



Work from Home: Safety eBook

January 5, 2021



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How Can I Work From Home Safely and Productively?

It's been a time of rapid change for Hawaii's workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic. Workers who have been able to work from home have had to adjust to a new paradigm of staying productive while juggling a new environment, new technology, and new distractions.

Recently, Hawaii was rated the second-worst state in the U.S. to work from home due to the following factors: internet access, cybersecurity, and crowded households (Star Advertiser, 2020). To tackle the rising challenges of working from home, we've put together some tips to help our local workforce maintain a safe and productive home office environment.

As with any work decision you make, you need to do what's specifically appropriate for you and your business. We encourage you to seek additional guidance from your organization. This material is provided for informational purposes only. It should not be used as legal or medical advice. Please consult a legal or medical professional for further guidance.

Questions?

Call our Team at **(808) 791-4900**.



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Safety First in the Home Office

There are more safety hazards in local homes than you might think. Beyond tripping over a pile of slippers at your front door, other hidden safety hazards exist in your home that should be addressed before you get to work. Start by conducting a safety assessment to identify the risks that may be present in your home. Risks may include ergonomic, physical, chemical, biological, environmental, and electrical hazards.

For Owners/Supervisors: 4 Steps to a Healthy Home Office

1 PLAN

Create a work from home safety plan for your organization by first reviewing your OSHA 300 logs to find out the most frequent and common injuries in your business and if they can also occur at home.

Look at the job titles of employees who are injured most frequently and ask yourself:

- Which employees are seeing the most strain?
- What motions or movements are they required to do?
- What type of injuries do they have?

3 CHECK

After employees implement changes to their home workspaces, check in often to measure their success.

2 DO

Once you identify where improvements can be made, choose solutions that every employee can participate in:

- Provide an employee checklist of things to prepare for their home offices
- Provide a list of recommended daily exercises or stretches at home
- Encourage employees to stay hydrated throughout the day

4 ADJUST

Are employee injuries happening less frequently? If not, you may want to reassess, adjust, and implement new solutions. Repeating this cycle is a great way to decrease ergonomic injuries in both the workplace and at home over time.

Risk Assessment Checklist

- ☐ Workstation and area
- ☐ Lighting
- ☐ Flooring
- ☐ Ventilation
- ☐ Computers, laptops and tablets
- ☐ Security of data
- ☐ Insurance, if applicable
- ☐ Electrical installations

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Work From Home: Ergonomic Safety

Ergonomics is the study of people's efficiency in their working environment. Ergonomic injuries happen when a person's daily tasks are greater than the abilities of their body. Seemingly simple movements repeated over and over during the workday can result in aches, sprains, and recurring pain. Having a dedicated, ergonomically sound workstation helps to reduce the risk of injury and is a crucial step in staying productive and healthy.

Three Essential Parts of an Ergonomic Workstation



CHAIR:

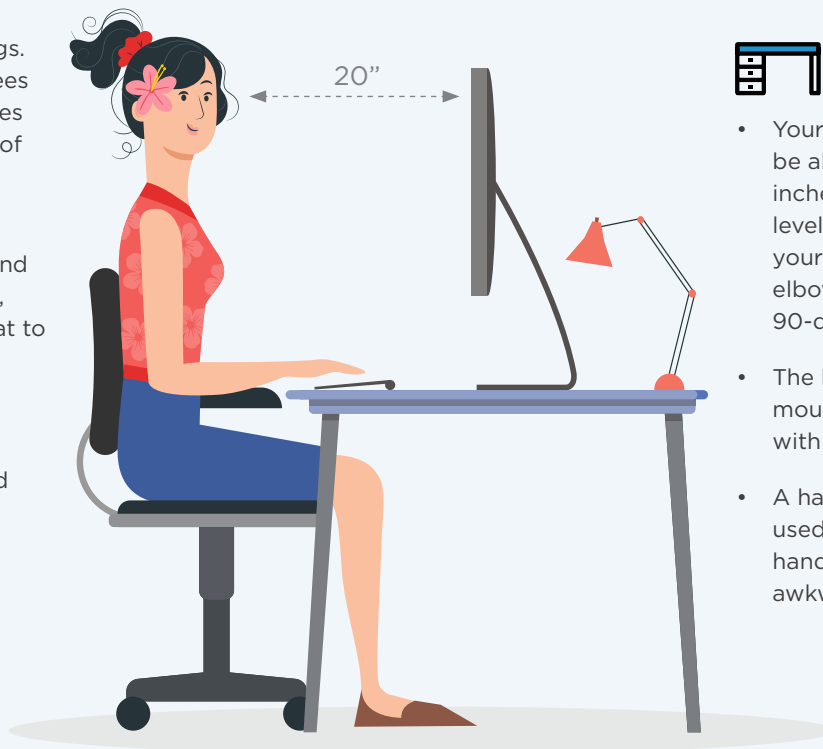
- A rolling chair with back support and padding is a good option.
- Adjust your chair so that your knees and elbows maintain a 90-degree right angle.
- Do not cross your legs. The back of your knees should be a few inches away from the edge of the chair.
- If you aren't able to place your feet flat and firmly on the ground, use a footstool or mat to protect your back.
- Keep your back, shoulders, and neck straight and centered towards the monitor.



