



## Manufacturing Makes Virginia Safe: COVID-19 Back to Work Plan

Virginia's manufacturing sector and suppliers are part of the nation's essential critical infrastructure. Virginia's 6,750 [manufacturing facilities](#) employ over 238,645 dedicated and talented people. Thousands more businesses and people are also essential to the manufacturing supply chain. Together, Virginia's industrial supply-chain includes chemical, critical manufacturing, defense industrial base, energy, food, nuclear and commercial facilities that are essential critical infrastructure and committed to working safely through the COVID-19 health crisis.



Together, these companies and committed citizens have been working 24/7 to maintain economic activity in the face of an historic pandemic while also donating and making critical products such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for US healthcare workers to slow the spread of COVID-19 infections.

The "Manufacturing Makes Virginia Safe: COVID-19 Back to Work Plan" recognizes public health official COVID-19 guidelines. It recommends general employer safety guidelines that will allow for the economy to reopen in phases beginning in May 2020. It identifies industry best-practices that embrace sustainable strategies and protocols for the purposes of maintaining business continuity, employee safety, public confidence, and ensuring the continued reduction in COVID-19 infections; and do not require added government regulation.

Public safety and economic security are not mutually exclusive public policy goals. Prolonged economic disruption will likely result in additional health-related illness and diminish the Commonwealth's ability to effectively respond to the acute needs of all citizens directly and indirectly affected by the COVID-19 virus and its related public policies. A responsible plan for reopening the economy must be data driven, mitigate the risk of resurgence, protect the most vulnerable and prioritize readiness. **It is time to get Virginia back to work safely.**

# MFGmakesVAsafe:

## COVID-19 Back to Work Plan

This document is provided by the [Virginia Manufacturers Association](#) as a voluntary service and does not constitute legal or medical advice.

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### PUBLIC HEALTH MILESTONES & METRICS

[Forward Virginia](#) was announced by Governor Ralph Northam as a blueprint for easing public health restrictions. The plan provided for the following public health milestones and metrics consistent with the *U.S. Guidelines for Opening Up America Again* that would allow for a Phase 1 opening of the Virginia economy:

- ↓ Moving downward: Percentage of positive tests over 14 days
- ↓ Moving downward: Hospitalizations over 14 days
- ↔ Enough hospital beds & intensive care capacity
- ↑ Increasing & sustainable supply of PPE

Governor Northam also appointed a [COVID-19 Business Task Force](#) to provide advice and guidance to the Cabinet on a safe, responsible strategy for easing restrictions on businesses and individuals. It is expected that the task force will recommend General Employer Guidelines and rigorous Non-Essential Business Guidelines that will enable the opening of the economy. However, there has been no Phase II or Phase III metrics or milestones articulated to date.

**The VMA recommends General Employer Guidelines for consideration in Phase I of Forward Virginia.** The VMA also suggests that the proactive adoption of rigorous Non-Essential Business Guidelines may enable these employers to open immediately. All other business sectors should be encouraged to develop their own COVID-19 Industry Guidelines that are consistent with the General Employer Guidelines and mitigate the risk of resurgence.

However, it may be advisable to incentivize or encourage employers to engage front line supervisors and employees on how to apply the guidelines to optimize safety and workflow, and to attain full operations faster. Industrial workplaces vary greatly, hence, employers need to be creative to optimize safety. It may also be important to link these guidelines to a timeline rather than declining positive tests, hospitalizations, hospital beds and PPE supplies alone. **Businesses require certainty and prolonged cashflow impairment will result in increased unemployment, bankruptcies, slow economic recovery, and other healthcare impacts<sup>1</sup>.** Therefore, it is recommended that Phases 1-3 be clearly articulated with May, June, and July timelines.

