

ISSUE 2 | VOLUME 11  
JUL-SEP 2020

SAFETY & LOSS PREVENTION

# OUTLOOK

## STAYING GROUNDED

MAKING ELECTRICAL SAFETY A TOP  
PRIORITY IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

ALSO INSIDE:  
COVID-19 CHALLENGES  
How We Work, Play, and Live





**OSHA estimates approximately 190 people die each year from electrical accidents, which are one of the “Fatal Four” types of injuries**

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# STAYING GROUNDED

## Managing Hazards to Avoid Electrical Injuries in the Workplace

Regardless of industry or occupation, most American workers are exposed to electrical energy every day, and with that exposure comes risk. Electrical hazards can be anything from a frayed extension cord to a downed powerline. Electrical injuries are one of the “Fatal Four,” along with “falls”, “struck by”, and “caught in/between” injuries. OSHA estimates approximately 190 people die each year from electrical accidents — that’s three people per week. Although not as prevalent as other types of injuries, electrical injuries tend to be more costly and more frequently fatal — one in 13 injuries caused by electricity results in death. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, each workplace death costs the U.S. economy \$5 million.

## What is electricity?

Electricity is the presence and flow of charged particles called electrons in one direction through a conductive material. It can occur naturally as lightning or static, or be produced by a generator or battery. A generator transforms a mechanical force into electrical current using motion energy — a magnet that spins, a combustion engine that drives a rotating shaft, or a waterfall that turns a turbine, for example.

Electricity requires a good conductor in order to flow. Wires are often made of copper, brass, or steel, as they are good conductors. Purified water is actually a poor conductor, but the addition of impurities such as salt make it an excellent conductor. Unfortunately this is why the human body is so good at conducting electrical current.

## Why is electricity so dangerous?

As electric current is conducted, resistance to the flow results in heat. Too much heat can result in fire or burns to skin and internal organs. When electrical current passes through the body, it overloads the body’s nervous system and causes muscles to involuntarily contract. If the person is holding the conductive material (e.g., a wire, a power tool, etc.), the shock will cause the fingers to grasp the item more firmly, making it impossible to let go. Not just skeletal muscles, but the diaphragm and heart muscles can also be affected, causing asphyxiation and/or cardiac arrest.



**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

- Electricity is generated by the movement of a loop of wire or disc of copper between the poles of a magnet.
- Electricity travels at the speed of light, about 300,000 kilometers per second.
- A bolt of lightning lasts less than one second and can measure up to 3 million volts.
- The first common domestic items to be powered by electricity were the sewing machine, fan, kettle, and toaster.
- Ore trains in Sweden traveling down to the coast generate five times the amount of electricity they use, powering nearby towns and the return trip for other trains.
- It would take about 648 AA batteries to power a human being for a day (based on 1 calorie = 4.2 Joules).

# How to avoid fires, injuries, and property loss caused by electricity

## Indoors:

- Check cords for damage — replace them if they are worn, frayed, or cracked.
- Do not overload electrical outlets.
- Have a professional add permanent wiring to places where electricity will be needed long term instead of using extension cords, which are not intended for permanent use. **See the following page for more on extension cord safety.**
- Do not cover cords with rugs, as this can cause the wires to overheat and start a fire.
- Do not tack or nail cords to walls or floors — doing so can damage the wires. Use cord organization gadgets instead.
- Keep electrical outlets covered when not in use, and never put anything other than a plug into an outlet.
- Do not use tools or appliances near water. Never reach for or unplug an appliance that has fallen into water — you must turn the power off at the breaker first, then safely unplug the appliance.
- Be sure the electrical system is in good working order and up to code. Flickering lights, sparks, and non-functioning outlets are signs of a system in need of repair or upgrade.

## Outdoors:

- Never touch downed power lines. Stay at least 35 feet away, and call your local utility company or 911 if you encounter a downed line.
- Always look up! Be aware of where all overhead power lines are located when working outside, and stay at least 10 feet away from power lines.
- Carry ladders and other equipment horizontally to avoid accidentally touching a power line.
- Do not touch anything in contact with power lines.
- Keep kites, model airplanes, drones, and balloons away from power lines.
- Avoid planting trees underneath power lines or near utility equipment such as electrical boxes.
- Call before you dig! Call 811 at least 3 days before starting any digging or excavation project to have underground utility lines and cables marked for free.



