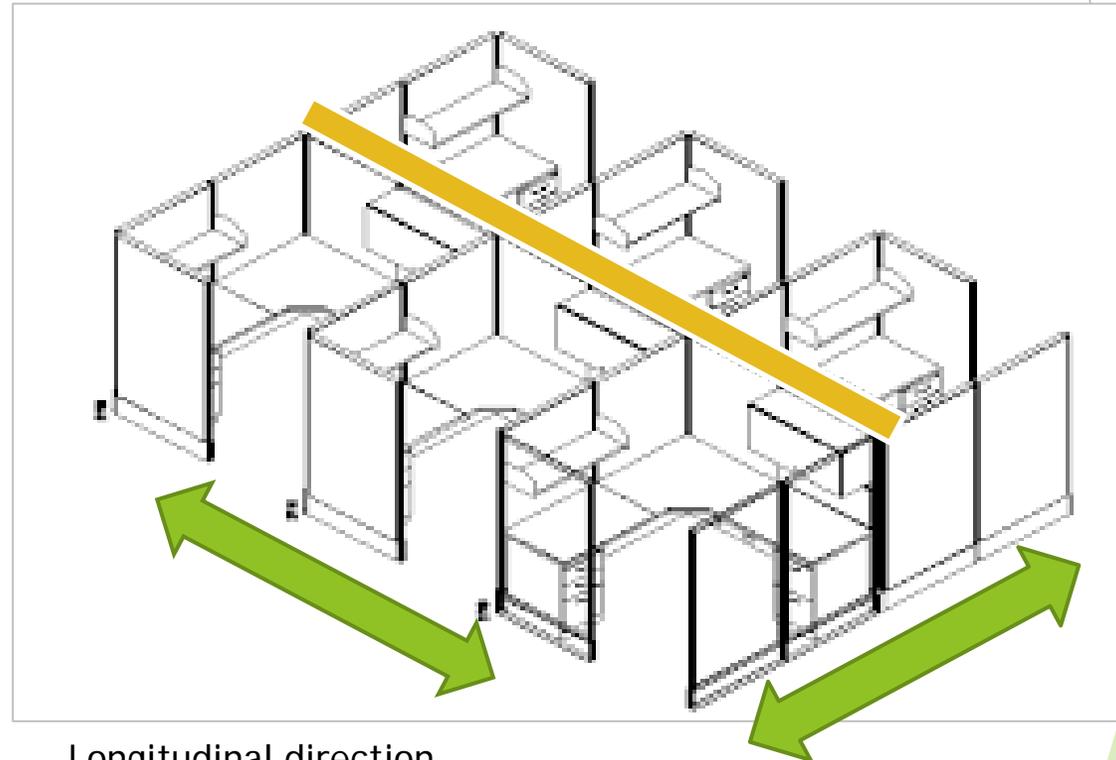
- ▶ Establish measures to assist employees. (continued)
  - ▶ Implement teleworking if feasible.
  - ▶ Perform self-audits to ensure staff and administration are following social distancing.
  - ▶ Encourage self-monitoring for symptoms.
  - ▶ Establish dedicated hours for high-risk customers.
  - ▶ Use communication boards or digital messaging to convey pre-shift meeting information.

# Implementing Workplace Safety

- ▶ Establish measures to assist employees. (continued)
  - ▶ Discontinue nonessential travel in lieu of virtual communications.
  - ▶ Install vertical barriers/dividers between work stations but keep 24 inch separation from the ceiling surface to allow for air conditioning circulation. Dividers could be plexiglass, corrugated plastic, plastic sheeting, etc. See examples. See the links at the end of this document for guidance on barrier heights.
  - ▶ Reduce the number of chairs and increase distance between tables in common areas such as break rooms.

# The Typical Individual Work Station

- ▶ Typical Modular Furniture Layout (as shown 6' x 6').
- ▶ Specific office layouts may not provide the recommended six feet social (physical) distance in all situations.
- ▶ For the layout shown, employees have the recommended six feet space for social (physical) distancing with their coworkers in the longitudinal direction but not in the transverse direction. In which case a higher vertical barrier/divider may be used. See examples.



Longitudinal direction spacing between seats may be okay.

Transverse direction spacing between seats may be less than six feet distance and may need a higher barrier/divider as shown.

# Tips to Improve the Office Layouts

- ▶ Offices with Loose Furniture:
  - ▶ Rearrange desks and tables to provide the recommended six feet social (physical) distance between employees. Since power and data outlets are fixed, provide employees with sufficient surge protector power strips, phone and data cables to accommodate the new office layout.
  - ▶ Install loose or add-on partitions/dividers between workspaces where necessary.