## PHASE I - GENERAL EMPLOYER GUIDELINES (MAY 15, 2020)

Employers must exercise extreme diligence and enact strategies to minimize the economic impact to employees. Employers that require on-site work should monitor their workforce for COVID-19 symptoms. At a minimum, employers should also take the following precautions:

- Provide remote work accommodations for high-risk employees
- Allow employees (part-time & full-time) and volunteers to work remotely if possible
- Require symptom<sup>ii</sup> checking for employees/visitors/customers/vendors/contract workers
- Require face coverings and other PPE in settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Ensure that face coverings are available to employees
- Require 6-foot social distancing and minimize meetings to 10 or fewer participants while utilizing a [hierarchy of controls](#) and suitable technologies to minimize face-to-face interactions
- Require personal and industrial hygiene guideline utilization. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; after touching machinery or vehicles; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. [CDC's handwashing website](#) features more information about why and how to wash hands.
- Minimize face-to-face interactions including employees/visitors/customers/vendors and utilize physical barriers or social distancing redesign where possible (e.g. partitions, plexiglass shields)
- Eliminate unnecessary travel and cancel or postpone in-person meetings, conferences, workshops, and training sessions
- Avoid contact with people who are sick. Require employees to self-quarantine when returning from high-risk areas
- Require individuals returning to work from isolation or quarantine to be released by a health professional
- Require social distancing in break rooms and internal food service areas; Do not allow for self-service food stations unless the meal is prepackaged; Do not allow for refilling of any used beverage cups; Provide single-use cutlery
- Where distancing and hygiene guidelines cannot be followed in full, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate

**Implementation of these guidelines, coupled with specific and rigorous Non-Essential Business Guidelines, along with face coverings and enhanced hygiene by the general public, should enable all Virginia businesses to open in Phase I by May 15.**

## PHASE II – III GENERAL EMPLOYER GUIDELINES (JUNE 10 & JULY 1, 2020)

- The VMA recommends that the General Employer Guidelines that are expected in Phases 2-3 should be clearly articulated now and include, but not be limited to, the public health conditions that would allow for the removal or specific revision of travel, in-person meeting, and workplace or public gathering restrictions.
- The VMA recommends that any removal of business activity restrictions should also clearly articulate the decline in public health conditions that would necessitate a rescission of those decisions. For example, there is legitimate question as to whether the downward trend in positive tests should be equally weighted against hospitalizations or healthcare system capacity.

## CHALLENGES: PPE, TESTING, TRACING, EMERGENCY RESPONSE & CHILD CARE

- PPE – There is inadequate PPE in the market for employers and citizens. A substantial effort must be undertaken to provide face masks for every citizen of the Commonwealth in the next 30 days.
- Testing – There is inadequate information about and availability of COVID-19 testing kits and sites. Every employer should have access to rapid response testing for employees within 30 miles of their facility within the next 30 days.
- Tracing – There is inadequate training and direction for employers on how to conduct tracing of employees that have been in contact with an infected person. There is also inadequate information about record keeping, HIPAA liabilities and obligations, and government agency reporting requirements. Cloud-based training should be available to employers within the next 30 days.
- Emergency Response – Employers are unclear about the proper steps to take for handling an emergency situation where there is a large-scale exposure of a specific workforce to an infected individual or individuals. Every employer should have access to rapid response teams of public health officials within 30 miles of their facility within the next 30 days.
- Child Care – Until child-care facilities and schools can reopen under strict safety guidelines, it will be difficult to return all Virginians to work.

## INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY

Engage employees and front-line supervisors to achieve the best solutions. Encourage regulations that provide for flexibility and innovation. Encourage and incentivize innovative physical separation solutions, sanitation solutions, PPE utilization and screening technology. Specifically, the Commonwealth of Virginia (through its tax and procurement systems) should incentivize:

1. Manufacturing, product purchase and utilization of UV-C sanitation technology manufactured in the Commonwealth
2. Manufacturing, product purchase and utilization of hand sanitizer manufactured in the Commonwealth
3. Manufacturing, product purchase and utilization of physical seating/work area retrofits for offices and factories manufacturing in the Commonwealth
4. Manufacturing, product purchase and utilization of thermal imaging systems for temperature screening
5. Manufacturing, product purchase and utilization of PPE manufactured in the Commonwealth of Virginia

Further, Virginia's Universities should be challenged to produce public service technical guidance on the application of UV-C sanitation technology and the evaluation of cost-effective thermal imaging systems for temperature screening.