# COMMON ELECTRICAL HAZARDS IN THE WORKPLACE

The first step in eliminating electrical hazards is determining the dangers. Though most of us do not work with live wires or electrical boxes on a daily basis, we all encounter electrical hazards. Most electrical accidents on the job stem from one of three things:

## 1. UNSAFE EQUIPMENT

- Loose or inadequate wiring
- Frayed or overheated wires or cords
- Pinched, pierced, or cracked wire insulation caused by heat, age, corrosion, or bending
- Damaged appliances or power tools
- Outlets close to water



## 2. UNSAFE ENVIRONMENT

- Poor maintenance
- Overhead power lines
- Flammable objects too close to hot lightbulbs
- Lightbulbs with wattage higher than the appliance
- Cords and wires covered by rugs or other objects, causing them to overheat



## 3. UNSAFE PRACTICES

- Lack of training
- Working with “live” (unguarded) parts
- Improper lockout/tagout procedures
- Handling electrical appliances with wet hands
- Inappropriate use of temporary wiring
- Overloaded outlets or extension cords





# EXTENSION CORD SAFETY

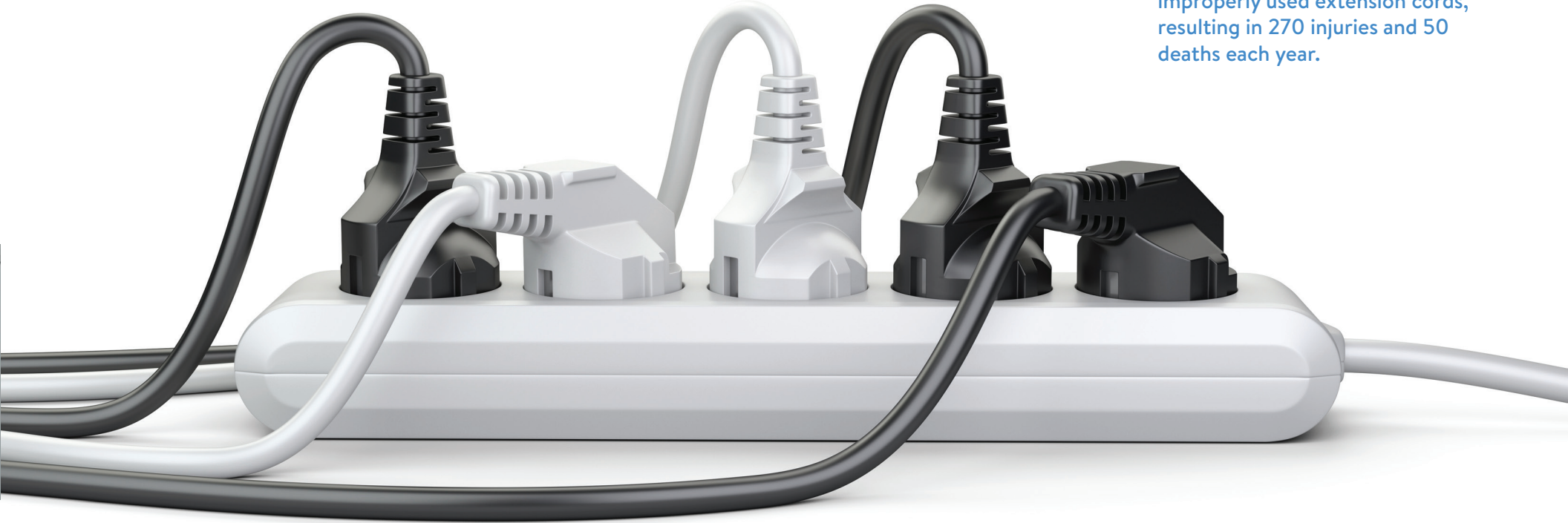
- **DON'T** plug extension cords into each other
- **DON'T** overload extension cords
- **DON'T** use cords that are cracked or frayed, have loose or bare wires, or loose connections
- **DON'T** nail or staple extension cords to walls or baseboards
- **DON'T** run extension cords under rugs or carpets, or through walls, ceilings, or floors
- **DON'T** remove the ground pin from three-prong plugs in order to fit them into two-prong outlets
- **DON'T** substitute extension cords for permanent wiring
- **DON'T** use extension cords or power strips with heaters or fans which can cause cords to overheat

- **DO** use extension cords that meet or exceed the power needs of the device being used and are properly rated for intended use (indoor or outdoor)
- **DO** keep all extension cords clear of standing water (including outdoors)
- **DO** have additional outlets installed where you need them
- **DO** use only cords that have been approved by an independent testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL)



**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

Approximately 3,300 home fires are caused by faulty or improperly used extension cords, resulting in 270 injuries and 50 deaths each year.





