

## Massachusetts' Sector Specific Workplace Safety Standards for Office Spaces Updated

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Governor Baker's administration updated Massachusetts' Sector Specific Workplace Specific Safety Standards for Office Spaces to Address COVID-19 (the "Standards"). While all employers operating office spaces are advised to review the complete Standards, key provisions are:

**Face coverings:** workers and visitors must wear face coverings at all times, except when in their own individual workspace and alone (or when it is unsafe for a worker/visitor to wear a face covering due to a medical condition or disability).

**Occupancy:** offices must limit occupancy to whichever is greater of: (a) 40% of the building's maximum permitted occupancy as documented in its occupancy permit; or (b) for buildings where no occupancy limit is on record, 8 persons per 1,000 square feet of accessible space. However, the guidance states that in any case, no enclosed space may exceed occupancy of 8 persons per 1,000 square feet.

**Social Distancing:** employers must ensure separation of 6' or more between individuals, unless doing so creates a safety hazard. Employers must close or reconfigure common spaces to allow 6' of physical distancing and physical partitions (at least 6' high) must be installed for areas that cannot be spaced out. Employers must also mark rooms and hallways to indicate 6' separation.

**Training:** employers must provide training to workers on up-to-date safety information and precautions, including: social distancing, hand

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washing, proper use of face coverings, self-screening at home, the importance of not coming to work if ill, when to seek medical attention if symptoms become severe, and which underlying health conditions may make individuals more susceptible to contracting and suffering from a severe case of the virus.

**Screening:** employer must screen workers at each shift by ensuring each of the following: (1) the worker is not experiencing any symptoms; (2) the worker has not had “close contact” with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19; and (3) the worker has not been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by a doctor or local public health official.

**Remote Work:** employers are encouraged to have workers continue to telework if feasible, and external meetings should be remote to reduce density in the office.

Violations may result in fines of \$500 per violation. Violations of capacity limits results in fines of \$500 for each person present over the applicable capacity limit.

In addition, the Standards provide that employers who operate office spaces are responsible for staying abreast of any updates to these requirements and adhering to all local, state, and federal requirements. If you have any questions about the application of the Standards, or whether different standards may apply to your operations, please do not hesitate to contact us.