



**NORTH CAROLINA  
AGRICULTURAL AND TECHNICAL  
STATE UNIVERSITY**

# **COVID-19: GUIDELINES FOR RETURNING TO THE WORKPLACE**



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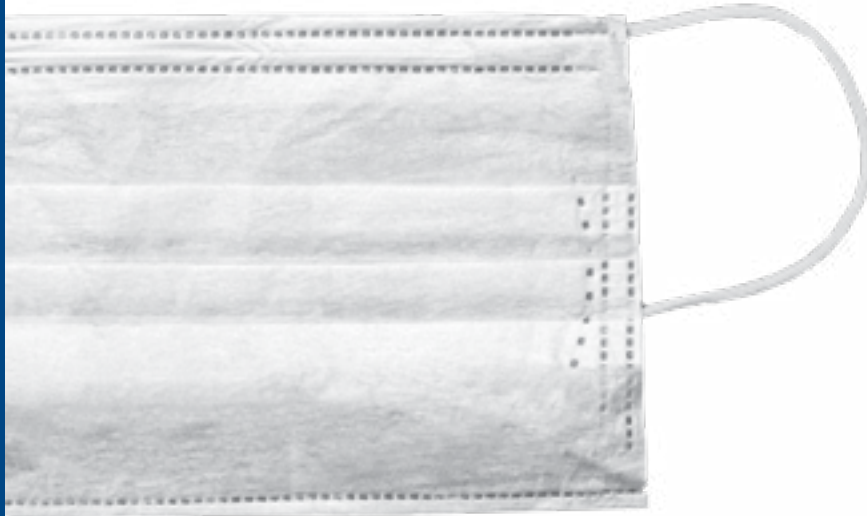
# INTRODUCTION

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North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all members of our community. As a values-driven university, we take seriously our commitment to responsibility and excellence as they correspond to our response to the coronavirus pandemic.

This document provides guidance for managing North Carolina A&T's expectations for the safe return of faculty and staff to workspaces and common areas on campus after teleworking, quarantine, illness or special leave, due to the novel coronavirus, COVID-19.

The university's phased approach to transitioning faculty and staff in a safe and deliberate manner is informed by guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the State of North Carolina and The University of North Carolina System to prepare for face-to-face campus operations.



# RETURN TO THE WORKPLACE

## Workplace Expectations

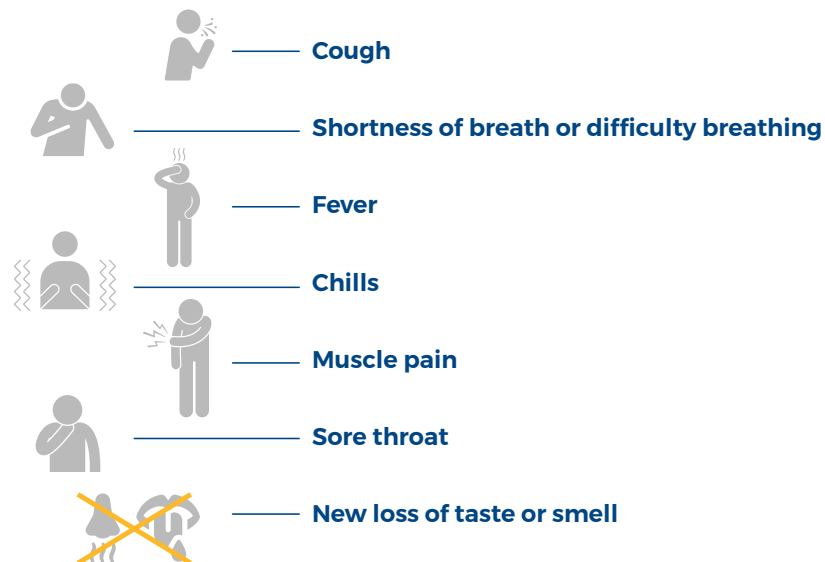
Employees of North Carolina A&T are expected to follow the procedures and guidelines outlined in this document, to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

## Symptoms and Self-monitoring

Before returning to the workplace, employees of N.C. A&T must conduct symptom monitoring every day and be free of symptoms related to COVID-19 before reporting to the workplace. If a person who is positive for COVID-19 comes to the attention of university officials, the university will follow the guidelines published by the NC Office Safety and Health for COVID - 19 Infection of Employees.

According to the CDC, individuals with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms—from asymptomatic to mild to severe. Symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure to the virus. (Note: The virus spreads quickly and easily between people.)

The following symptoms may be a sign that a person has COVID-19:



However, this list is not all possible symptoms. Other less common indicators have been reported, including gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.

