

Phase II guidelines for Offices

I. Summary of Phase II operations

In response to COVID-19, Governor Raimondo issued executive orders requiring that all those who could work from home, including business service providers, work from home. Beginning in Phase II, employers may begin to permit limited numbers of workers who have been working remotely to return to on-site work.

Working from home is still strongly encouraged when possible. For office-based businesses that were closed or operated with a minimal workforce on-site through Phase I, up to 33% of workers (or up to 15 staff members, whichever is greater) may work on site at the same time as long as physical distancing standards described below can be maintained. This guidance also applies to offices that were closed or operated with a minimal workforce on-site through Phase I within non-office-based businesses. For any workplace where more than 33% of employees has been working on site during Phase I, the employer is not required to reduce the number of staff on site and may return a limited number of employees to on-site work.

Offices are required to review and follow the Rhode Island general business guidance posted on www.reopeningri.com. Please note that the general business/organization guidance is the main source of guidance for the office setting. If you have questions about this guidance (including how it applies to or should be interpreted by your organization), please contact DBR via the online form at <https://dbr.ri.gov/questioncomplaints/> or at 401.462.9500.

II. Physical space and occupancy limits

As employers begin to phase in a gradual return to the office setting, RI General Business Guidelines should be followed for the health and safety of the workforce. To maintain 6 feet of physical distancing in the workplace, employers must:

- Separate desks and workstations to ensure 6 feet of physical distancing (or, as necessary, use every other or every third workstation to maintain 6 feet of physical distance between stations). Side-by-side cubicles may be utilized as long as the distance measured chair-to-chair allows for proper social distancing to be established.
- Add partitions to open floor plans when needed. Physical, nonporous barriers (e.g. plexiglass) of an appropriate height (tall enough to fully separate seated workers) can be installed between workstations as an alternative to 6 feet of physical distance (only where such distance cannot otherwise be obtained).
- Permit no more than 15 individuals per conference room and ensure 6 feet of physical distancing within a conference room; however, video-conferencing should be utilized both on and off premises to the furthest extent possible to accommodate social distancing measures.
- Regulate cafeterias or dining rooms in accordance with the rules, regulations and guidance issued for restaurants. Guidance for restaurant settings can be found [here](#).

Employers may also consider implementing the following practices in areas where cubicles are utilized to accommodate social distancing measures:

- Discourage employees from entering another employee's cubicle space.

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- Encourage employees to install an inbox outside of their cubicle where documents and mail can be left rather than within their workspace.
- Discourage shared workspaces. If shared workspaces must remain in place, provide cleaning products and require equipment to be disinfected both before and after use. This includes shared mechanical equipment/machines and vehicles.
- Provide hand sanitizer bottles at workstations.

III. Other considerations

The use of ropes or signage to delineate traffic patterns in the office is recommended; consider one-way circulation routes. Employers should also consider staggering lunch and break times to reduce density.

Limit visitors and service providers on site. Services that can be provided by phone or remotely should be provided in that manner.

Maintain physical distancing while using elevators. Consider passenger limits and safe distances by using floor markers on elevator carriage floor. Consider providing hand sanitizer at elevator entrances/exits or other creative solutions to minimize contact with commonly touched surfaces.