A rolling wave of business closures across the United States has forced manufacturers to respond in agile ways. Many essential businesses have continued to operate as usual on their production floor but have often sent their office employees to work from home. As states and other municipalities discuss their plans to reopen, there are many considerations to make about if and when to return the full workforce to a physical facility.

These are some considerations that manufacturers shared in recent NAM and MLC webinars as they navigate the path forward. Note that this is not guidance from the MLC or the NAM, but examples of what companies are doing as part of the pandemic crisis response.

Guidance and directives from local, state and federal governments, which could include:
- Stay-at-home orders
- Travel restrictions
- Requirements for PPE usage

Consultations with legal, HR, facilities and any other relevant teams to develop criteria for reopening. Criteria could include:
- Phased timeline for employee return based on government guidance, sustained decreases in reported COVID-19 cases, etc.
- Protocols for social distancing, plus means for training and reinforcement
- Establishment of new employee screening procedures, if applicable
- Adequate supplies of PPE for employee use

Assessment of a company’s risk points:
- Average age of the workforce and risk levels
- Employee proximity during routine operations
- Local and regional infection rates

Lessons learned from global facilities:
- Consultation with leadership at facilities that have already experienced the crisis

Healthcare readiness and COVID-19 testing availability:
- Adequate local supply of ICU beds and ventilators
- Widespread testing availability for the population

What About Sick Individuals?

For individual employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 or shown symptoms, the CDC’s recommended guidelines include meeting at least one of the following criteria:
- 72 hours have passed since recovery and at least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared
- Employee provides proof of negative COVID-19 test or written release from doctor

For additional COVID-19 resources for manufacturers, visit nam.org/coronavirus or https://www.manufacturingleadershipcouncil.com/covid-19/.

Please note that these are intended as a helpful reference point and this is not legal advice. We still recommend consulting with your appropriate regulators and key stakeholders, including legal counsel, before deciding on how to best proceed with your company’s operations. These are simply “examples of what others are doing” not guidance from the MLC and NAM.

Source: NAM/MLC webinars