## MFG EMPLOYER GUIDELINES (VOLUNTARY)

- Follow “General Employer Guidelines”
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces regularly
- Engage the workforce in how to implement the guidelines to optimize safety and workflow. Train... train... train.
- Engage Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) and/or Human Resources (HR) departments or external contractors in symptom checking (e.g., to measure body temperatures at the facility's entrance) protocol
- Require PPE adequate for the specific workplace particularly where social distancing is difficult or impossible. Require refresher training on PPE use - engage employees and front-line supervisors to achieve the best solutions. Wear facemasks in situations where social distancing cannot be practiced and when in public. Reserve N95 masks for health care workers and essential personnel
- Require regular personal and industrial hygiene guidelines utilization (e.g., hand washing, coughing and sneezing etiquette, etc.)
- Strongly encourage employees to self-report if they feel symptoms or self-quarantine in case of credible suspicion of having experienced situations with high risk for infection
- Strictly insist on a release by a medical professional before self-quarantined employees or employees who had contracted the corona virus infection can return to work
- Engage everyone involved to achieve a sustainable infection free workplace - safety is everyone's responsibility

## WEAR FACE MASKS

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) now recommends the use of face masks or cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. The cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders.

This recommendation is made in addition to the current best practices for stopping the spread of COVID-19, and does not diminish the importance of frequent handwashing and social distancing. Stay safe!



## MFG EMPLOYER ACTION PLAN (VOLUNTARY)

### Employee Communication:

- Remind employees of the importance of their work and the company's role in supporting public health and safety during this time. Thank them and reward them for their dedication.
- Provide clear communication on company roles and expectations for continued work on-site or remote work.
  - Provide information on approved available digital tools for remote use and guidance to ensure connections and communications meet cybersecurity standards.
- Establish a point of contact for fielding employee inquiries or infection concerns, and a communication method or platform where news, resources and updates will be shared.
- Provide information on [how to identify the symptoms, conduct a risk assessment](#) and clear instructions on who that information should be reported to and how they should record that information and associated actions in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 infection.
  - **\*\*ALERT\*\* Information regarding an employee who tests positive for COVID-19 and their condition must be kept confidential and limited to personnel with a need to know.**
    - *The earliest an employee that has tested positive may return to work is 7 days after diagnosis and 3 days after symptoms have subsided.*
    - *If a family member of an employee tests positive, be aware of secondary quarantine regulations and practices.*
- Identify qualified staff available to cover absences.
- Assess and reinforce safety processes and procedures with increased inspections to ensure safety measures are not overlooked with increased absences.
- Update policies and training requirements for all cleaning staff, including cleaning contractor employees.
- Monitor company social media channels for any employee concerns or comments and redirect them to established communication channels.
- If layoffs are required, please provide employees with the [Information from Governor Northam's Office](#) on unemployment insurance benefits.

### Operations Risk Assessment and Mitigation Efforts:

- Identify areas where supply chain disruptions are expected, and redundancies should be added.
- Identify options for the movement of goods in case restrictions are placed on interstate/international logistics.
- Analyze projected cost increases and extended product lead times.
- Develop project/product delay communications to keep upstream/downstream supply-chain informed.

- Contact your insurance carriers to conduct a risk-assessment to determine if you have proper coverage or need to make changes to respond to employee reductions, business continuity issues, etc. For assistance, contact [VMA Insurance Services](#).
- Use available time to train and retrain workers especially on industrial hygiene and safety. Utilize online training and certification resources to maintain 6-foot separation. See the [Manufacturing Skills Institute](#) for available online safety and industrial hygiene training, certifications and to access their free learning management system.
- Use available time for maintenance and facility deep cleaning. For assistance with disposal of chemicals, solvents and petroleum-based products, see [VMA-Crystal Clean services](#).
- Check with your trade association for regulatory flexibility and/or deferrals before paying key taxes, license fees or filing specific reports.
- [Donate or contribute](#) to the Commonwealth’s critical product needs.