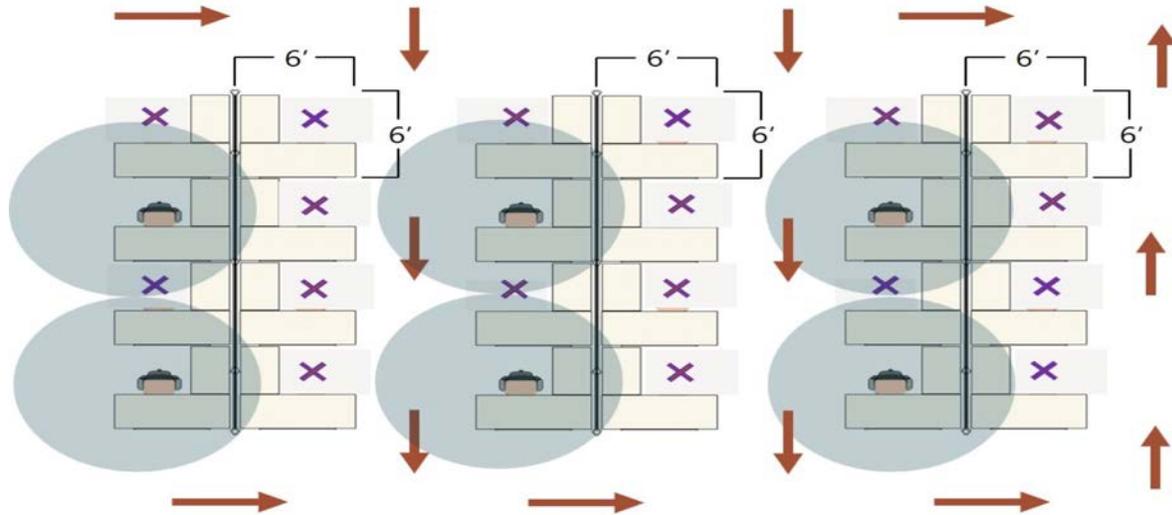
Translucent partition barrier placed between work stations.



Translucent partition barrier placed around work station.

# Tips to Improve the Office Layouts

## ► Offices with Loose or Modular Furniture:



- If some staff members are teleworking away from the office, consider physical staggering of in-office staff as modular furniture configuration may allow.
- Implement foot-traffic patterns within the office that limit face-to-face encounters, including one-way circulation strategies.
- For situations where there are workstations on both sides of a narrow pathway, consider removing workstations on one side of the pathway to allow traffic through with adequate physical distancing.

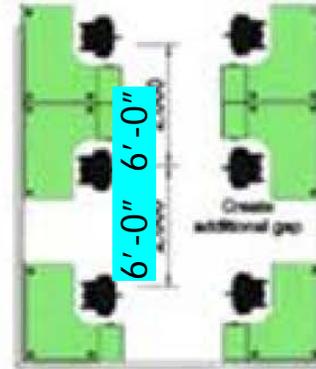
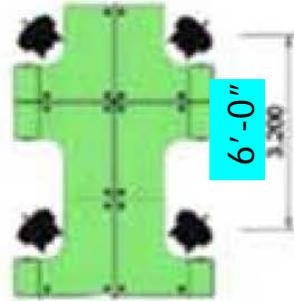
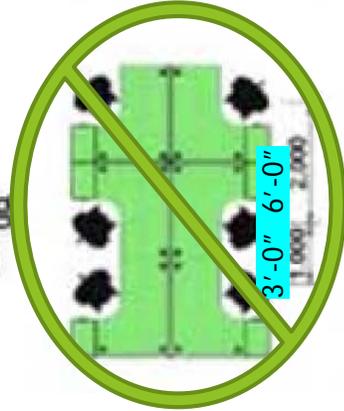
# Tips to Improve the Office Layouts

- ▶ Offices with Modular Furniture:
  - ▶ For the longer-term, consider permanent strategic reconfigurations that promote physical separations and social distancing.
  - ▶ Integrate stand-alone furniture items, such as file cabinets, bookcases, and work tables, together with modular furniture to enhance physical separations and social distancing.

