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Brewery Back to Work Plan

Virginia's craft beer industry manufactured 344,972 barrels of beer and had a \$1.9 billion economic impact last year. Production was up 10.4% over the previous year. The industry had grown to an estimated 290 breweries - placing the Commonwealth in 16th place for breweries per capita in the U.S. COVID-19 has stopped that growth and will likely take years to recover.

Although the manufacturing operations of these breweries have continued to operate through the COVID-19 pandemic, their retail tasting rooms have been closed and thousands of personnel laid off. Most breweries have relied upon curbside, delivery, and direct shipment income but recent polling suggests that revenue is down by an average of 75%.

Breweries have also lost most of their draught sales due to the closure of restaurants. This has created an additional burden because out-of-code beer is unmarketable and will have to be destroyed.

Regardless of these challenges, breweries, as social and tourism destinations, have continued operations and are helping with the COVID-19 recovery by providing food banks for retail workers or manufacturing hand sanitizer to help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. However, nearly 22% of breweries have reported that a prolonged economic shutdown will threaten their viability. So, the VCBG supports a responsible plan for reopening the economy that is data driven, mitigates the risk of resurgence, protects the most vulnerable and prioritizes readiness.

It is time to get Virginia back to work safely.

Brewery Back to Work Plan

This document is provided by the Virginia Craft Brewers Guild as a voluntary service and does not constitute legal or medical advice.

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PUBLIC HEALTH MILESTONES & METRICS

[Forward Virginia](#) was announced by Governor Ralph Northam as a blueprint for easing public health restrictions. The plan provided for the following public health milestones and metrics consistent with the *U.S. Guidelines for Opening Up America Again* that would allow for a Phase 1 opening of the Virginia economy:

- ↓ Moving downward: Percentage of positive tests over 14 days
- ↓ Moving downward: Hospitalizations over 14 days
- ↔ Enough hospital beds & intensive care capacity
- ↑ Increasing & sustainable supply of PPE

Governor Northam also appointed a [COVID-19 Business Task Force](#) to provide advice and guidance to the Cabinet on a safe, responsible strategy for easing restrictions on businesses and individuals. We are aware that the task force will recommend General Employer Guidelines and rigorous Non-Essential Business Guidelines that will enable the limited opening of the economy.

As such, the VCBG recommends Brewery Guidelines for consideration in Phase I of Forward Virginia that will enable these employers to open immediately. All other business sectors should be encouraged to develop their own “COVID-19 Industry Guidelines” that are consistent with General Employer Guidelines and mitigate the risk of resurgence.

Workplaces vary greatly, hence, employers need to be creative to optimize safety. **Businesses also require certainty and prolonged cashflow impairment will result in increased unemployment, bankruptcies, slow economic recovery, and other healthcare impacts¹.** Therefore, it is recommended that Phases 1-3 be clearly articulated with May, June, and July timelines.

PHASE I - BREWERY GUIDELINES (MAY 15, 2020)

Breweries must exercise extreme diligence and take the following precautions when opening tasting rooms to customers:

- Require face coverings for all employees serving customers. Encourage customers to wear face coverings.
- Require personal hygiene guideline utilization. Follow [CDC guidelines](#) and wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; after touching machinery or vehicles; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Require industrial hygiene guideline utilization and [training](#). Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces regularly. Properly dispose of PPE. Safely handle money and credit cards. Follow [OSHA beverage vendor guidance](#).
- Require 6-foot social distancing, including seating and tables, inside and outside, while utilizing a [hierarchy of controls](#) and utilize physical barriers where possible (e.g. partitions, plexiglass shields) to minimize face-to-face interactions. Allow for full use of all outside space contiguous to the brewery for sales.
- No public gatherings greater than 10 people. No inside or outside seating of more than 10 people from a single party at a table.
- Only new containers, growlers and crowlers will be filled. No used containers will be refilled.
- Encourage symptomⁱⁱ checking for employees/visitors/customers/vendors/contract workers.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick or have been exposed to someone that is sick.
- Require individuals returning to work from isolation or quarantine to be released by a health professional.



Implementation of these voluntary guidelines, coupled with General Business Guidelines, along with face coverings and enhanced hygiene by the general public, should enable all Virginia businesses to open in Phase I by May 15.

