

HR Tracker, ¶46,765, Connecticut governor directs nonessential functions to suspend operations, issues guidance for businesses — STATE LAW, (Mar. 25, 2020)

Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont on March 20, 2020, announced that part of the ongoing civil preparedness and public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, he is directing Connecticut residents to “Stay Safe, Stay at Home.”

Under Executive Order No. 7H, the governor is directing all non-essential businesses and not-for-profit entities in Connecticut to prohibit all in-person functions if they are able to, effective Monday, March 23, 2020 at 8:00 p.m. The governor is encouraging all businesses to employ, to the maximum extent possible, any telecommuting or work-from-home procedures that they can safely implement.

The order excludes any essential business or entity providing essential services or functions, such as healthcare, food service, law enforcement, and similar critical services.

In addition, the Governor, working with the Department of Economic and Community Development, on March 23, 2020, released a Guidance to assist businesses and nonprofits on the March 20 Executive Order. The governor is encouraging all businesses to employ, to the maximum extent possible any telecommuting or work-from-home procedures that they can safely implement. The order excludes any business or entity providing essential services or functions, such as healthcare, food, law enforcement, and similar critical services.

“At this critical time it is essential that everyone just stay home so we can contain the spread of this virus while keeping essential services running,” Governor Lamont said. “I know that this will be disruptive to many and will bring many daily activities to a halt, but the only way we will be able to mitigate the impacts of this public health emergency is to take measures like this. I appreciate everyone’s cooperation, and I especially want to thank the essential workers who are needed to keep critical services running.”

Executive Order

The governor is calling this his “Stay Safe, Stay Home” initiative. The plan recommends that state residents do the following:

1. Effective at 8:00 p.m. on Monday, March 23, all non-essential businesses statewide should close;
2. Non-essential public community gatherings of individuals of any size for any reason should be canceled (e.g. parties, celebrations or other social events) are canceled or postponed at this time;
3. If you must leave your home, do not travel in groups -groups must be limited to workers providing essential services;
4. Everyone should keep at least six feet away from each other whenever possible;
5. Businesses and entities that provide other essential services should implement rules that help facilitate social distancing of at least six feet;
6. Individuals should limit outdoor recreational activities to non-contact and avoid activities where they come in close contact with other people;
7. Individuals should limit use of public transportation to when absolutely necessary and should limit potential exposure by spacing out at least six feet from other riders;
8. Sick individuals should not leave their home except to fill critical needs or to receive medical care, and only after a telehealth visit to determine if leaving the home is in the best interest of their health;
9. Young people should also practice social distancing and avoid contact with vulnerable populations; and
10. Use precautionary sanitizer practices such as using soap and water, hand sanitizer, or isopropyl alcohol wipes. Washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds works best.

The businesses for which this order applies shall include, but not be limited to, the 16 critical infrastructure sectors as defined by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which are available here.

Business resources

To help businesses in Connecticut navigate the COVID-19 crisis, DECD has established the COVID-19 Business Emergency Response Unit reachable at 860-500-2333.

Also, in addition to the March 23 Guidance, Governor Lamont also issued Executive Order No. 7J, which provides the following:

Clarification of Executive Order No. 7H regarding non-essential business operations: Allows non-essential retailers to take orders remotely and sell products for curbside pickup and delivery, and allows other nonessential businesses to allow the minimum staff necessary on site to handle security, maintenance, mail, and other essential services.

Extension of time period for fire service personnel examinations: The order extends deadlines for certain fire-service examination components, so career and volunteer fire service personnel in the queue for certification testing can meet the contractual, bylaw, and probationary requirements of their employers and continue to meet critical public safety needs.

Delivery of methadone to homebound patients by methadone maintenance clinics: The order allows delivery of at-home doses of methadone to homebound drug-dependent patients who a medical professional determines are unable to travel to the treatment facility because of COVID-19. The order does not allow patients themselves to carry methadone off site.

Suspension of rehiring procedures and restrictions on temporary worker retirees (TWRs): To meet critical government staffing needs caused by COVID-19 with skilled and experienced employees who require little to no additional training, the order suspends previously enacted executive orders and public acts, temporarily removing the two-year limitation on TWRs and allowing employees who participated in retirement incentive programs to work during this emergency.

Suspension of certain real property and state contracting statutes: To expedite obtaining appropriate locations for emergency operations, the order suspends certain state contracting, leasing and procurement requirements to enter into emergency short-term leases and take other emergency measures.

Further, on March 23, the Governor issued an update on COVID-19, which states that: "Connecticut businesses are urged to note that the IRS is providing a "full and immediate" reimbursement for COVID-19 employee medical leave costs." The U.S. Treasury Department, Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and the U.S. Department of Labor announced in IR-2020-57 that small and midsize employers can begin taking advantage of two new refundable payroll tax credits, designed to immediately and fully reimburse them, dollar-for-dollar, for the cost of providing coronavirus-related leave to their employees. This relief to employees and small and midsize businesses is provided under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (Act). For COVID-19 related reasons, employees receive up to 80 hours of paid sick leave. See State of Connecticut, Insurance Department, Press Release, March 23, 2020, for more information.

Source: State of Connecticut, Office of the Governor, Press Release, March 20, 2020.