

Phase III guidelines for Offices

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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 401.889.5550.

I. Summary of Phase III operations

In Phase III, employers may continue allowing 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 Phase III, office-based businesses are permitted to operate with up to 66% of workers on site at the same time as long as physical distancing standards described below can be maintained. For any workplace where more than 66% of employees have been working on site during Phase II, 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.

II. Physical space and occupancy limits

Physical distance. It is required to maintain six feet of physical distance between people in the workplace. Physical, nonporous barriers (e.g. plexiglass) of an appropriate height (tall enough to fully separate workers) can be installed between workstations as an alternative to six feet of physical distance (only where such distance cannot otherwise be obtained).

Desks and workstations. Options for accommodating physical distance include:

- Separating desks and workstations to ensure six feet of physical distancing.
- Using every other or every third workstation to maintain six 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 physical distancing to be established.
- Partitions that exceed the individuals' height may also be installed when workstations cannot be moved.

Meeting and conference rooms. Limit conference room occupancy so that six feet of physical distancing can be maintained. It is recommended to limit the number and size of in-person meetings (e.g. by using video-conferencing if on or off premises).

Cafeterias and dining rooms should operate in accordance with the rules, regulations, and guidance issued for restaurants. Guidance for restaurant settings can be found [here](#).

Common areas, including walkways, and elevators: Maintain physical distancing while using elevators. Consider passenger limits and safe distances by using floor markers on elevator carriage floors. Consider providing hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol at elevator entrances/exits or other creative solutions to minimize contact with commonly touched surfaces. The use of ropes or signage to delineate traffic patterns in the office is recommended; consider one-way circulation routes.

Employee schedules and interactions: Employers are recommended to take additional measures to reduce the number of people that employees come into contact with. Examples of such measures

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include:

- Stagger arrival, lunch, and break times to reduce bottlenecks and the number of people in common areas at one time.
- Assign working areas for individuals to limit movement throughout the space.
- When possible, it is recommended to build consistent pods or teams that work in shifts.
- Discourage employees from entering another employee's office, workspace, or cubicle.
- Encourage employees to use inboxes outside of their workspace where documents and mail can be left rather than having people enter their workspace.

III. Other considerations

Face coverings: It is required to wear a face covering in any entry, exit, and common areas of the business, including, but not limited to hallways, bathrooms, breakrooms, elevators, and stairways.

Sanitization. High-touch surfaces and shared objects must be cleaned in accordance with the general business and organization guidance document available at: www.reopeningri.com. Limiting mutual contact on equipment is strongly recommended. Additional measures include:

- Limiting the use of shared workspaces and equipment. If shared workspaces must remain in place, provide cleaning products and require equipment to be disinfected both before and after use. This includes shared office equipment like copy machines and vehicles.
- Providing hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol at workstations and near commonly-touched or shared surfaces/objects.
- Using no-touch waste receptacles when possible.

Ventilation: Taking steps to increase fresh air ventilation in the building is recommended, such as:

- Opening windows and doors;
- Increasing the total airflow supply and the percentage of outdoor air introduced by HVAC systems; and
- Disabling demand-control ventilation (DCV) controls that may reduce air supply based on temperature or occupancy.

Screening: Although screening is required of all establishments and establishments have options for conducting such screenings, workplaces are encouraged to conduct such screenings for employees verbally or virtually (e.g. via app) before they enter the work site. A screening tool is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) on reopeningri.com.

Visitors and service providers: Limit visitors and service providers on site. Services that can be provided by phone or remotely should be provided in that manner. Where feasible, deliveries should be conducted via drop-off or facilitated outside of buildings. Any visitors, service providers, or other entrants must be screened for symptoms and risk factors (e.g. travel) prior to entering the building.

Travel: It is recommended that workers not travel together to and from work unless they reside in the same household. If traveling together is unavoidable, face coverings should be worn when inside the vehicle and individuals should be spaced as much as possible. If employees commute to work using public transportation or ride sharing, consider offering incentives to promote forms of commuting that minimize close contact with others (e.g. biking), ask employees to follow CDC and RIDOH guidance on how to protect yourself when using transportation, and shift hours so employees may commute during less busy times.