# Office Implementation Examples

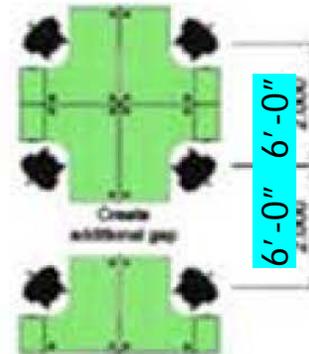
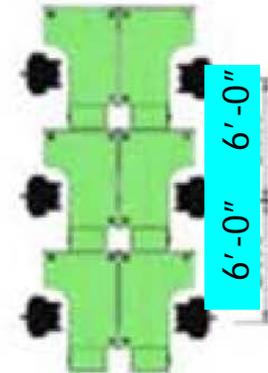
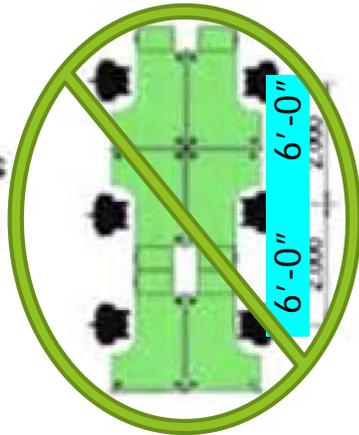
Remove alternate working positions where possible

Original design facing into corners



Face the walls

Move pedestals between desks

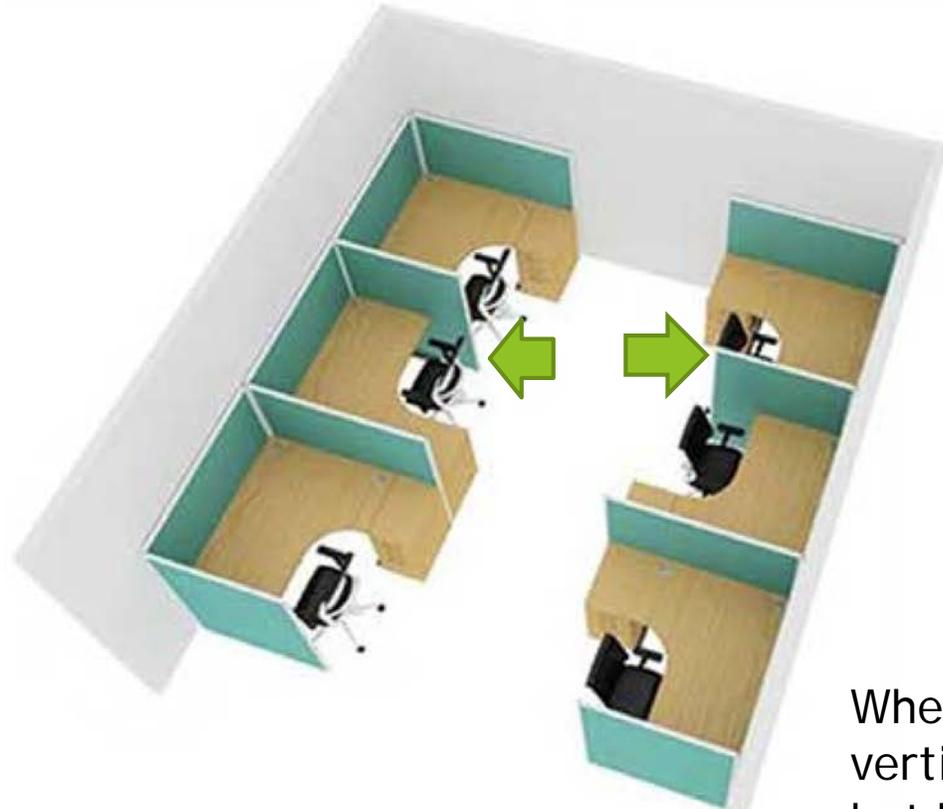


Split working positions

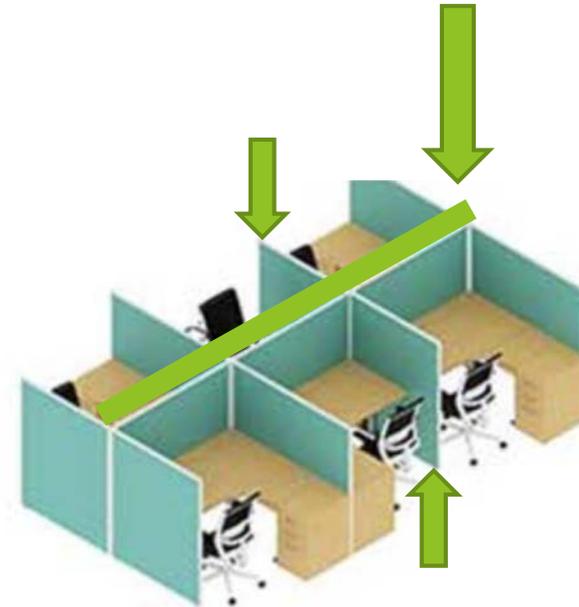
Create cubicles

When facing each other, introduce an additional high barrier

# Office Implementation Examples



Re-arrange work stations so they don't face each other. The addition of vertical barrier/dividers may be needed to separate the adjacent work stations.