# ELECTRICAL SAFETY DURING A DISASTER

Floridians are well aware of the damage that a disaster can bring. Fires, floods, and high winds can wreak havoc on our infrastructure, and that includes the electric grid. Here are some ways you can prepare before — and protect yourself after — the storm.

## BEFORE THE STORM:

- Charge all communication devices before the storm hits.
- Unplug all electronics and move them to a high location to avoid water damage from flooding.
- Turn off the main power breaker to prevent surges to wiring and equipment.
- Protect your home with carbon monoxide detectors.

## AFTER THE STORM:

- Avoid flooded areas, as they may be electrified by downed power lines.
- Do not use any electrical equipment that has been submerged.
- If flooding or a surge has occurred, have the electrical system inspected by a qualified electrician.
- If you use a generator, be sure it has been installed properly, and know how to use it safely.
- Be extremely aware of your surroundings when venturing outside. Downed power lines can be anywhere, and they can energize the objects they touch with electricity.

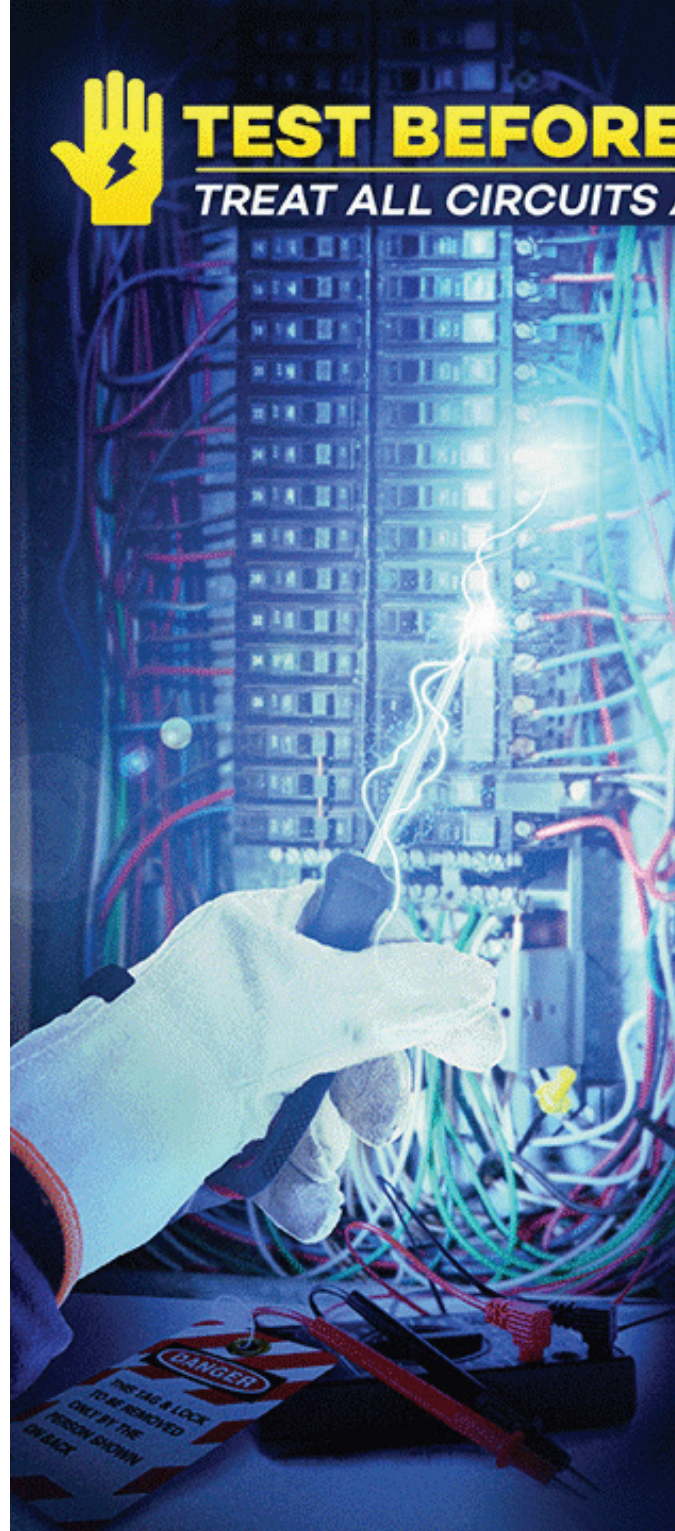


## TEST BEFORE YOU TOUCH: TREAT ALL CIRCUITS AS LIVE UNTIL TESTED

Every year, **thousands** of workers are **injured** or **killed** by circuits they thought were safely turned off. Simply shutting off the power is not enough. **Hazardous conditions** can still exist. Make sure to always