MONITOR:

- Position your monitor at least 20 inches away from your face (about an arm's length away). A larger screen may require more viewing distance. Your eye level should sit at the top third of the screen.

- For every 20 minutes of screen time, look at an object at least 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.



DESK:

- Your desk should be about 26 to 30 inches above ground level, depending on your height, and your elbows should be at a 90-degree right angle.
- The keyboard and mouse should be in line with your elbows.
- A hand rest can be used to prevent your hands from bending awkwardly.

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Stand up and stretch

Stand up and take periodic stretch breaks to stay relaxed and prevent overexertion injuries. Set a few alarms throughout the day to remind yourself. It's recommended to stretch for 3-5 minutes every hour. Prioritize exercising and remaining active outside of work hours as well. Simple stretches include:

- **Diagonal neck stretch** – Turn your head slightly, then look down towards your pants pocket. Hold for 15 seconds and repeat on each side a few times.
- **Shoulder shrug** – Slowly bring shoulders up to your ears and hold for a few seconds. Rotate shoulders back and down. Repeat a few times.
- **Executive stretch** – Sit down and lock your hands behind your head. Bring your elbows back and hold for a few seconds. Inhale deeply when stretching.
- **Foot rotation** – Sit down and slowly rotate each foot from the ankle a few times in each direction.



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Work From Home: Slips, Trips, and Falls

Slips, trips, and falls are some of the most common types of workplace injuries. For those working at home with children, your floors can sometimes be a minefield of Lego pieces, safety scissors, and other obstacles. Familiarize yourself with common tripping hazards and what you can do to prevent them:

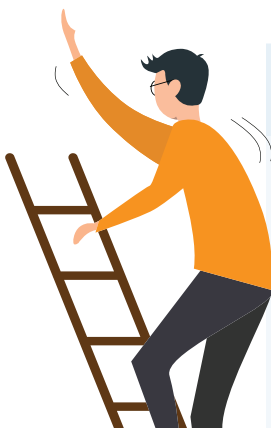
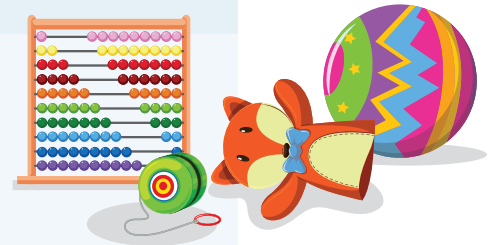


SLIPS

- Improper footwear (going barefoot outside, wearing socks on slippery floors)
- Slick floors (spilled drinks, grease, cleaning products, hard to spot spills, rain)
- Debris (unraked leaves and foliage, fallen mangoes or fruit)

TRIPS

- Clutter (kids toys, open drawers, electronic power cords, slippers in front of doorways)
- Flooring (uneven floormats, curled carpeting, uneven flooring)



FALLS

From elevation:

- Stairs
- Ladders
- Using improper stools and ladders without support

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Prevention Tips:



Good housekeeping and maintenance

Put items in their assigned places to ensure they aren't slipped or tripped on. Clean up spills immediately to minimize your exposure to these hazards. Make a cleaning routine to ensure nothing is overlooked. Get the whole ohana to help. Include outdoor as well as indoor spaces.



Use proper step stools and ladders

Ensure that step stools and ladders are sturdy enough to bear your weight, they are in a stable condition to keep you balanced, and that you can maintain three points of contact (between one hand and two feet or two feet and one hand) at all times.



