

EHS MANAGEMENT

Pandemic Response Planning



Founded in 1974, Trinity Consultants helps organizations overcome complex, mission-critical challenges in EHS, engineering, and science through expertise in consulting, technology, training, and staffing. We support clients in geographies worldwide and across a broad range of sectors including industrial, energy, manufacturing, mining, life sciences, and commercial/institutional.

The beginning of 2020 brought the COVID-19 pandemic, which presented a global impact on everyone's life and business operations. Pandemics are a great challenge to the EHS professionals who are responsible to establish, manage, and monitor company policies and programs to ensure the health and safety of their workforce. Many



EHS managers have expressed the following concerns in preparing for the return of workers into their facilities during a pandemic:

- ▶ Fulfilling the general duty to provide a healthy and safe workplace for workers
- ▶ Managing new rules/policies around restarting work and maintaining compliance with evolving regulations
- ▶ Health screening procedures for employees and others coming to the site
- ▶ Providing proper personal protection equipment (PPE) for various job functions
- ▶ Conducting safety training and monitoring for social distancing rules and personal hygiene
- ▶ Improving ventilation systems to help minimize the spread of the virus

With our expanded health and safety capabilities, Trinity assists clients in essential industry sectors with business continuity planning, workplace evaluations, and practices to address employee wellbeing. Our pandemic response team closely monitors new rules, policies, and recommended practices established by the Centers for Disease Control, federal and state OSHA programs, and recognized associations including the American Biosafety Association (ABSA), American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), American Association of Safety Professionals (ASSP), and World Health Organization (WHO), as well as state and local public health authorities.

Developing a Pandemic Response Plan

As offices begin to reopen and staff members are returning to the workplace, employers are prioritizing the health and safety of their employees, customers, supply chains, and the communities they serve. In order to promote health and safety while maintaining operations and complying with OSHA requirements, employers should consider developing a Pandemic Response and/or Preparedness Plan to establish the requirements to address health concerns caused by pandemic diseases. The plans should be based on the latest guidelines and recommendations published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), local/state public health authorities, and professional organizations with subject matter expertise.

The CDC and OSHA advise employers to conduct a thorough risk assessment of the workplace to identify potential workplace hazards related to the pandemic. Employers should use an appropriate combination of controls to limit the spread of the virus, including engineering controls (e.g., install high-efficiency air filters, increase ventilation rates), workplace administrative policies (e.g., practice social distancing and good hand hygiene, disinfect surfaces, require sick employees to stay home, discontinue nonessential travel,



provide training, etc.), and PPE to protect workers from the identified hazards. Each site plan should clearly address the following:

- ▶ Employee communication/training to enforce pandemic policies/programs and personal obligations for prevention of spreading the virus
- ▶ Screening and monitoring procedures for contractors, visitors, and customers onsite activities
- ▶ Site assessment of workplace environment for disease control
- ▶ Requirements and documentation of daily facility cleaning procedures and practices
- ▶ Requirements for personal protective measures such as face coverings and additional PPE for specific jobs

Identifying Site-Specific Hazards and Risk Assessment

Whether your facility has been fully/partially operational or is preparing to reopen for returned workers, your EHS management team is responsible to ensure the workplace is healthy and safe for preventing infection. According to the CDC, the SARS-CoV-2 virus, cause of COVID-19, is transmitted via person-to-person contact, contact with contaminated surfaces, and airborne droplets. Trinity's Life Science Services team, led by our credentialed team of Certified Industrial Hygienists (CIHs) and Certified Safety Professionals (CSP), can provide organizations with recommendations to prevent the transmission of the virus and assist EHS management to maintain a healthy and safe workplace for facility operations.

Site assessments follow the latest guidance from the CDC, OSHA, and other professional organizations, such as ASHRAE and AIHA. Our experts conduct site specific infection risk assessments, identify potential hazards, and advise engineering and administrative control measures. We can also address these related issues:

- ▶ Improvement of indoor air quality with enhanced building ventilation management¹
- ▶ Evaluation of potential health hazards in the workplace, such as mold and Legionnaires' disease, for buildings with prolonged shutdown²
- ▶ Job safety analysis and process safety management for starting/re-starting work
- ▶ Developing focused cleaning plans and procedures
- ▶ Respiratory protection program development, review, and support
- ▶ Risk communication regarding prevention of pandemic infectious disease for workers

Recommendations for Normal Operations

In this unprecedented time, EHS professionals must be ready to advise company leadership with practical actions to ensure business continuity and more importantly, workers' health and safety. Companies should have a plan with critical crisis practices that can be executed quickly. Our EHS management team has addressed such needs and assisted clients to prepare action items for this pandemic and beyond. Several critical action items for the plan include:

1. Identify individuals in leadership for the pandemic response team and assign responsibilities for action items
2. Designate a senior member of the leadership team to communicate company policies and programs to internal and external stakeholders
3. Closely monitoring the situation and regulatory requirements to provide early alerts and updates to all employees about the disease and company actions
4. Identify and/or adopt control measures recommended by the public health authorities and acquire needed supplies quickly, especially items needed for respiratory protection
5. Set strict rules to stop employees or visitors from coming to the site with any symptoms
6. Establish protocols for common cleaning procedures and personal hygiene practices that can be quickly implemented to control the spread of the disease
7. Establish safety guidance for employees working away from offices or performing business activities during the pandemic. Be mindful about the mental health of workers while sheltering in place
8. Have system in place to evaluate critical business functions; strategize for operational flexibility; and monitor EHS compliance to minimize impact to company financial health
9. Be transparent on actions required to stop/slow down the spread of the infectious disease
10. Establish training and communications platforms to share relevant pandemic information, guidelines, rules, and recommendations

Why Choose Trinity

For over 45 years, Trinity Consultants has assisted industrial facilities with EHS management and regulatory compliance issues. As new EHS programs and responsibilities have evolved, we continue to meet our clients' EHS needs, maintaining our commitment to technical expertise, high quality solutions, and exceptional client service.

For more information about how we can help you with your Pandemic Response plan and other EHS compliance needs during a Pandemic, please contact Sue Sung, Director of EHS Services, at 972.661.8100 or Christine Haman, Managing Consultant, at 225.346.4003.

ISO 9001:2015 certified at our corporate office in Dallas, Texas

1 ASHRAE Position document on Infectious Aerosols, approved by ASHRAE Board of Directors April 14, 2020, expires April 14, 2023.

2 AIHA.org "Recovering from COVID-19 Building Closures" Guidance document.