### TEST BEFORE YOU TOUCH.

- 1 Ensure all participants are qualified for the job
- 2 Identify potential hazards
- 3 Wear correct PPE and use the proper tools
- 4 De-energize the circuit
- 5 Lockout/Tagout
- 6 Test the circuit
- 7 Verify the testing device





# WORKING AROUND COVID-19

**The novel coronavirus outbreak is changing how Floridians and people everywhere work, play, and live.**

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of the latest coronavirus, COVID-19, a pandemic — and the lives of Floridians haven't been the same since. Over the past three months, state agencies and universities have taken action to help stop the spread of this virus by cancelling classes, closing offices, and implementing procedures for teleworking, as well as onsite precautionary measures (additional cleaning procedures, mandatory masks, etc.). Given the unique nature of their programs and functions, each agency has established its own individual protocols for addressing COVID-19, in adherence with the general and workplace recommendations made by the Governor and the CDC. If your agency has developed guidelines for employees' return to the workplace, please send a copy to DFS Loss Prevention section at [StateLossPreventionProgram@myfloridacfo.com](mailto:StateLossPreventionProgram@myfloridacfo.com).

According to the CDC, the virus is spread in similar ways as cold viruses, the flu, and other infectious germs — a sick person infects an area by releasing droplets of infected fluid into the air and onto surfaces, which other people then pick up and transmit to themselves. Therefore, the same precautions suggested for other airborne illnesses can be applied to COVID-19.

Many people who contract the illness experience mild symptoms and recover. Others, especially older adults, those who are immunocompromised, and those who have underlying medical conditions might be at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Some even experience no symptoms; however, it is important to recognize that even asymptomatic carriers can spread the virus to others.

## **Working onsite**

Contamination on surfaces is one of the main ways the virus spreads. Remember that everything you touch can potentially be contaminated and will need to be

kept clean. Desks, tables, phones, keyboards, etc. (all hard surfaces) need to be wiped with disinfectant regularly, especially in shared spaces, but also in individual work spaces. Don't forget about personal items such as cars and cellphones. Provide employees with antibacterial wipes and hand sanitizer, and encourage their use upon entering the workplace and frequently throughout the day.

Encourage proper hygiene practices by providing employees and customers with access to soap and water. Display posters reminding people to keep their hands clean and showing proper handwashing techniques.

Employees should not gather in offices or other small spaces if it can be avoided. The CDC suggests keeping a distance of six feet between people (social distancing).

Though laws and ordinances vary between each city and county, the CDC and the WHO recommend face masks for every individual who comes in contact with another individual.

## **If an employee becomes ill with suspected COVID-19 while at work:**

- Isolate the employee from others in a closed area.
- Inform your agency's HR department and the local health authorities.
- Make sure the employee has transportation to their home or to a medical facility.
- Clean the area where the employee has been working, including areas such as elevators, restrooms, and common areas. This may mean evacuating those areas. Personal protective equipment (PPE) should be used when cleaning.
- Identify which employees have had close contact with the infected person over the past two weeks (close contact means face-to-face for at least 15 minutes, or in the same space for at least two hours).
- Employees who have possible exposure should be informed and sent home to isolate for 14 days. (NOTE: Due to confidentiality laws, the sick person's identity cannot be revealed to other employees.)

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**



**The COVID-19 virus is about 10,000 times smaller than the period at the end of this sentence.**

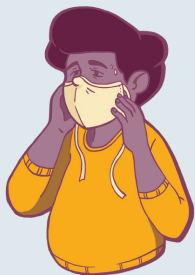
# How to put on, use, take off and dispose of a mask

1



Before putting on a mask, wash hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water

2



Cover mouth and nose with mask and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask

Avoid touching the mask while using it; if you do, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water

3



Replace the mask with a new one as soon as it is damp and do not re-use single-use masks

4



To remove the mask: remove it from behind (do not touch the front of mask); discard immediately in a closed bin; wash hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water

The CDC recommends that anyone with a fever of 100° or greater stay home from work, or work from home. Employees who have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 should self-isolate and monitor themselves for 14 days, even if no symptoms appear.

