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Bringing Your Workforce Back To Work

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As hotels, resorts, casinos and restaurants re-open, there are challenges around every corner. The industry has weathered many storms, from terrorist threats to major weather events. A worldwide pandemic is a new challenge. Re-opening plans must comply with local, state, and federal orders and guidelines, provide for a safe environment for employees and guests, and maintain enough flexibility to operate. Every location must reimagine processes and develop (and enforce) protocols, procedures and policies. Employers should follow a four-step process for safely bringing employees back to work.

Step 1: Evaluate and ensure compliance with local and state shutdown/reopening orders.

Become an expert on state and county orders and any modifications to them. Many states and counties have shelter-in-place requirements for vulnerable populations, require face coverings and social distancing, impose limitations on the number of individuals in certain locations and in meetings, place limits on opening pools and hot tubs, and place restrictions on dining services, to name the most common. Do not ask or require employees to work in violation of the orders.

Step 2: Provide a safe workplace.

The hospitality industry has been at the forefront in developing protocols for cleaning and safety. In addition to adopting industry standard cleaning protocols, every property must develop a written return to work plan – for every department. The property must be prepared to modify the plan as issues develop. These may include return-to-work health risk assessments, face coverings, temperature checks and social distancing. Put all safety measures and protocols in writing and give copies to employees.

Step 3: Re-hire and re-call employees.

During their furlough or layoff, stay in touch with employees. Regular phone calls and social media connections, just to check on them, likely will go a long way to maintaining morale and good will. Whether employees were furloughed or laid off (the terms are often used interchangeably to connote a short term or non-permanent separation from employment), we recommend a systematic approach to returning them to work to avoid claims of discrimination.

Step 4: Keeping employees safe.

Once employees are back to work, it is critical to maintain and enforce safety protocols. The CDC has provided guidance on handling confirmed COVID-19 cases in the workplace. Follow

them strictly: Isolate/Quarantine Confirmed Employees; Contact Tracing – Address and Isolate Employees Working Near an Infected Co-Worker; Clean and Disinfect the Workplace; Notify Employees.