Media:

- Develop statement that includes justification for continued operations. Example draft statement:  
*“We have taken extraordinary measures to ensure the safety of our employees, products, facilities, suppliers, contractors and community. Our operations are essential to the health and safety of our Commonwealth and country. Our employees recognize the critical role that we play in the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. These are challenging times and our team is committed to the highest safety standards so that we can combat COVID-19 and ensure that manufacturing makes Virginia.”*
- Use social media platforms to share public information and rebuild public/employee confidence.
  - Engage your industry trade associations to share your own best-practices. See [VMA Facebook page](#).
- Have information readily available to share on:
  - How your operations are essential to human health and safety.
  - Health and safety measures in place.
  - Resources the company has made available to employees.
  - Actions to ensure social distancing, increased industrial hygiene and sanitation measures, 6-foot separation of workers, online learning, video conferencing, etc.

Local Leaders / First Responders:

- Identify a single point of contact from your company to communicate with locals.
- Provide regular updates on current operations and identify the best way to communicate future updates.
- Remind leaders why your business is essential.

- Ask that leaders keep you informed of any potential local ordinances or requirements that may affect operations.
- Create or engage your [Community Advisory Panel \(CAP\)](#).
- Call your Mayor, County Board Chairman, Delegate and Senator today. Explain your COVID-19 Action Plan.

**Resources:**

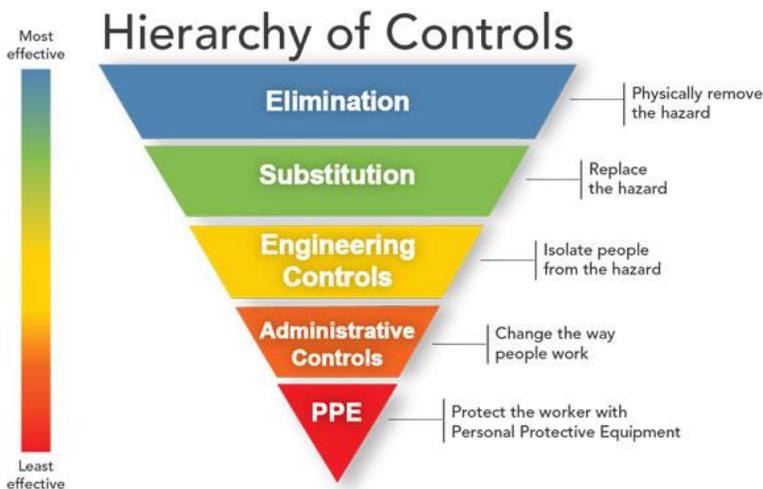
[McClung – VMA PPE Sourcing Center](#)

VMA [COVID-19 Resource Center](#) - Comprehensive guide to Federal, state and industry-best practice information on COVID-19.

*Disclaimer: The information provided herein does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal advice; instead, all information, content, and materials provided are for general informational purposes only and suggested guidance based on the best available information at the time. This model policy is provided by the [Virginia Manufacturers Association](#) as a voluntary service and should be reviewed by your own legal counsel. March 22, 2020.*

**HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS**

Controlling worker exposures to occupational hazards is best managed through a hierarchy of controls<sup>iii</sup>. The “elimination” control methods are potentially more effective and protective than “PPE” only. Following this hierarchy normally leads to the implementation of inherently safer systems and a substantially reduced risk of illness or injury.



## NATIONAL & STATE PLANS

- [US Guidelines for Opening Up America Again](#)
- [Forward Virginia](#)

## ADVISORY BOARD

[VMA Board of Directors](#)

VMA Safety Committee

VMA Government Affairs Council

VMA COVID-19 Advisory Panel – BAE Systems, BGB Technology, Bramlee Consulting LLC, Merck

## REFERENCES

- [VMA COVID-19 Resource Center](#)
- [VMA MFG Economic Impact Portal](#)
- [2019 MFG Competitiveness Index](#)
- Lear Corporation, [Safe Work Playbook](#), 2020
- [Utah Coronavirus Task Force](#)

**For more information on the Virginia Manufacturers Association visit our website at [www.vamanufacturers.com](http://www.vamanufacturers.com) or contact a team member at 804.643.7489.**

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4880023/>

<sup>ii</sup> Symptoms include fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or above, cough, trouble breathing, sore throat, sudden change in taste or smell, muscle aches or pains

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/hierarchy/default.html>