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Washington State Coronavirus Response (COVID-19)

Economic Resiliency Team - Joint Information Center, Camp Murray

SEPT. 23, 2020

The Business and Workers update is a weekly newsletter providing news and information to help businesses and workers navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. The information is compiled by the state Economic Resiliency Team (ERT), part of the Joint Information Center.

What should Washington workers and employers know this week?

Sept. 23, 2020

What you need to know about...

Safe Start business activity guidance updates

Allowable activities expanded for "Personal Services" business category

"[Personal Service Provider](#)" guidance includes salons, cosmetologists, estheticians, tattoo artists, and other similar categories. A [recent revision](#) now permits some close-contact services (such as facials and beard trimmings)

provided the worker wears an **N95 respirator***. An FDA-approved surgical mask combined with a face shield will suffice as long as the provider has N95 respirators on backorder, but are not immediately accessible.

*Refer to the N95 segment below for more information

Wedding and funeral receptions now permitted, with limitations.

Receptions are now permitted in Phases 2 and 3 thanks to an expansion of permissible activity for weddings and funerals. Capacity, excluding staff and vendors, is limited to 30 people or 25% of the capacity of the space, whichever is less. Receptions are limited to three hours in length and alcohol may not be sold or consumed later than 10 p.m.

Agritourism expanded in Modified Phase 1 counties

Agritourism activity in Modified Phase 1 counties has been expanded to permit outdoor mazes, animal viewing, hayrides and other common seasonal activities.

New guidance offered for miscellaneous venues

Governor Jay Inslee issued guidance for miscellaneous venues, including convention/conference centers, hotel meeting spaces and other similar venues. The guidance allows business meetings and similar activities to occur away from business premises and with additional attendees, so long as all requirements are met.

Questions about the Safe Start Plan?

Ask questions about workplace safety, Safe Start phases, relief programs, paid sick leave, unemployment and more. Our Business Response Center is standing by to respond.

[Submit your question here.](#)

What you need to know about...

N95 respirators and related documentation

Employers must enact a respiratory protection program when workers require respirators.

Fit testing is just one element of worker respiratory protection. [Chapter 296-842](#) of the Washington Administrative Code details an employer's obligations when workers encounter hazards that require respirator use.

Employer responsibilities include designation of an administrator, regulating voluntary respirator use, maintenance of a written program, record-keeping, medical evaluation, fit testing and training. Each is a legal requirement.

Workers must be medically cleared and fit-tested to wear N95 respirators.

A respirator is a critical defense against respiratory hazards, including COVID-19. A respirator works by filtering air inhaled by its wearer. This filtration is only effective if the seal is complete – if contaminants get *around* the filter, the wearer is at risk.

Fit testing is an important and legally-required precaution for workers that require respirators. Fit testing ensures that the respirator properly seals against the wearer's face, preventing contaminants from sneaking around the filter.

N95 is required when L&I standards indicate high risk of exposure

This [L&I document](#) is the legal standard for respiratory protection selection during the pandemic. For “high-risk” and “extremely high-risk” work, fit-tested and rated respiratory protection is required. See L&I's “[Which mask for which task](#)”

The FDA has approved some KN95 models for use in high-risk work settings

KN95 masks are generally more available and affordable than N95 masks, at the moment. The FDA has issued [emergency use authorizations](#) for some models of KN95 masks, permitting their use in contexts where NIOSH-approved N95 respirators are required. Check the FDA EUA page to see if a KN95 model of interest has received EUA. If so, that model may be used “high-risk” or “extremely high-risk” work settings

What you need to know about...

Unemployment

Lost Wages Assistance program payments to arrive this week

[Lost Wages Assistance program](#) payments are now processing - funds should start to reach eligible claimants this week. Payments will be retroactive for all weeks for which the claimant met eligibility requirements. Refer to the [Employment Security Department](#) website for details.

Job search requirements to remain suspended through Oct. 1

The job search requirement of unemployment claimants remains suspended through Oct. 1. The soonest that unemployment claimants must actively seek work is Oct. 4. Claimants may continue to answer “no” to the job search question on weekly claims until the suspension is lifted. Learn more on the [job search requirements](#) page.

What you need to know about...

Economic recovery data

Economic Recovery Dashboard published by Department of Commerce

A new [data dashboard](#) tracks employment, taxable sales and other metrics to illustrate economic recovery following turbulent spring and summer. The dashboard demonstrates the broad effects of the pandemic. Employment and taxable sales remain substantially depressed over the prior year.

Washington's economy increased by 19,800 jobs in August, unemployment rate decreased to 8.5%

The Employment Security Department's recent [Monthly Employment Report](#) observed some progress towards recovery. A [more detailed report](#) cites that employment increased in ten major industries, contracted in two and was unchanged in one in August.

What you need to know about...

Small business and nonprofit resources, information

Spanish small business webinars provide up-to-date info, answer live questions

A monthly [Spanish language webinar series](#) presents information specific to Washington small businesses. The series features brief presentations from state and federal partners and open-mic Q&A time. Topics include unemployment insurance, returning employees to work, PPP and EIDL loans, workplace safety, face covering requirements and other topics important to employers. The next webinar will be held on [Sept. 30 at 6:30 p.m.](#)

Small business relief funding may be available in your community.

Check with your [Associate Development Organization](#) to learn about local relief programs.

Funding available to support community youth programming

Approximately [\\$9 million](#) in federal CARES Act funding is available to support nonprofit youth programs serving school-age kids and young adults. The Washington State Department of Commerce will partner with School's Out Washington to distribute the funds. Application instructions may be found [at this link](#). The program is also seeking peer grant reviewers - those interested should complete [this form](#).

Stress and anxiety are normal. Talk it out!

The pandemic has exacted a heavy toll on our mental health. It's normal to feel anxiety and it's healthy to talk it out. Try calling *Washington Listens* - it's a non-clinical support line staffed by specialists ready to lend an ear. Call 1 (833) 681-0211.



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