Keep areas well-lit

Visibility is key to recognizing slip, trip, and fall hazards. Lighting helps to ensure we can identify those hazards, even in spaces that we are most familiar with.



Slow down

Things can get hectic when you're juggling tasks at home, but don't rush or run around the house or you could risk a nasty fall. Take a breath and take it easy.

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Work From Home: Caution with Chemicals

With all the extra cleaning we're doing during the pandemic, we often forget these products can pose a hazard if not handled properly. Chemical hazards can cause severe irritation to the throat, nose, and skin. So be mindful of the substances in your home that could damage your health.

Everyday chemical products in your home:

Clorox Bleach, Windex, Simple Green, Clorox Wipes, Drano Drain Cleaner, detergent, Febreze Air Freshener, Lysol Disinfectant Spray and hand sanitizers.



Common chemical hazards:

- Accidentally drinking or consuming the chemical.
- Inhaling chemical fumes or splashes.
- Direct skin or eye contact with the chemical.

Prevention Tips:

- Clean up any spills or leaks immediately.
- Cap and close all chemical product containers properly.
- Store chemicals away from commonly frequented work areas such as the bedroom, office, and kitchen.
- Opt for less hazardous chemicals with natural ingredients when possible.
- Use gloves, eye protection, or other PPE if necessary when handling chemical substances.
- Label all chemicals, especially when putting them into a secondary container such as a cup or empty bottle so that it does not get confused for another substance.
- Take your time when cleaning and make sure excess chemicals are wiped thoroughly.
- Wash your hands well with soap and water after each use.

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Work From Home: Invisible Hazards

Sometimes the biggest hazards are the ones we can't easily see. Biological hazards are in the air and on surfaces, so be sure that your workspace and work area is clean, well-ventilated, and sanitized regularly.

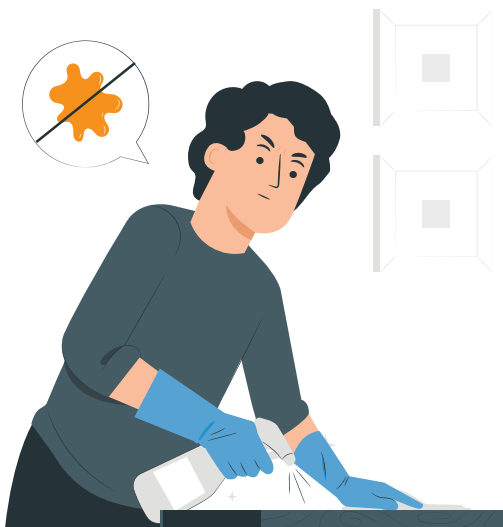
Common biological hazards:

Coming into contact with gas leaks, asbestos, tobacco smoke, mold, dust, insects, plants, animals, blood, other infectious materials, bacteria, and viruses.



Prevention Tips:

- Clean and vacuum to prevent the buildup of dust.
- Keep areas dry and eliminate moisture to prevent mold.
- Sanitize high-touch surfaces to prevent the spread of bacteria and viruses.
- Wear gloves and necessary protection any time you deal with blood or other infectious materials such as urine, feces, saliva, and vomit.
- Do not smoke inside the house.
- If you suspect any leak or potential hazard through sight or smell, evacuate and have it checked out.
- Clean up after your pets and watch for things they may track into the house, such as fleas, mites, and insects.



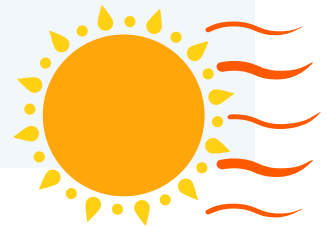
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Work From Home: Environmental Hazards

Environmental hazards are commonly created in the home from excessive noise or insufficient lighting. These hazards can be minimized by taking the time to properly set up a designated, private office space that is free of distractions.

Common environmental factors in the home:

Heat, humidity, poor ventilation, insufficient light, excessive noise.



Common environmental hazards:

- Suffering from heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
- Poor lighting that leads to slips, trips, or falls.
- Damaging or distracting noise (near the street, yard work, or TV).

Prevention Tips:

- Especially in Hawaii, make sure your work environment is kept cool and well ventilated – open up a window, turn on the AC, or use a fan.
- Avoid walking in areas with poor lighting. Turn on the lights or use a flashlight.
- Situate yourself in an area free of distracting or loud noise.



