

Our Take: Workplace Health in the Post-COVID-19 Era

By Corporate Synergies
April 21, 2020



COVID-19 has thrown a wrench in the way employees do their jobs. According to a recent report by

MIT, an estimated 34% of Americans now work from home.¹ That accounts for nearly every employee whose job allows them to work remotely. As the federal and state governments begin to move toward reopening the economy, there is an intense focus on workplace health.

What could that mean for the future of work? For some office workers, they may never return to a traditional space. For others, their workplace won't be what they remember, as contact-free and antibacterial measures are taken to protect them.²

For some of us nearing Day 40 of working from home as a measure of social distancing, an unfamiliar feeling is washing over: we miss our desks, that temperamental copying machine and even so-so office coffee. But getting back into the groove takes a lot of thought behind the scenes.

As well-justified social distancing recommendations are amended or eventually lifted, workplace health is the focus.

The COVID-19 crisis will force swift and permanent changes in workplace health, policies and culture. Architects will be looking for new ways to design commercial spaces with an eye toward minimizing

germ spread, and work-from-home policies will be a top priority in contract negotiations.

Changes could also manifest in existing structures, like reorganizing desks and other workstations to create a safe social distance in an open layout. In offices, factories, restaurants and retail settings, the focus on workplace health could include "cleaning stations" with disinfectants and personal hygiene products. Maybe it's time to replace the building's front door with a touch-free, automatic slider.



The U.S. Department of Labor has resources to help workers and employers, including the [OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#) and a [COVID-19 Webpage](#) with infection prevention information specifically for employers and workers.

With the rapid shift to [telehealth as a COVID-19 triage tool](#), employers may consider adding this service to their health and welfare benefits program permanently. Work policies may also adjust to allow a more permanent accommodation to work from home for those employees whose jobs would allow them to do so.

The reverberations from the novel coronavirus pandemic will be felt for years to come, and workplace health will continue to take center stage. ■

¹[MIT](#), "COVID-19 and Remote Work: An Early Look at U.S. Data"

²[Vox](#), "This is the End of the Office as We Know It"

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