**If symptoms begin to show, do not come to work on campus.** Contact your healthcare provider or the Student Health Center at 336-334-7880 to speak with a professional. Also contact the appropriate supervisor.

### Employee Self-Reporting of COVID-19

If a person who is positive for COVID-19 comes to the attention of university officials, the university will follow the guidelines published by the NC Office Safety and Health for COVID - 19 Infection of Employees.



**Self-check** is available through the CDC at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>, to help you make decisions and seek appropriate medical care.

# RETURN TO THE WORKPLACE

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## Symptoms and Self-monitoring

Individuals with certain conditions may be at a higher risk of COVID-19 infection. Those conditions include but are not limited to:

- 65 years and older
- Chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
- Serious heart conditions
- Immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications
- Severe obesity, e.g., body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher
- Diabetes
- Chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- Liver disease

## Phased Staffing and Staffing Options

### *Phased Staffing*

N.C. A&T will phase in a return of staff over time in a coordinated process to ensure appropriate social distancing and availability of personal protective equipment (PPE). N.C. A&T is phasing in a gradual return of employees to campus while ensuring appropriate physical distancing, cleaning and sanitizing of workplace surfaces, and availability of personal protective equipment for on-campus employees.

The university will assess expanded staffing based on mission-critical operations, its ability to control and manage specific work environments. These decisions, once approved, will be communicated through the respective dean, vice chancellor or vice provost.

The need to reduce the number of people on campus (density) to meet social distancing requirements will continue for some time. Support units that can continue to effectively work remotely will likely continue to do so until restrictions are eased for larger gatherings.

Expanded staffing will be tightly controlled and coordinated to mitigate potential risks and ensure the safety of faculty and staff, as well as the communities we serve. No unit or department should increase staffing levels beyond current needs to support critical on-site operations without approval from the appropriate dean, vice chancellor or vice provost. Once decisions to expand on-site staffing in certain areas have been made, staff should follow the policies and protocols detailed in this guide for returning to work on campus.

# RETURN TO THE WORKPLACE

## Phased Staffing and Staffing Options

As staffing on-site increases and operations expand, officials will closely monitor and assess the potential spread of the virus, as well as existing policies and procedures to mitigate it. Self-monitoring will be a critical part of assessing the impact of increased staffing. If localized outbreaks emerge, tighter restrictions and reduced staffing may again need to be implemented.

### Staffing Options

Once employees have been instructed to return to work on-site, there are several options that departments should consider to maintain the required social distancing measures and reduce population density within buildings and workspaces.

#### FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS



**Remote Work:** Those who can work remotely to fulfill some or all of their work responsibilities may continue to do so to reduce the number of individuals on campus and the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus. These arrangements, which must be approved by the immediate supervisor, can be done on a full or partial day/week schedule as appropriate.



**Alternating Days:** To limit the number of individuals and interactions among those on campus, departments have the option to schedule partial staffing on alternating days. Such schedules will help enable social distancing, especially in areas with large common workspaces.



**Staggered Reporting/Departing:** The beginning and end of the workday typically bring many people together at common entry/exit points of buildings. Staggering reporting and departure times by at least 30 minutes will reduce traffic in common areas to meet social distancing requirements.



# HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE

## Personal Safety Practices

### Face Masks/Cloth Face Coverings:





The university strongly encourages employees to wear masks or face coverings when working on campus and unable to maintain social distancing measures described below.

Appropriate use of face masks or face coverings is critical in minimizing risks to others. COVID-19 can be spread from person to person even if there are no symptoms. The mask or cloth face covering alone is not a substitute for social distancing. Employees should contact their supervisor if the employee failed to bring an appropriate mask/face covering. The university will provide a mask so long as supplies are available.

Disposable masks may only be worn for one day and then must be disposed of in the trash. A cloth face covering can also be worn, as this will help reduce the need to purchase additional masks, which are in short supply. (Cloth face coverings must only be worn for one day at a time and must be properly laundered before use again.)

Employees should bring their own appropriate face mask/face covering to be worn on campus. Click link below to learn CDC recommendations on making and wearing face coverings. N95 respirators should be reserved for medical professionals.

