

Edging up

COVID-19 updates and resources for employers

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has prompted several legislative changes and new laws impacting key areas in our industry. Below is a summary of recent state and federal updates, and helpful information related to disability and leave, unemployment, workers' compensation, liability, compliance, ergonomics and getting back to business.

DISABILITY AND LEAVE

Many states have expanded provisions in their disability and leave programs to accommodate issues related to COVID-19, including California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island and Washington. For the latest information and expert insight on all of the updates, see the Sedgwick blog article, [States respond to the coronavirus: Latest disability and leave expansions](#), by Bryon Bass, senior vice president, disability and absence management at Sedgwick. We have also created a summary of these changes in our [Coronavirus statutory state chart](#).

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

The recent influx in unemployment claims, changes in work search requirements and many other related issues have introduced new challenges for employers. In March, the federal government enacted two new laws that seek to provide temporary relief for workers affected by COVID-19 by easing eligibility requirements and providing additional income for longer periods of time to more individuals than regular unemployment compensation law. The new laws include the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. For more details on these changes and other helpful information for employers, see our [COVID-19 impact on unemployment](#) summary.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND LIABILITY

We continue to monitor legislative changes impacting a wide range of issues in the workers' compensation and liability claims industries. For updates that are specifically related to COVID-19, please see the following documents on our website:

- [Workers' compensation reference guide on COVID-19 compensability by state](#)
- [State agency COVID-19 related actions impacting workers' compensation](#)
- [State agency COVID-19 related actions impacting liability](#)

OSHA COMPLIANCE

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) provides specific recordkeeping requirements for cases involving exposure to illnesses in workplace. The factors below offer guidance to help employers determine if the case is recordable. For more details, see our [coronavirus update on OSHA recordkeeping](#).

- If an employee develops COVID-19 as a result of a workplace exposure, the case is recordable and should be entered on the OSHA 300 log.
- A case is not recordable if an employer suspects possible exposure to employees and takes them off work. The case only becomes recordable if the worker develops the illness, and the illness can reasonably be traced to an exposure at work.

ERGONOMICS

With more people working from home for the first time, it is important to ensure that their work stations are set up properly. Several aspects of our work environment can have a direct impact on safety and productivity. For example, the monitor and keyboard should be positioned properly to ensure a healthy posture. Other things that may need adjusted include the height of the chair and the desk or work surface being used. In a recent blog article, [Working from home safely and effectively](#), Lisa Orr, senior human factors consultant at Sedgwick, shares insights on setting up your workspace and tips on productivity and ergonomics.

GETTING BACK TO BUSINESS

While every organization's needs are different, and may vary widely based on specific circumstances and the nature of the business, each must find the right path forward as COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed. Businesses will need to create and maintain a safe work environment, use best practices based on public health and safety guidelines, and ensure they are ready to resume operations when the time is right.

Here are three key questions for organizations to answer as they prepare to get back to business:

1. When it comes to cleaning and compliance, can we be certain our facilities are ready?

- Perform site safety inspections prior to reopening to ensure buildings are set up properly and equipment is in good working order.
- Develop business-specific cleaning and disinfection protocols.
- Clean buildings and contents in accordance with CDC guidelines.

- Complete worksite ergonomic evaluations for preventative care and virtual ergonomic inspections for work from home employees.
- Walk through the physical and administrative controls necessary to get back to business.

2. How are we planning to care for the safety and well-being of our employees and customers?

- Perform temperature screenings and provide clinical support to protect your employees.
- Provide fit-for-work programs for those employees who have been out of their typical routines and may be deconditioned, both physically and psychologically.
- Offer clinical consultations and access to trained nurses who can provide recommendations and direction for employees who have been exposed to COVID-19, or those who fear they have been exposed and need to know where to seek medical care.

- Connect employees who have had to postpone non-urgent surgeries with experienced and trained surgery nurses who can provide prehabilitation activities to ensure quality outcomes.

3. Do we have a plan in place to address continuity and claims challenges?

- Consider workplace contact tracing to help isolate any incidents and contain further spread of the virus.
- Develop a centralized, consistent process for managing unemployment claims, analyze unemployment tax liability, manage tax accounts, audit charges, and uncover possible savings.
- Stay on top of tracking and compliance issues as federal, state and municipal disability and leave programs adapt in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

You can hear our expanded back to business conversation as part of Sedgwick's virtual RIMS week [here](#), and learn more about Sedgwick's back to business initiatives [here](#).