When work stations are facing each other, install vertical barriers/dividers between work stations but keep 24 inch separation from the ceiling surface to allow for air conditioning circulation. Dividers could be plexiglass, corrugated plastic, plastic sheeting, etc. See examples. See the links at the end of this document for guidance on barrier heights.

# Reception Areas - Implementation Examples

Example of plexiglass sneeze barrier at cash register. Note required 24" gap between ceiling and top of barrier.



These photos show examples using stop/wait and arrow floor markings, clear vertical and horizontal barriers (but not within 24 inches of the ceiling), limiting of touch surfaces, and signage to direct ingress/egress. The entry door is left open to eliminate that high touch surface.

Conduct meetings outside of office areas if feasible.

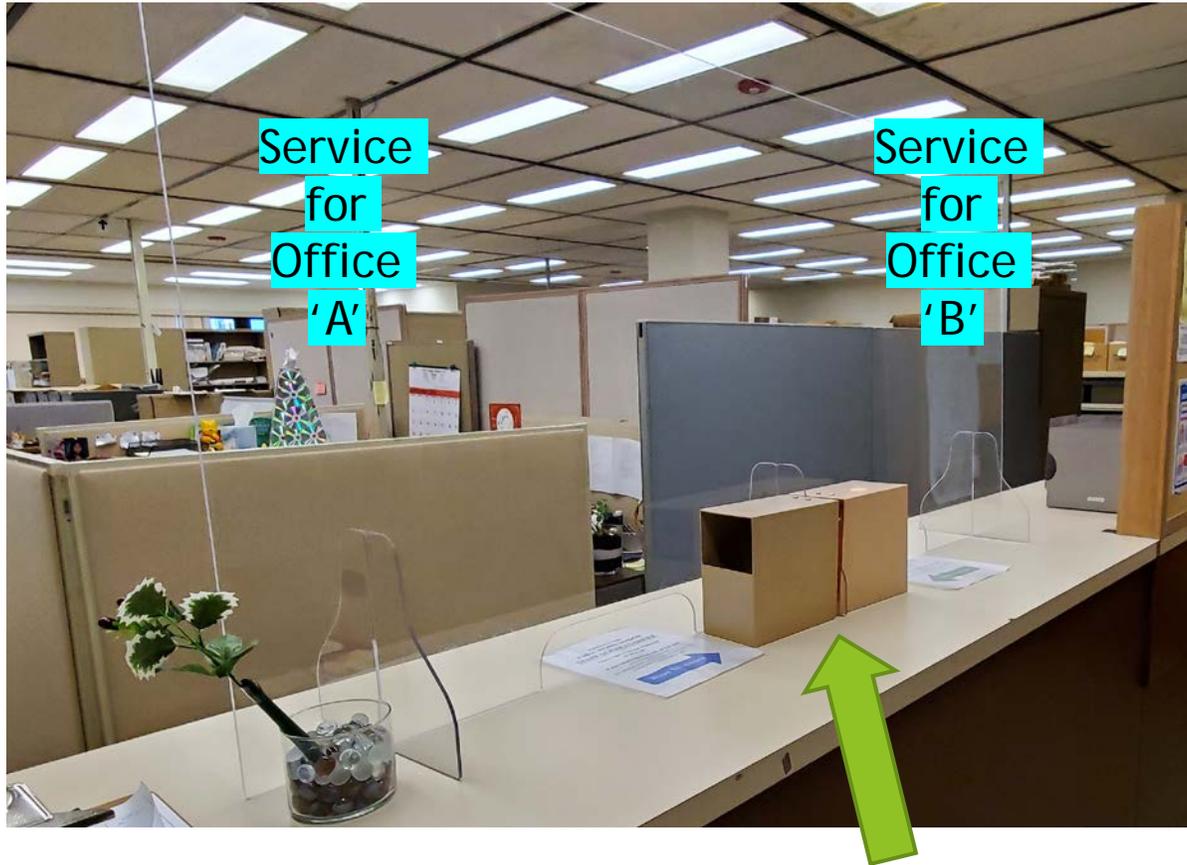
# Reception Area - Implementation Examples



Clear vertical barrier/divider at office service/reception areas.

