



COVID-19 Actions for Responsible Warehouse Operators

Overview

The Murphy Administration has deemed all warehouse work essential during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thousands of warehouse workers in New Jersey continue to work every day with minimal protections against COVID-19 exposure. In order to protect warehouse workers during the COVID-19 pandemic -- and ensure that vital supply chains remain stable and secure -- warehouse workers need a series of protections to be enacted and enforced by the State Government and warehouse employers. These protections should apply to all workers employed in warehouses, including employees of temp agencies and third party contractors. These protections should be required in addition to any benefits and standards established in existing company policies or Collective Bargaining Agreements covering warehouse workers.

State Actions Needed

- Mandate that warehouses follow CDC COVID-19 guidelines regarding social distancing, hygiene, housekeeping, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), telling employees not to work when sick, and other health and safety measures.
- Mandate that warehouse operators shut down a warehouse or work area where anyone has tested positive for COVID-19 for two weeks to allow workers to self quarantine, fully sanitize the facility, provide all workers with paid leave, testing and treatment at no cost to the employee, and maintain records that it has complied with COVID-19 disinfecting protocols.
- Provide emergency grants to NGOs for COVID-19 health and safety training and consultation for employers, employees and worker representatives.
- Explicitly provide whistleblower protection for workers who alert the Department of Health of COVID-19 outbreaks or OSHA regarding safety concerns.
- Explicitly offer workers the right to refuse to work if warehouses do not follow the regulatory measures outlined above and protection against retaliation if workers engage in such demonstrated action for the health and wellbeing of their co-workers.

Employer Actions Needed

- Immediate hourly hazard pay for all warehouse workers that work during the NJ emergency order.
- Additional Paid Sick Leave for warehouse workers during the epidemic, including for workers who are under quarantine, isolation and or experiencing COVID-19 related illnesses; workers who take time off to care for a loved one; and workers who are immune-compromised and instructed to self-quarantine. Provide a minimum of 80 hours of additional paid leave time, and waive any waiting or accrual period outlined in existing leave time policies.

- Immediate health coverage for all warehouse workers who are currently working to continue for 2 months beyond the end the workers' employment (if temporary).
- Job and benefit protection so workers are not penalized - with job loss, income loss, benefit loss or any other type of retaliation - for not working if they are sick, suspect they may have been exposed, if they decide to stay home because they are over the age of 60 or immune-compromised, or if they need to take care of a loved one who is sick.
- Establish Health and Safety committees where workers are paid to participate and are empowered to enforce compliance with COVID-19 health and safety standards issued by the NJ Department of Health and OSHA.
- Conduct a hazard assessment with input from the Health and Safety Committee. Implement necessary control measures based on the hazard assessment.
- Provide necessary Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to all warehouse workers based on governmental COVID-19 recommendations and hazard assessment.
- Increase the frequency of housekeeping measures to sanitize areas that are "high touch" such as workstations, doorknobs and bathroom faucets. If an employer introduces new cleaning products or disinfectants, all elements of the OSHA Hazard Communication standard must be followed including providing proper PPE to housekeeping employees, employee training and access to Safety Data Sheets.
- Post CDC guidelines in break rooms in the languages spoken by the employees.
- Reduce the number of people in the warehouse by staggering work schedules, lunch and other breaks and provide staggered bathroom breaks to allow for more regular hand washing.
- Provide free COVID-19 testing for employees if another employee has tested positive in the same work area.
- Create a reporting system for employee hazards and health concerns without any fear of retaliation.

Warehouse Workers Stand Up Coalition Members:

New Jersey Work Environment Council, a COSH affiliate
 Workers United Laundry, Distribution and Food Service Joint Board
 Make the Road NJ
 New Jersey Communities United
 New York Communities for Change
 NJ Working Families Alliance
 Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU)