



Coronavirus Government Reponses—FAQs for the Cleaning Industry

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There has been a plethora of government--federal, state, and local--responses to the novel coronavirus crisis in the U.S, many of which significantly impact the full spectrum of the cleaning industry. Accordingly, ISSA—The Worldwide Cleaning Industry Association has received many questions from our members about these responses and the association has created numerous materials to assist and support our members during this pandemic. Following is a compilation of some of the most common questions we’ve received, along with our corresponding answers, including links to further information. [You can watch our webinar](#) summarizing many of the topics below as well.

Please note this document is advisory in nature and subject to frequent change.

ISSA has made every attempt to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information provided here. However, due to the quickly evolving nature of the coronavirus crisis, the underlying information is constantly changing. Therefore, this information is provided "as is" without warranty of any kind. ISSA does not accept any responsibility or liability for the accuracy, content, completeness, legality, or reliability of the information contained in this document. We encourage you to consult your federal, state, and local governments for more specific information.

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Essential Business

Q: Is my business or job considered “essential” under state and local “stay at home” orders?

A: The Federal Government has issued guidance to states and localities related to what businesses/jobs are essential if “stay at home” orders are made. Yes, the cleaning supply chain

from manufacturers down to cleaning service providers were included in that guidance. You can review our [Essential Services Nationally and by State Summary for more information](#).

Q: Is there a letter I can provide to my employees so that they are not detained or otherwise prevented by authorities from going to and from work?

A: Yes, we have created template “[Open for Business Letters for Employees, Customers, Vendors for: Chemical Manufacturers, Paper Manufacturers, Distributors, Cleaning Service Providers, Residential Cleaners](#)”

Q: How can I best communicate to my customers and vendors that we are considered an “essential” business and will remain open during a “stay at home” order?

A: ISSA has prepared a series of communication templates for our members to use specifically for such purposes and which can be found online at [Open for Business Letters for Employees, Customers, and Vendors for: Chemical Manufacturers, Paper Manufacturers, Distributors, Cleaning Service Providers, Residential Cleaners](#)

Q: How can I let my elected officials know that my business is essential?

A: You can contact all your federal and state elected officials with just a couple clicks in our Action Center - [Act Today to Ensure the Cleaning Industry Is Declared “Essential”](#).

Q: What has ISSA been doing to make sure the cleaning industry is deemed “essential”?

A: To date our members have sent more than 10,000 messages to their federal and state elected officials in all 50 states on this issue. Additionally, ISSA has been contacting federal and state officials to educate them on this issue and successfully got the entire cleaning supply chain recognized as “essential” in the federal guidance. Also, [ISSA sent a letter to governors urging them to recognize the cleaning industry as ‘essential’](#)

Q: Where can I get updates on what governments are doing on legislative and regulatory issues impacting the cleaning industry right now?

A: ISSA has been putting out daily updates on our website - [Coronavirus Government Response Updates. Please bookmark this link](#)

[Paid Sick Leave and Expanded Family and Medical Leave](#)

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has issued some guidance in the form of [FAQ’s on this here](#).

Q: If I am a small business with fewer than 50 employees, am I exempt from the requirements to provide paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave?

A: A small business can be granted an exemption by the DOL from certain paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave requirements if providing an employee such leave would jeopardize the viability of the business as a going concern. This means a small business is exempt from mandated paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave requirements only if the:

- employer employs fewer than 50 employees;

- leave is requested because the child’s school or place of care is closed, or child care provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19 related reasons; and
- an authorized officer of the business has determined that at least one of the three conditions described below is satisfied.
 - The provision of paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave would result in the small business’s expenses and financial obligations exceeding available business revenues and cause the small business to cease operating at a minimal capacity;
 - The absence of the employee or employees requesting paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave would entail a substantial risk to the financial health or operational capabilities of the small business because of their specialized skills, knowledge of the business, or responsibilities; or
 - There are not sufficient workers who are able, willing, and qualified, and who will be available at the time and place needed, to perform the labor or services provided by the employee or employees requesting paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave, and these labor or services are needed for the small business to operate at a minimal capacity.

Q: Everything addresses 50-500 employee companies. What if we have more than 500 employees?

A: The law passed only applies to private sector employers with fewer than 500 employees.

Small Business Assistance

Q: What kind of financial assistance can my business apply for?

A: Here is a [good write up of various programs](#) being made available.

Q: Where do I go to apply for an SBA loan?

A: You can [go here](#).

Q: What is the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)?

A: This is a loan program for businesses with 500 or fewer employees being administered by the current Small Business Administration. In general, eligible small businesses may borrow 250% of their average monthly payroll up to a maximum of \$10 million and part or all the loan may be forgiven if the business meets certain conditions. The loan can be used to cover payroll and most usual operating expenses. A business cannot take out a PPP and SBA disaster loans for the same purposes. Here is a [more detailed summary of the program](#).

Q: How can I apply for a PPP loan?

A: Call your bank or find SBA-approved lenders in your area. [You can also reach out](#) to your local Small Business Development Center or Women’s Business Center for free assistance and guidance.

Q: What expenses am I able to use a [PPP loan towards](#)?

A: Payroll, rent/mortgage, utilities, interest of prior debt, continuation of group health benefits.

Disinfectant Products

Q: What disinfectant products are proven to be effective for use against SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes the disease COVID-19?

A: EPA's [List N: List of Disinfectants for use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)

Q: How do I get my product approved for being effective against coronavirus?

A: [The EPA has information for registrants about expediting Emerging Viral Pathogen claim submissions](#)

Q: Is there any guidance on hand sanitizers?

A: yes, the [FDA has provided relaxed the regulations around the production of alcohol-based hand sanitizers to help increase the supply needed during the current public health crisis](#)

Q: Where can I find more information about disinfectants?

A: [Frequently Asked Questions about Disinfectants for use Against Coronavirus](#)

Unemployment Benefits

Q: What is the difference between furloughing and laying off employees?

A: Traditionally, a layoff is a temporary separation from payroll. An employee is laid off because there is not enough work for him or her to perform. The employer however believes this condition will change and intends to recall the person when work becomes available again. Laid off employees are typically able to collect unemployment benefits while on an unpaid layoff, and frequently employers will allow employees to maintain benefit coverage for a defined period of time as an incentive to remain available for recall.

On the other hand, when an employer furloughs employees, it typically requires them to work fewer hours or to take a certain amount of unpaid time off. For example, the employer may furlough its employees one day a week for the remainder of the year or require all employees to take a week or two of unpaid leave. Furloughed employees traditionally have not been eligible for unemployment benefits.

Q: Who is eligible for unemployment benefits?

A: The legislation extends benefits to previously ineligible workers including those furloughed, self-employed, those lacking a sufficient work history, and workers who can't reach their place of work as a result of COVID-19. Unemployment programs are run by the states and therefore can vary. [Go here for more state by state information.](#)

Q: What is the additional \$600 weekly for unemployment?

A: It is an additional \$600 per week on top of the amount they would have otherwise received for up to four months.

Q: How much unemployment will I get?

A: That varies drastically by state but the average worker would receive [\\$985 per week](#) after the \$600 supplement is factored in.

Q: Can a worker “stay on the payroll” and still receive unemployment?

A: Yes, employers could furlough or reduce their employee’s hours to zero and they would still be eligible for unemployment.

Protecting Workers

Q: What kind of guidance is there on protecting employees who are still able to work?

A: OSHA has issued “[Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)”.

Q: Where can I find more information about protecting workers?

A: The OSHA [COVID-19 webpage](#) provides information specifically for employers and workers.

Other ISSA Advocacy Efforts

Q: What has ISSA done to advocate on the federal coronavirus bills on behalf of the cleaning industry?

A: ISSA engaged federal policymakers on both the “Families First Coronavirus Response Act” and “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act” ([full summary here](#)). The House made some important “technical” changes to allow exemptions for small businesses from the paid leave requirements which ISSA supported related to small businesses. Additionally, John H. Barrett, ISSA Executive Director, [participated in a conference call](#) with U.S. President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence. The call focused on the importance of maintaining a strong supply chain for critical supplies in the face of the COVID-19 emergency.

Q: What else has ISSA been doing related to Advocacy?

A: In addition to actions taken throughout this document, we have signed onto a number of coalition letters: [ISSA Urges Congress and Administration to Take a Broad and Quick Economic Response to COVID-19](#), [ISSA Asks Senators to Improve Paid Leave in House Coronavirus Bill](#), [ISSA Urges President to Provide Tariff Relief](#).

Q: How can I sign up for alerts related to ISSA’s Advocacy efforts?

A: Sign up to become “[An Advocate for Clean](#)”