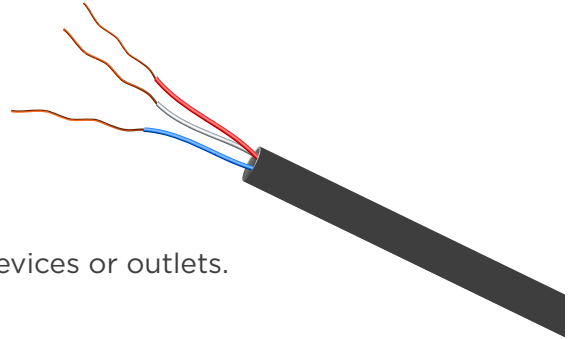
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Work From Home: Electrical Safety

The demands of distance working and learning in Hawaii means more devices and accessories are being powered throughout the house. Be aware of the stress you're putting on your outlets, and be mindful of the condition of cords, chargers, and power strips.

Common electrical hazards:

- Damaged or old extension cords or charger cords with frayed wires.
- Using tape or glue to repair frayed wiring.
- Keeping a glass of water or beverage near electrical devices or outlets.
- Daisy-chaining multiple power strips with each other.
- Permanent use of extension cords.
- Plugging in high-wattage appliances to outlets that are not meant for that purpose.



OLDER HAWAII HOMES

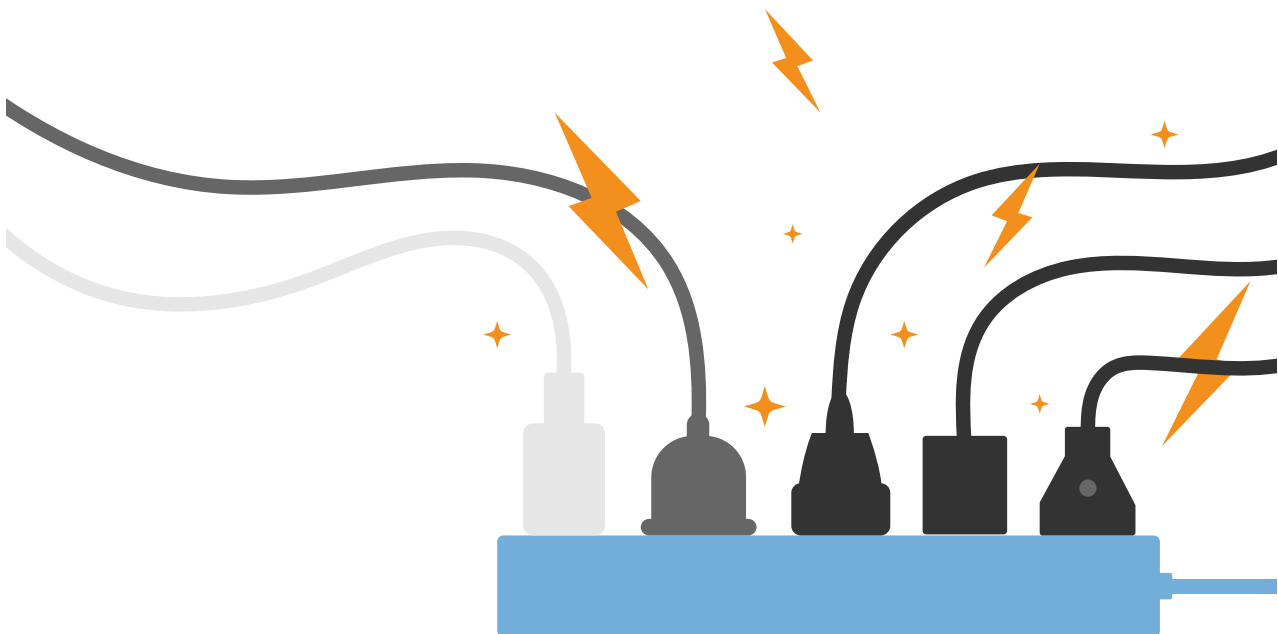
Knob-and-tube (K&T) wiring is an electrical wiring method employed in buildings and though now mostly obsolete, this type of wiring is still present in older homes as it was the standard till the 1940s. K&T wiring is not naturally dangerous, but it can pose significant safety hazards. It was perfect for powering homes during a time when only a few appliances ran on electricity. The problems they create primarily come from aging equipment or incorrect modifications. Occasionally, a house's insulation wraps around the wiring, which then creates a fire hazard. Another problem is the lack of a grounding conductor. Without it, the K&T has a higher chance of starting an electrical fire and causing extensive damage to your home. If you live in an older home, you will want to be aware of the load you place on your outlets and may consider updating your wiring.



