

Making reopening safe

Written by By Dominic Aragon Sun Correspondent
Friday, 19 June 2020 01:22



Workforce Solutions outlines help for businesses, practices for workers

New Mexico Workforce hosted a virtual town hall June 8 to detail how our state's business owners and employees should be adhering to COVID-19-safe practices on the job.

Bill McCamley, the Cabinet Secretary for the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, hosted the virtual town hall.

"We want to make sure that all employees have masks and wear them except when eating, drinking, exercising, or for medical needs. You can make a request to the New Mexico Department of Health for masks," McCamley said.

Personal protective equipment bulk purchases for New Mexico business owners include disinfectant spray, gloves, face masks, and no-touch thermometers.

McCamley said not all PPE works for everyone. For instance, "Some people out there with severe asthma can't wear a mask, and the Americans with Disabilities Act would ask you to try to find an accommodation for them," he said.

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“So if there’s ways they can work without exposing themselves, that’s the best solution for everyone,” he said.

NMDWS requires employers to have their employees work remotely “to the greatest extent possible.”

One of the important things returning employees should be trained in is the daily cleaning and disinfection of work areas and high-contact areas. Employees showing symptoms that could be indicators of the virus, such as a fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat or chills should be sent home.

“If you have a vulnerable worker, try to figure out a way that they can move to another area that doesn’t put them in touch with the public, in touch with other employees, so they can keep their exposure lower,” McCamley said.

Employers may need to make accommodations for high-risk employees like older and asthmatic workers.

The initiative, “All Hands New Mexico,” addresses how business owners can attract new workers. Ricky Serna told town hall participants how to post jobs on the DWS website.

“We launched this webpage about a month ago to provide a platform for you all to post position vacancies that you’re seeking to fill in light of all the public health orders that have been put in place,” Serna said.

“We’ll do our best to promote those available positions broadly so we can connect you with qualified job seekers,” he said.

As for people accepting unemployment benefits because of the COVID-19 virus, McCamley said recipients could lose their benefits if NMDWS determines they don’t have a good reason

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for not returning to work.

Examples of good reasons to not go back to work might include proof of an employer not following COVID-safe practices, or workers who have pre-existing medical conditions.

Simply being afraid of COVID-19, or staying away because unemployment pays more than work does, is not considered a good reason to avoid returning to a job.

Business counseling is another topic that was addressed at the event. Russell Wyrick, the executive director of the New Mexico Small Business Development Center, explained that it's free and talked about how it works.

"Think of that as basically a business consultant that you don't have to pay for. It's funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration and the state through the Higher Education Department," Wyrick said. "We work with you one-on-one for your specific needs to help you navigate the challenges you have in sustaining and growing your business."

Helpful Links

Business owners can buy PPE at <http://acinm.chambermaster.com/store/>.

The link to post a vacancy is www.dws.state.nm.us/COVID-19-Post-Jobs .

Business owners interested in counseling can visit www.nmsbdc.org/ .

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