## Working from home

Telecommuting comes with its own set of practical challenges. Treat your home as you would your workspace. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily — this includes tables, chairs, doorknobs, light switches, appliances, remotes, desks, toilets, sinks, cabinet handles, etc.

## If a person in the household becomes ill with COVID-19:

- Keep the infected person quarantined in one room away from other members of the household as much as possible, including pets.
- Prohibit visitors from entering the home.
- If a dedicated bathroom cannot be provided, a shared bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected after each use by the infected person.
- The infected person should wear a facemask when outside of the quarantined area to mitigate spread of the virus.
- Avoid sharing household items such as dishes, utensils, towels, or bedding with the ill person.
- Everyone in the household should wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer frequently.
- Be sure shared spaces have good air flow (air conditioner, open windows, etc.).
- Discontinue home isolation only when the risk of transmission is thought to be low (typically 14 days after infection).

## How to stop the disease from spreading

Unlike the flu virus, there is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19, and no medicine to treat it. Therefore, it is even more important to take steps to avoid being exposed and stop the spread to other people. Clean your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose, or after being in a public place. If soap and water are unavailable, use a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.



Avoid contact with people who are sick, and stay home if you are sick. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, throw used tissues in the trash, and immediately wash your hands or use hand sanitizer. The CDC also advises wearing masks in combination with the practice of “physical distancing” — avoiding large gatherings in public places, and keeping six feet of space between yourself and people who are not members of your household.

To learn the latest news regarding COVID-19 in Florida, visit the Florida Department of Health website: <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/COVID-19/>

More helpful links from the Centers for Disease Control:

[COVID-19 Symptoms \(includes an online symptom checker\)](#)

[COVID-19 in the U.S. \(updated weekdays at noon\)](#)

[COVID-19 Information for Travel](#)

# Cleaning **VS.** Disinfecting

Cleaning refers to the removal of germs, dirt and impurities from surfaces. Cleaning does not kill germs.

Disinfecting refers to using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.



## How to clean and disinfect surfaces to prevent the spread of illness:

Immediately following an exposure, the CDC recommends closing off areas used by the ill person and waiting 24 hours or as long as possible before beginning to clean and disinfect, opening doors and windows to improve air circulation.

- Wear disposable gloves while cleaning, and wash hands immediately after removing gloves.
- Clean visibly dirty surfaces with detergent or soap and water first, then disinfect.
- For disinfection of hard surfaces, use a diluted household bleach solution, a cleaning solution with at least 70% alcohol, or an EPA-registered household disinfectant (Lysol, Pine-Sol, etc.). NOTE: Some disinfectants take longer than others to kill germs — follow the directions on the label.
- For porous surfaces such as carpets, sofas, and curtains, clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for these surfaces. Wear disposable gloves when handling dirty laundry from an ill person.
- Do not shake dirty laundry; this will minimize the possibility of dispersing the virus into the air.
- Launder items in the warmest appropriate water setting, and allow them to dry completely before use. Dirty laundry from an ill person CAN be washed with other people's items safely.
- Clean and disinfect clothes hampers and baskets that have held contaminated items. Consider using a disposable or washable bag.

## CAUTION



Follow the directions and warnings on the labels of chemical cleaners to ensure you are using them safely and effectively.

**NEVER mix:**

- Bleach and vinegar
- Bleach and ammonia
- Bleach and rubbing alcohol
- Hydrogen peroxide and vinegar

# WORKING IN CAPTIVITY:

## *A Survival Guide for the New Teleworker*



The COVID-19 crisis has forced many employers to make the shift away from traditional workspaces, and many state of Florida employees now find themselves working from home. For some, this may seem like an opportunity — no traffic, no suit and tie, no office distractions, conference calls in sweatpants ... for others, especially those without experience working outside of a business setting, the household distractions, the lack of structure, the complexities of offsite technology, and the loneliness can be challenging. Compound this with school closures, health and financial concerns, and the ever constant stress of daily life during a pandemic, and productivity threatens to go out the window.

### HOW TO STAY PRODUCTIVE

**Have a schedule.** Not having natural breaks in your day, such as the morning commute, inperson meetings, lunch, etc., can make it difficult to maintain a work/home life balance. A good way to combat this is to create “time boundaries.” Continue to follow your daily work schedule. Get up at the same time every day and get dressed (you don’t need to wear “work clothes,” just something different from what you wore to bed the night before). Set timers to remind yourself to take breaks, and have lunch around a set time. If you previously set aside certain times of day to read emails or return phone calls, continue to do that now if possible.