### HOW TO MAKE AND WEAR CLOTH FACE COVERINGS

TYPE	 <b>CLOTH FACE COVERING</b>	 <b>DISPOSABLE MASK</b>	 <b>MEDICAL-GRADE SURGICAL MASK</b>	 <b>N95 RESPIRATOR</b>
DESCRIPTION	Home-made or commercially manufactured face coverings that are washable and help contain wearer's respiratory emissions	Commercially manufactured masks that help contain wearer's respiratory emissions	FDA-approved masks to protect the wearer from large droplets and splashes; helps contains wearer's respiratory emissions	Provide effective respiratory protection from airborne particles and aerosols; helps contain wearer's respiratory emissions
INTENDED USE	Required for campus community use in non-healthcare settings (office spaces, general research/work settings, shops, community areas where 6' social distancing cannot be consistently maintained. Must be replaced daily. (While likely necessary for ingress and egress, not required when working alone in an office).		These masks are reserved for healthcare workers and other approved areas with task-specific hazards determined by OESO.	

# HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE

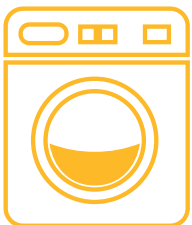
## Use and Care of Face Coverings



Wash hands or use hand sanitizer prior to handling the face covering/disposable mask.



Ensure the face covering/disposable mask fits over the nose and under the chin.



Cloth face coverings should be properly laundered with regular clothing detergent before the first use and after each shift.

### Putting On the Face Covering/Disposable Mask:

- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer prior to handling the face covering/disposable mask.
- Ensure the face covering/disposable mask fits over the nose and under the chin.
- Situate the face covering/disposable mask properly with nose wire snug against the nose (where applicable).
- Tie straps behind the head and neck or loop around the ears.
- Throughout the process, avoid touching the front of the face covering/disposable mask.

### Taking Off the Face Covering/Disposable Mask:

- Do not touch eyes, nose or mouth when removing the face covering/disposable mask.
- When taking off the face covering/disposable mask, loop finger into the strap and pull the strap away from the ear or untie the straps.
- Wash hands immediately after removing.

### Care, Storage and Laundering:

- Keep face coverings/disposable mask stored in a paper bag when not in use.
- Cloth face coverings may not be used more than one day at a time and must be washed after each use.
- Cloth face coverings should be properly laundered with regular clothing detergent before the first use and after each shift.
- Cloth face coverings should be replaced immediately if soiled, damaged (e.g., ripped, punctured) or visibly contaminated.
- Disposable masks must not be used for more than one day and should be placed in the trash after shift or if it is soiled, damaged (e.g., stretched ear loops, torn or punctured material) or visibly contaminated.

### Social Distancing:

Maintaining distance between individuals is one of the best tools to avoid being exposed to the COVID-19 virus and slowing its spread. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to stay away from others when possible, even if there are no symptoms. Social distancing is important for everyone, especially to help protect people who are at higher risk of getting very sick. Situations that would violate social distancing should be avoided. If unavoidable, use face masks/face coverings. Staff at work on-site must follow these social distancing practices:

Always stay at least 6 feet (about two arms' length) from other people.



Do not gather in groups of 10 or more.



Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings.



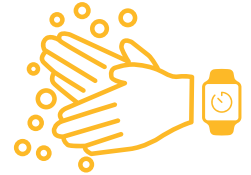


# HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE

## **Handwashing:**

Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after being in a public place, and after blowing nose, coughing, sneezing or touching face. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of the hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth, and wash hands after touching the face.

**Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.**



## **Gloves:**

Healthcare workers and others in high-risk areas should use gloves as part of personal protective equipment (PPE), but according to the CDC, gloves are not necessary for general use and do not replace good hand hygiene. Washing hands often is considered the best practice for common everyday tasks.

## **Goggles/Face Shields:**

While goggles or face shields may need to be worn in certain work areas, the majority of staff will not need to wear them as part of general activity on campus. Good hand hygiene and avoiding touching the face are generally sufficient for nonhealthcare environments.

## **Cleaning/Disinfection:**

Housekeeping teams will clean lobby areas, and heavy traffic areas, based on CDC guidelines for disinfection and Occupational and Environmental Safety Office (OESO) protocols. Facilities also will maintain hand-sanitizer stations at major building entrances, elevator stops, auditoriums, classrooms, computer rooms and high-traffic areas. The university will supply disinfectant, initially, then employees in individual workspaces will be responsible for frequently disinfecting their own areas.

Mechanical, electrical, plumbing and monitoring systems will be assessed and readied prior to reopening of buildings. Building occupants should also wipe down commonly used surfaces before and after use with products that meet the EPA's criteria for use against COVID-19 and are appropriate for the surface. This includes any shared-space location or equipment (e.g., copiers, printers, computers, A/V and other electrical equipment, coffee makers, desks and tables, light switches, doorknobs, etc.). Research laboratories will undergo an additional cleaning checklist.

