

Stay safe together while staying two metres apart

Dr Shane Farrelly MFOM Occupational Health Specialist

COVID-19 Office Capacity Assessment whilst Maintaining Social Distancing

1. Review work-settings in your workplace on a furniture plan.

2. Enclosed Spaces

Begin by identifying enclosed spaces that can be allocated to individuals without modifications to the physical space:

- a. **Offices** – these can become one person spaces – no visitors – individuals can stand in doorway to ask questions but should not enter
- b. **Conference Rooms of 5 People or Less** – these can become spaces for individuals, similar to office noted above
- c. **Phone Rooms with Doors** – these can become spaces for individuals
- d. **Huddle Rooms or Rooms with Soft Furniture** – these can become spaces for individuals
- e. **Other Enclosed Spaces** – these can become spaces for individuals if needed by relocating a work surface or table, but make sure the ventilation is set up for office occupancy

3. Open Spaces

- a. **Workstations** - Evaluate your open workspaces by determining if the height of your workstation panels limits transmission. Where employees are seated behind partitions of sufficient height and using all the other recommended precautions, droplet spread may be greatly reduced. If you do not have workstation panels another approach to achieve adequate social distancing is to stagger or 'checkerboard' placement of employees at workstations.

Using this approach, identify open plan work spaces that are 2m apart. Note each of these as single occupancy.

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- b. **Open Collaborative Spaces** – Each of these should be counted as single occupancy unless they can accommodate a 2m separation

4. Conference Rooms Greater than 5 Seats

Evaluate the occupancy of each room and maintaining a 2m separation and determine maximum capacity. A good rule of thumb is to remove 50-60% of the chairs from conference rooms. For larger rooms, there should be no more than 8 occupants allowed in any space to maintain the social distancing guidelines. If larger meetings are required, consider video conferencing within the office between rooms (i.e. holding an all hands meeting) using a number of rooms “virtually connected” together.

Keep in mind that tables are typically less than 2m in width so staggering occupants may be required to maintain distancing.

Record the occupancy of the rooms after the overlay and change the capacity in your room reservations system details and issue new room capacity diagrams to staff.

It is important to remove the excess chairs from these conference rooms to help educate the workforce on the new capacity limitations. Consider taking one room offline to house chairs that need to be stored during distancing.

5. Break / Café Capacity

Using the social distancing 2m separation between occupants, identify seating that can maintain the required separation. For these spaces specifically, you may consider moving loose furniture to within the overall space to maximize single occupancy (i.e. chairs take up a lot of space and once you remove a portion of the inventory, you may find a more efficient layout of the room.

Consider using tape on the floor to identify queues for the coffee/microwave/refrigerators to help your staff understand the right separation as they wait to use appliances.

6. Calculate your capacity:

- a. Your **COVID-19 individual capacity** is calculated by adding the number of spaces you identified in Steps #3 and #4. This can be used to determine the number of people you can accommodate once the workforce begins to return. You may want to consider reserving a few spaces for unplanned staff members and visitors.

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- b. Your **COVID-19 conference capacity** is calculated by adding the new seating capacities for conference rooms identified in Step #5. Note this as number of rooms and capacity for each room.

7. Occupancy Approach

With both your individual and conference capacity you can now plan your re-population approach. Additional options or considerations other organizations are using include:

- a. Returning essential workforce only (only those that have to be in the office to support business critical operations)
- b. Implementing staggered shifts (6am-12pm and 2pm to 8pm) with office cleaning occurring at midday and end of day
- c. Alternating days with multiple groups (Group A & B in Monday, C&D Tuesday, A & C Wednesday, B&D Thursday etc)

Once you have determined your occupancy strategy you can look at what spaces will be used by whom, clear desktops for cleaning protocols and communicate all plans to your workforce, cleaning staff, and management.

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