PHASE II – III GENERAL EMPLOYER GUIDELINES (JUNE 10 & JULY 1, 2020)

- The VCBG recommends that the General Employer Guidelines that are expected in Phases 2-3 should be clearly articulated now and include, but not be limited to, the public health conditions that would allow for the removal or specific revision of travel, in-person meeting, and workplace or public gathering restrictions.
- The VCBG recommends that any removal of business activity restrictions should also clearly articulate the decline in public health conditions that would necessitate a rescission of those decisions. For example, there is legitimate question as to whether the downward trend in positive tests should be equally weighted against hospitalizations or healthcare system capacity.

CHALLENGES: PPE, TESTING, TRACING, EMERGENCY RESPONSE & CHILD CARE

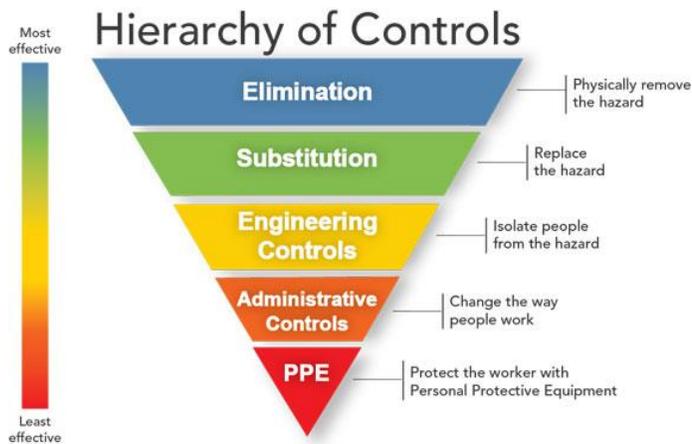
- PPE – There is inadequate PPE in the market for employers and citizens. A substantial effort must be undertaken to provide face masks for every citizen of the Commonwealth in the next 30 days.
- Testing – There is inadequate information about and availability of COVID-19 testing kits and sites. Every employer should have access to rapid response testing for employees within 30 miles of their facility within the next 30 days.
- Tracing – There is inadequate training and direction for employers on how to conduct tracing of employees that have been in contact with an infected person. There is also inadequate information about record keeping, HIPAA liabilities and obligations, and government agency reporting requirements. Cloud-based training should be available to employers within the next 30 days.
- Emergency Response – Employers are unclear about the proper steps to take for handling an emergency situation where there is a large-scale exposure of a specific workforce to an infected individual or individuals. Every employer should have access to rapid response teams of public health officials within 30 miles of their facility within the next 30 days.
- Child Care – Until child-care facilities and schools can reopen under strict safety guidelines, it will be difficult to return all Virginians to work.

HAND SANITIZER

Virginia's breweries will be affected by COVID-19 changes to consumer behavior for an indeterminate time. Citizens and businesses will continue to need access to local sources of hand sanitizer. Breweries want to continue to manufacture hand sanitizer for the foreseeable future as a public health service and economic recovery mechanism. The Commonwealth of Virginia (through its tax and procurement systems) should permanently incentivize the manufacturing, product purchase and utilization of hand sanitizer by Virginia breweries.

HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS

Controlling worker exposures to occupational hazards is best managed through a hierarchy of controlsⁱⁱⁱ. The "elimination" control methods are potentially more effective and protective than "PPE" only. Following this hierarchy normally leads to the implementation of inherently safer systems and a substantially reduced risk of illness or injury.



NATIONAL & STATE PLANS

- [US Guidelines for Opening Up America Again](#)
- [Forward Virginia](#)

RESOURCE

- [VCBG COVID-19 Resource Center](#)
- [BA Coronavirus Resource Center](#)

ADVISORY BOARD

VCBG Leadership Council

For more information on the Virginia Craft Brewers Guild, visit our website at www.vacraftbeer.com or contact a team member at 804.643.7489.

ⁱ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4880023/>

ⁱⁱ Symptoms include fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or above, cough, trouble breathing, sore throat, sudden change in taste or smell, muscle aches or pains

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/hierarchy/default.html>