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Prevention Tips:

- Do not overload outlets. Overloading could cause the wire and breaker to heat up and start an electrical fire.
- Unplug appliances when not in use. This saves energy and minimizes the risk of shock or fire.
- Regularly inspect electrical cords and extension cords for damage. Extension cords should only be used temporarily.
- When unplugging, take hold of the plug firmly and pull straight. Yanking can cause damage to the cord and wires.
- Never plug an A/C or fan into an extension cord or power strip.
- Never run cords under rugs, carpets, doors, or windows. This poses fire and tripping hazards.
- Keep papers, fuel sources, and other potential combustibles at least three feet away from heat sources and high wattage appliances (do not store propane tanks near water heaters).
- Ensure proper wattage for lamps and lighting by checking the fixture and bulb specifications.
- Ensure your home has smoke alarms. Test them monthly, change batteries yearly, and replace the unit every ten years.



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Work From Home: Cybersecurity

The more we work remotely, the more your cybersecurity can be compromised through hacking, theft, or cyber-attacks. Organizations establish many safeguards, processes, and policies at the office that should be upheld at your home office.



Cybersecurity Tips:

Take inventory of any technology and software you'll need – Organizations may provide a company laptop and applications. However, you may need to check on the speed and bandwidth of your internet service and wireless router. Take an inventory of any technology and software you'll need to ensure you can perform your job.

Think before you click – Avoid clicking on ads, links, or downloadable content if it's not coming from a reputable source. Go directly to the website or check the email address it's coming from to verify its legitimacy. Hackers will disguise their emails to look like a familiar contact or organization. Do not share personal or secured company information to a questionable source through email.

Maintain your logins and passwords – Use creative, unique passwords for different accounts. Monitor your notifications to ensure you do not get suspicious logins or activity on your accounts. Use multi-factor authentication when possible.

Ensure your network is secure – Anytime you're accessing work accounts, use a

secure network. Public Wi-Fi in areas such as coffee shops, malls, and airports may not be secure. Use a virtual private network (VPN) when possible.

Keep devices secured – When not in use, lock your computer. Set auto log-out in case you forget to lock your computer. Do not allow anyone else to use your work devices, even if they are family and friends.

Separate your work and personal life devices – Avoid using work devices for personal activity such as browsing the Internet, listening to music, downloading content, or reading personal emails or messages. Avoid using personal devices for work activity unless approved by your employer. Accessing work documents or files could be at risk, especially if your device is compromised.

Keep your software updated – Updating your software frequently improves the performance and security of your devices. Ensure the software update is legitimate and directly from your applications.

As a general rule, follow your company's policies and procedures for working from home.

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Work From Home: How to Handle Stress

Maintaining a good work-life balance while working at home can be challenging, especially if you also have others living in your home. Transitioning to a long-term distance work situation means changes to regular routines, extended time away from coworkers, and inaccessibility to certain resources. Building routines and setting boundaries can help make working from home more manageable. Whether it's exercise, meditation, or some simple alone-time, finding the best way to deal with stress that works for you is essential.



Know that this is a stressful time for employers and employees alike. Not to mention, working at home can be isolating and lonely for some, especially if employees are used to a collaborative office atmosphere. Even if you are physically alone, know that you are still a part of a team with others you can reach out to.

Maintain your work-life balance with these healthy habits:



Get dressed every day – Yes, that means wearing pants. Even if you might not leave the house, you'll encourage a productive mindset by preparing yourself for work through the proper attire.



Set up in a dedicated workspace – While the kitchen or the living room is usually the biggest space to set up, they are also the most communal, which means more distractions. Setting up a dedicated, private workspace can maximize your productivity while minimizing interruptions.



Set boundaries for work hours - Setting boundaries can help you gauge when you're overworking yourself. We can easily blur the lines of work and life, especially because our laptops and smartphones are always on. But learning to shut down your laptop when it's time to focus on your family or your own self-care will help keep you balanced.

