



NJ Must Do More to Protect Warehouse Workers from COVID-19

Introduction

Governor Murphy has implemented important measures to protect New Jersey workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as COVID-19 cases in warehouses grow, warehouse workers at companies like Barnes & Noble, Amazon and others are demanding additional state action. The Warehouse Workers Stand Up coalition has proposed Governor Murphy enact additional immediate measures to protect warehouse workers.

Proposed COVID-19 Protections for Warehouse Workers

We urge Governor Murphy to enact the following policies, where possible through additional executive orders:

- Mandate that warehouse operators shut down a warehouse 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Provide immediate hourly hazard pay for all warehouse workers that work during the NJ emergency order.

- Provide 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.
- Provide immediate health coverage for all warehouse workers who are currently working to continue for 2 months beyond the end the workers' employment (if temporary).
- Provide 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.
- 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.
- Ensure these protections should apply to all workers employed in warehouses, including employees of temp agencies and third party contractors.
- Ensure these protections are required in addition to any benefits and standards established in existing company policies or Collective Bargaining Agreements.