## **Coughing/Sneezing Hygiene:**

In a private setting without a cloth face covering, remember to always cover mouth and nose with a tissue to cough or sneeze, or use the inside of the elbow, then throw used tissues in the trash. Immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



**Remember to always cover mouth and nose with a tissue to cough or sneeze, or use the inside of the elbow,**



# HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE

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## Guidance for Specific Workplace Scenarios

### ***Public Transportation/Aggie Shuttle:***

If the use of public transportation or the Aggie Shuttle is necessary, wear a face covering before entering the bus and avoid touching surfaces with hands, if possible. Upon disembarking, wash hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers with greater than 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol as the preferred form of hand hygiene in healthcare settings as soon as possible and before removing the mask.

### ***Working in Office Environments:***

In an open environment, be sure to maintain at least 6 feet of distance from co-workers. If possible, have at least one workspace between workers. Face masks or face coverings should always be worn while in a shared workspace/room. Departments should assess open work environments and meeting rooms to institute measures to physically separate and increase distance between employees, other coworkers and customers, such as:

- Place visual cues such as floor decals, colored tape or signs to indicate where to stand while waiting in line.
- Place barriers such as plexi-glass in high traffic spaces such as reception areas.
- Place one-way directional signage in large open workspaces that have multiple thruways to increase distance between employees moving through the space.
- Consider designating specific stairways for up or down traffic if building has multiple stairwells.

In an office, ideally no more than one person should be in the same room unless the required 6 feet of distancing can be consistently maintained. If more than one person is in a room, masks/face coverings should always be worn. A mask or face covering is not required if working alone in a confined office space. A mask or face covering is required in partitioned work areas (e.g., cubicles) in a large open environment.

Masks/face coverings are recommended to be worn by any staff in a reception/receiving area. Masks/face coverings should be used when inside any N.C. A&T facility where others are present, including walking in narrow hallways and in break rooms, conference rooms and other meeting locations.

### ***Using Restrooms:***

Use of restrooms should be limited based on size to ensure at least 6 feet distance between individuals. Wash hands thoroughly afterward to reduce the potential transmission of the virus.

### ***Using Elevators:***

No more than two people may ride an elevator at a time; use the stairs whenever possible. If using the elevator, wear a mask or face covering and avoid touching the elevator buttons with exposed hand/fingers. If possible, use elbow to press buttons. Wash hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers as the preferred forms of hand hygiene upon departing the elevator.

# HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE

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## Guidance for Specific Workplace Scenarios

### **Meetings:**

Convening in groups increases the risk of viral transmission. Meetings should be held in whole or part using Zoom or collaboration tools. In-person meetings are limited to the restrictions of local, state and federal orders and should not exceed 50% of a room's capacity, assuming individuals can still maintain 6 feet of separation for social distancing requirements. Departments should remove or rearrange chairs and tables or add visual cue marks in meeting rooms to support social distancing practices between attendees. All attendees should wear a mask or face covering while sharing space in a common room.

When meeting in conference rooms, participants should wipe down surfaces prior to meeting and wipe them down once again at the meeting's conclusion. This is an essential task that is important to everyone's wellbeing in meeting spaces shared by different groups often multiple times in a single day.

During the time on-site, please communicate with colleagues and supervisors as needed by email, instant message, telephone or other available technology rather than face-to-face.

### **Meals:**

Before and after eating, wash hands thoroughly to reduce the potential transmission of the virus.

If dining on campus, wear a mask or face covering until ready to eat and then replace it afterward. Eating establishments must meet requirements to allow at least 6 feet of distance between each customer, including lines and seating arrangements. Individuals should not sit facing one another. Staff are encouraged to take food back to their office area or eat outside, if reasonable.

If eating in a work environment (break room, office, etc.), maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between each other. Individuals should not sit facing one another. Only remove mask or face covering to eat, then put it back on. Departments should remove or rearrange chairs and tables or add visual cue marks in employee break rooms to support social distancing practices between employees. Wipe all surfaces, including table, refrigerator handle, coffee machine, etc. after using in common areas.

### **Laboratory Work:**

Specific criteria will be provided for faculty and staff working in laboratory environments.

### **Employee Assistance Program (EAP):**

The EAP is a confidential counseling and resource program, contracted through ComPsych, designed to help university employees and their families deal with both personal and work-related concerns. Call anytime: 866-511-3373 TDD: 800-697-0353 Go online: [guidanceresources.com](https://guidanceresources.com). Web ID: NCAT.

## Mental and Emotional Well-being

# ENTER/EXIT CONTROL

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If employees need access to buildings other than their own, supervisors must coordinate clearance with the OneCard office. Staff arrival and departures should be scheduled in 30-minute increments to reduce personal interactions at building access points, hallways, stairs/elevators, etc.