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Keep Communications Open

- While our colleagues, supervisors, and clients are not immediately around us, technology has made it easier to maintain communication and connection.
- Be sure to understand the use of different platforms and their purpose (email is for long formal messages, while messenger systems are used for quick conversations).
- Be flexible when dealing with challenges brought on by the pandemic within your organization and with outside organizations.



- » Focus on each day as it comes
 - » Reach out to support groups (families, friends, faith communities)
 - » Catch-up with coworkers and make a conscious effort to reach out to friends
- Even if you're not experiencing lows, other coworkers might be. They'll need your support now more than ever. Signs they may be struggling:



- » Addiction (to alcohol or nicotine)
- » Anger
- » Isolation
- » Lack of motivation
- » Lack of interest in hobbies
- » Over-eating or under-eating
- » Trouble getting out of bed

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Work From Home: Emergency Action Plans (EAP)

Working from home means that you should create a home Emergency Action Plan. An Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is a written document that has vital information about emergency evacuation and responses for your safety. Evacuation procedures, routes, meeting locations, floor plans, and alert procedures are some of the key components of an EAP. To create one for your household, start by reading our [Emergency Preparedness for Employees eBook](#). This free guide for the public lists different resources that can help you to formulate your home EAP.

Work-From-Home EAP Checklist

- ☐ **Establish household responses and communications** - Account for all household members and how you will communicate with one another in a time of an emergency. Establish a nearby safe meeting place in-case of evacuation due to a fire. Establish a meeting place in case of larger evacuations such as hurricanes, floods and other natural disasters.
- ☐ **Create role-specific duties and responsibilities in times of emergency** - Amongst members of your household, establish what duties and responsibilities are required.
- ☐ **Communicate an emergency with your company** - Any emergency should be dealt with immediately. As soon as you are safe, communicate the emergency with your company so that any work delays do not compound into larger problems. Know the contact information of who you should report your emergency to.
- ☐ **Know your property's vulnerabilities** - Perhaps you live in a flood zone or the condo you live in doesn't have a fire sprinkler system. Knowing the building, facility, and property vulnerabilities can help you anticipate and prioritize what to prepare for.
- ☐ **Learn your local support resources** - Identifying your neighborhood evacuation shelters, support groups, and disaster response organizations will save time during an emergency. It will also be invaluable during the recovery period, which is typically longer than the emergency itself.



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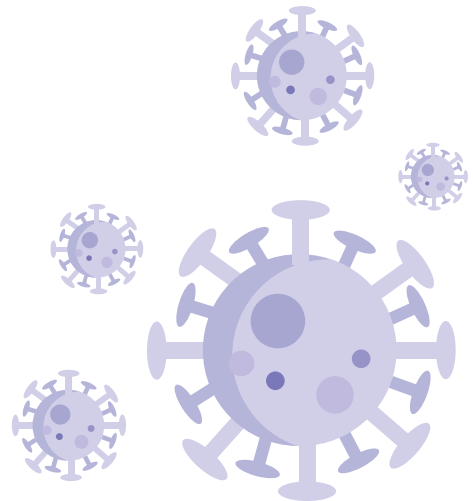
COVID-19 Resources

Because guidelines for COVID-19 safety are ever-changing, we recommend you stay up to date with:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>
 - » What to do if you are sick
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>
 - » What to do if someone in your household is sick
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html>
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>
- United States Environmental Protection Agency <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus>
- Hawai'i State Department of Health <https://health.hawaii.gov/coronavirusdisease2019/>

Familiarize yourself with your company's sick leave policies and practices:

- » Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)
- » Health Benefits
- » TDI and Workers' Compensation
- » Other applicable company benefits



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From the Remote Desk of Barron Guss

To our clients and members of our business community,

COVID-19 continues to change the landscape of Hawai'i business profoundly. The constant flow of everchanging information regarding the crisis continues to overwhelm business owners. At simplicityHR we always do our best to simplify this information so you can make informed decisions and do what's best for your company.

For the last 50 years, we've taken to heart our responsibility to not only serve, but to make a difference with our clients and our community. While tomorrow's business landscape may look different, our commitment will remain the same – to support your business today, tomorrow, and for the next 50 years.

Sincerely,

Barron L. Guss
President and CEO

About Us

simplicityHR by ALTRES serves as the human resources “back office” for more than 2,200 local businesses. We provide expert payroll processing, HR administration, workers' compensation coverage and claims management, health care plans, and exceptional employee benefits packages, as well as training for managers and staff.

Questions?

Call our team at **(808) 791-4900**

