COVID-19 will bring about a fundamental shift in the business world, long lasting if not permanent. Companies will need to adopt newer ways of working to create safe and hygienic work environments for employees.

While the lockdown continues, plans are afoot for a calibrated reopening of select sectors, apart from those that are operational by virtue of being essential services. To ensure business continuity and employee well-being, it is time now for businesses to conduct a reality check on their preparedness and introduce additional measures for workplace health and safety.

Potential challenges for businesses due to the pandemic

Worker (re)deployment
- Engaging with the migrant workforce and securing their travel back to the city (or workplaces)
- Containing exposure to the virus and controlling its spread during travel
- Checking for infection and regular monitoring of workers once they return

Workplace safety management procedures
- Organising production with limited / staggered workforce, factoring in physical distancing norms
- Ensuring protocols are maintained for entry and exit, work areas, common areas and facility management
- Organising resources and manpower to deal with an emergency situation

Ensuring safe accommodation facilities
- Assessing and planning for accommodation facilities from a physical distancing perspective
- Standardising health and safety conditions in accommodations
- Provisioning for essential and medical services

Transport and logistics
- Assessing adequacy / availability of modes of transport linked with the phase-wise lifting of lockdown and checking financial feasibility of the same
- Mapping risks related to transport hotspots and gateways
- Monitoring safe transport of T&L workforce and logistic conditions

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The next steps for businesses to prepare themselves

**Health, Safety and Environment management – prior to resuming operations**

**Assessing workplace risk and preparedness**
- Earmarking the facility hotspots (spaces with higher risks of contamination)
- Disinfecting the entire facility
- Revised inventory assessment for PPE stock management

**Addressing infrastructure needs**
- Providing adequate infrastructure requirements such as physical barricading, air filters, ventilation management system and sanitisation platforms

**Revising HR policies**
- Developing new flexible work policies such as those related to leave, emergency care and insurance

**Health, Safety and Environment management – after resuming operations**

**Entry and exit control**
- Thermal screening
- Entrance sanitisation station

**Workplace safety**
- Shift-wise shop floor sanitisation
- Restriction on unnecessary movement of workers in the premises
- Common area management
- Safe disposal of used PPE to prevent contamination

**COVID-19 emergency response plan**
- Developing an emergency response plan for all worksites and potential exposure scenarios
- Prepare core response team to coordinate activities

**Training and monitoring**
- Training of housekeeping, security and service staff on usage of necessary PPE, sanitisation equipment and hygiene behaviours (respiratory hygiene, hand-washing, physical distancing norms and more)

Any questions? Our Occupational Health and Safety Experts will be happy to answer.

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