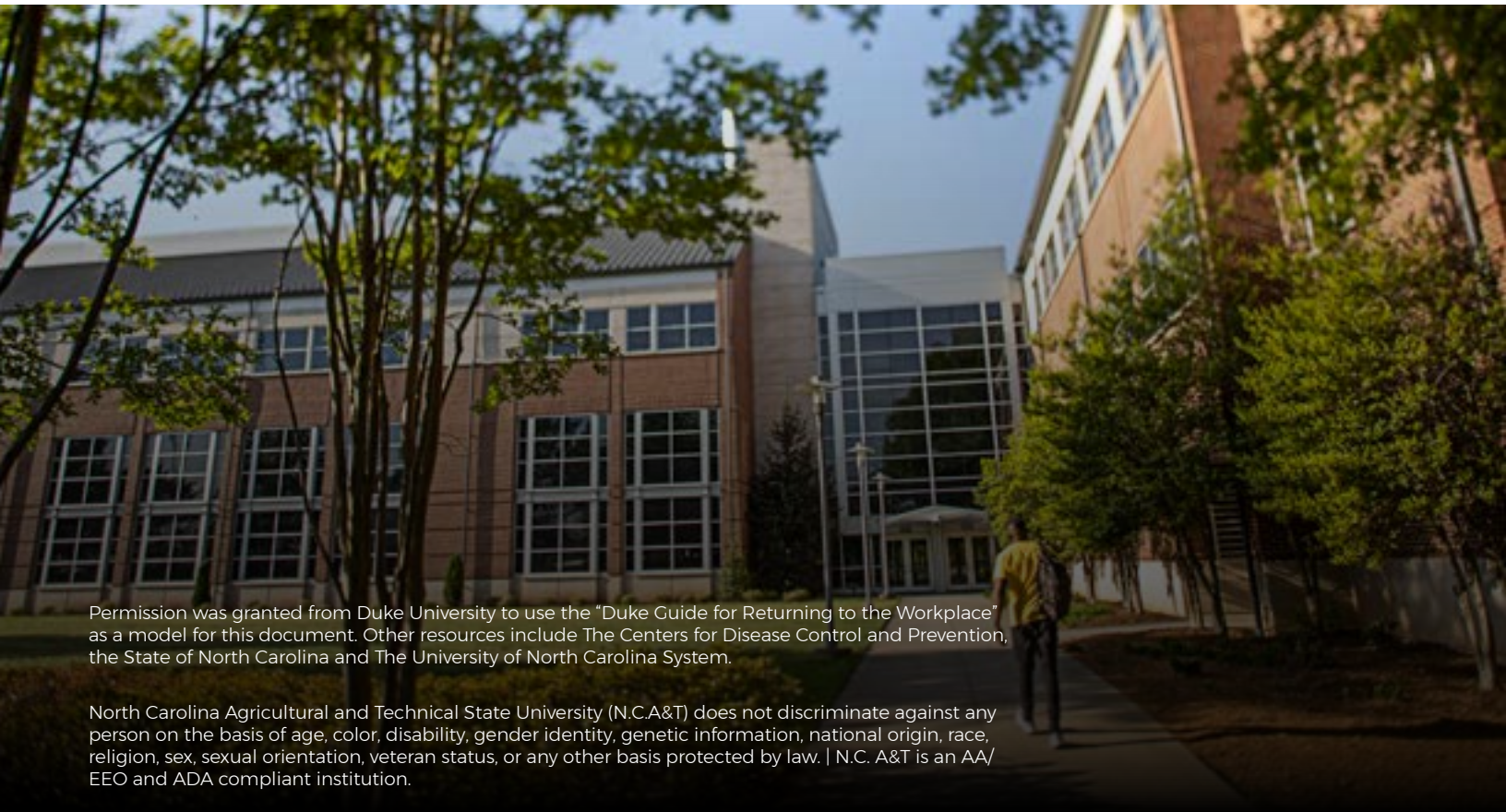
Once employees are instructed to return to the workplace, they should report to work or depart work through the designated building access and at the designated time to limit the number of people entering and exiting buildings at any one time.

Personal guests and trainees are not allowed on worksites during this time.

Violation of these guidelines may result in the immediate revocation of building access privileges, as well as corrective action.

## Signage and Posters

Building occupants are expected to follow signage on traffic flow through building entrances, exits, elevator usage and similar common use areas.



Permission was granted from Duke University to use the “Duke Guide for Returning to the Workplace” as a model for this document. Other resources include The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the State of North Carolina and The University of North Carolina System.

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