



Good Afternoon,

This week's FAQs focus on a variety of pertinent topics related to COVID-19 including: preparing for the reopening of your workplace, actions taken by the Tennessee Unemployment Commission to make the weekly certification process easier for your employees, updates on the PPP loans and resources available to help your employees with the COVID-19 related stressors.

Q: How should we prepare the workplace as cities and states begin to reopen?

A: There are several considerations as you prepare to open your workplace, some of which are going to be dependent on the industry that you are in and your geographical location(s). Preparing in advance as much as you can and gaining input from others on your team are going to be key in your readiness. Where it makes sense, consider forming a task force to help you work through the process of how you will open. As a starting point, we have identified some factors to consider and sources for additional information:

- Review industry specific guidelines – refer to CDC guidelines, trade association guidance, and other industry-specific resources for which you have access.
- Review reopening guidelines from the city government(s) where your company is located. The focus should be on what the city government regulations are versus the state government as the regional specific requirements can vary within the state.
- If you have a landlord, contact them to find out what they are doing to mitigate risks in the building and incorporate those guidelines in your plans.
- Review OSHA guidelines. Baker Donelson Law Firm has put together an OSHA Classification At-A-Glance Chart that has helpful information as you are making your preparations. Here is the link:
https://www.bakerdonelson.com/webfiles/Publications/OSHA_Classification_Protection_04_17_2020.pdf.
- In addition, consider these basic infection prevention measures provided by OSHA:
 - Frequent and thorough hand washing by employees, customers, and worksite visitors (if soap and running water are not available, provide hand wipes containing at least 60 percent alcohol)
 - Encourage sick or symptomatic employees to stay home
 - Provide customers and the general public with tissues and no-touch trash receptacles
 - Establish flexible worksites and/or flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts) to increase physical distance among employees and others
 - Discourage employees from using others' phones, desks, offices, tools, and other equipment, and maintaining regular and routine cleaning and disinfecting with EPA-approved products.
- Consider signage in the workplace, especially in common area, to provide direction/expectations to employees, customers, and guests. Examples include putting markings in six feet (or more) increments in meeting spaces, detailing protocols to be followed when using common equipment such as copiers, coffee makers and microwave ovens and providing suggested “walking paths” in high-traffic areas.

As you are working through your plan, consider all actions that can be taken to help minimize risk of exposure for your employees and give careful consideration to what you can require versus encourage.

For example, if federal agencies or local government are not requiring your employees to use facemasks, you are not able to require it as an employer, but you can certainly encourage employees to wear them.

Q: Why are so many people having challenges completing their weekly unemployment certifications in Tennessee?

A: The number of Tennesseans applying for unemployment benefits over the last few weeks has put an unprecedented demand on the state's systems. Beginning Sunday, April 19, the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development moved to a staggered schedule for unemployment claimants completing their weekly certifications. Claimants now have access to complete their weekly certifications according to the last digit of their social security number.

The schedule is:

- Sunday - social security numbers ending in 0, 1, 2 and 3.
- Monday - social security numbers ending in 4, 5 and 6.
- Tuesday - social security numbers ending in 7, 8 and 9.
- Wednesday through Saturday - all numbers.

If the claimant certifies and they are accessing the system on the correct day, it will allow them to proceed. If it is not the claimant's scheduled day, the system will not let them certify. If a claimant misses their scheduled day, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday are open certification days for any social security number. Claimants must certify each week to ensure eligibility for benefit payments and to avoid the potential for overpayment.

The contact information for the Tennessee Unemployment Office is: 844-224-5818 or www.jobs4tn.gov.

Please consider sharing this information with your impacted employees.

Q: My company tried to apply for a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan, but we were told the funds for that program had run out – now what?

A: Late yesterday, the U.S. Senate passed a new coronavirus relief bill that will add \$300 billion to replenish the PPP fund, allowing more small businesses to receive loans. The House of Representatives will now consider the bill and if it passes, it will go to the President for signature.

The Employee Retention Credit under the CARES Act is a second option for financial relief for those employers that do not receive a PPP loan. More information on the Credit can be found at: <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/faqs-employee-retention-credit-under-the-cares-act>

Q: Are there any employee assistance program offerings that may benefit my employees during this time?

A: Lincoln Financial, the provider of our Employee Assistance Program for the PEO, put together a flyer that has links to information that can be helpful to your employees in managing COVID-19 related stress. The flyer is attached, and you are welcome to share the links with your employees.

For those clients in our PEO, the flyer also contains the contact information for **Employee Connect** which is available for use by all your employees.