Signage for employees and visitors.

# Reception Area -Implementation Example

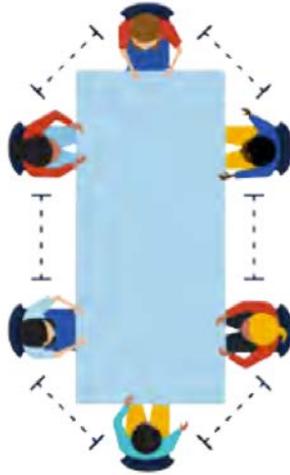
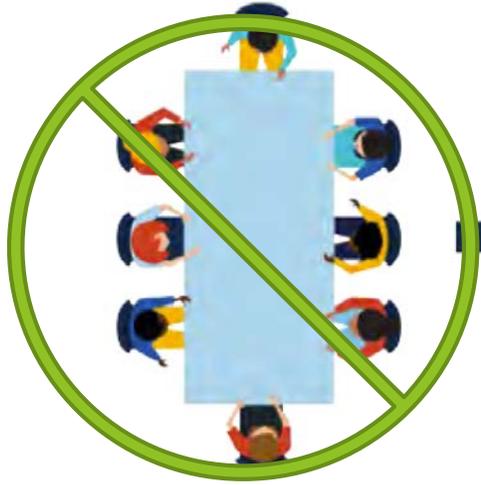


- ▶ This reception area was created with a plexiglass sneeze guard with two separate service windows for two offices in one room. The 'service bell' is handsfree and is activated by waving to the side of the center box (see arrow) for the office desired. The center box is made up of two separate units with each containing a motion detector and its own individual ring tone. The staff knows to respond when they hear their individual office ring tone.

# Restrooms

- ▶ Create distancing of stalls and urinals to eliminate side-by-side usage by locking out or taping closed every other stall/urinal.
- ▶ Favor no touch activation of faucets, soap dispensers, towel dispensers, and flush valves.
- ▶ Avoid the use of hand air dryers which may spread particulates in the air.
- ▶ Use a hospital grade disinfectant during a daily or nightly cleaning regimen. The disinfectant smell will alert users that the facility was recently cleaned, which may impart hygienic usage by the user.

# Common Areas, Conference/Meeting Room Examples



Reduce the number of chairs and increase distance between seats in conference/meeting rooms and common areas such as break rooms.

## Work Area - Examples



- ▶ Install vertical barriers/dividers between work stations but keep 24 inch separation from the ceiling surface to allow for air conditioning circulation.
- ▶ Here, a transparent vertical barrier (shower curtain) was used between work stations.
- ▶ Dividers could also be plexiglass, corrugated plastic, plastic sheeting, etc.
- ▶ See the links at the end of this document for guidance on barrier heights.

# For more information regarding COVID-19:

- ▶ General information on COVID-19 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
  - ▶ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- ▶ General information on COVID-19 with a local emphasis from the State of Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH).
  - ▶ <https://health.hawaii.gov/coronavirusdisease2019/>
- ▶ Occupational health and safety information related to COVID-19 from the United States Department of Labor, including its publication titled "Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19".
  - ▶ <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>
  - ▶ <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>
- ▶ General information and links related to COVID-19 from the World Health Organization (WHO).
  - ▶ <https://www.who.int/>

# For more information regarding COVID-19:

- ▶ Helpful links and information related to building environmental quality under COVID-19 from the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE).
  - ▶ <https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/resources>
- ▶ Publication titled “Help prevent the spread of COVID-19: Designing effective barriers” providing practical guidance of the use of physical protective barriers such as plexiglass and polycarbonate screens, by WorkSafe BC.
  - ▶ <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/covid-19-health-safety-designing-effective-barriers?lang=en>
- ▶ Publication titled “Guidance for Plexiglass Barriers in the Workplace” from the University of Washington’s Environmental Health and Safety Department.
  - ▶ <https://www.ehs.washington.edu/resource/guidance-plexiglass-barriers-workplace-updated-july-9-2020-984>
- ▶ Web page titled “The Do’s and Don’ts of Workspace Layouts” providing useful tips and examples on office cubicle usage and adaptations for COVID-19 preventative purposes, from the University of Florida’s Office of Human Resource Services.
  - ▶ <https://hr.ufl.edu/covid-19/cubicle-guidelines/>

Mahalo and Stay Safe!