**Have a designated “work space.”** Piles of laundry, dirty dishes, and your Netflix queue may be calling to you — fight the urge to let household things distract you by providing yourself with a defined work space. Give yourself a nice view, adorned with photos, plants, good lighting, and pleasant aromas to make the space more appealing. If you have other people in the house with you, shut the door to discourage intrusions if you can. Use noise cancelling headphones or ear-plugs to block out household sounds. Or, if you are used to a noisier environment, find a playlist with some brain-energizing music or ambient sounds.

*Tip: Soft music or soothing nature sounds can help calm your brain and help with concentration, as well as lowering your heart rate and blood pressure. (Click [here](#) to*

*jump to page 9 for some suggestions on how to boost your productivity using music — backed by scientific research!)*

End the day by “closing up shop” — put away your work so you aren’t tempted to let it creep into your off hours.

### HOW TO MANAGE TEAM COHESION FROM A DISTANCE

**Maintain and create rituals.** A ritual is a habit formed at a team level. Rituals in organizations help to boost employee morale, increase engagement, and foster a supportive culture. Workplace strategist and best selling author Erica Keswin suggests maintaining workplace rituals during this time of physical distancing is more important than ever. Determine which workplace rituals can be maintained from a distance, which rituals can be shifted to the new work-from-home environment, and what new rituals can be created. For example, if your team had a standing weekly meeting on Tuesdays at 10:00 am, continue to have that meeting, but do it as a video conference. Even if you didn’t do it previously, having a daily or weekly check-in is a good idea.

**Make meetings personal.** Honoring the relationships between team members creates trust and connection, which is directly correlated to job performance. Be real, be vulnerable and willing to share, and allow others time and space to do the same. Including social aspects (chatting about daily life, telling jokes, etc.) and allowing members at all levels of the organization to communicate with each other can contribute to the spirit of camaraderie and increase accountability.

**Use online collaboration tools.** Hold meetings via telephone conference or using a video chat platform such as Zoom or Skype. Everyone’s learning curve is different, so be sure to provide everyone with the opportunity to learn them.

**Be mindful of bandwidth — both technological and psychological.** Employees can feel overloaded when faced with too many new tech-nologies — find one or two platforms that work best and use them consistently. Match the message of the meeting to the tech medium. Though video conferencing can be a great way to stay connected to your team, being online too much can take a toll. (Read more



about “Zoom Fatigue” [here](#).) Some people thrive on the togetherness of meeting “in person” on screen; others do not. Be sure to allow more than one method for people to communicate and share ideas. Certain types of collaboration require facetime; others work better over the telephone or email. Communicate with team members to determine what works best for everyone.

On top of the changes at work, people are navigating new situations at home: learning how to juggle work and childcare, share resources with other household members, take care of older parents — not to mention concerns about the illness — all while separated from family and friends. Allow time and flexibility to adjust, and make sure employees feel safe and appreciated.

## HOW TO COPE WITH STRESS

**Take care of yourself physically and mentally.** Everyone reacts differently to stress and isolation. It can be easy to fall into negative patterns, such as overeating, staying up late, or misusing drugs or alcohol; it is important to figure out healthy ways to handle the stress. Keep your body moving throughout the day; take breaks to stretch and walk around, outside if you can — fresh air and exercise can help boost your mood. Try exercise videos or online dance classes. Listen to uplifting music. Maintain your normal sleep patterns as much as possible. Try to avoid the temptation to graze all day in the kitchen, and eat healthy snacks and meals. Give yourself breaks from the news and social media, and connect with friends and family via phone, video conferencing, etc. Take advantage of the state of Florida’s [Employee Assistance Program](#) to connect with professionals who can help.

### Employee Assistance Program

As of July 1, 2020, your State of Florida Employee Assistance Program (EAP) vendor has changed from New Directions Behavioral Health, LLC (New Directions) DBA E4, LLC, to KEPRO. With this change, employees will continue to have access to essential EAP services found in the Employee Summary of Services below. Benefit information will be available via the People First portal and below this page.

To ensure employees receive care with no disruption of services, those who are currently receiving services through June 30, 2020, will complete their remaining allotted sessions through the current EAP vendor, E4.

If you have any questions regarding this change, please contact the KEPRO toll-free member services line at (833) 746-8337.

KEPRO EAP will be available to provide free services to all benefits-eligible employees. The EAP has an abundance of resources to help you manage everyday challenges or significant life events through a robust support network of local resources.

**Please See KEPRO’s contact information to the right, to learn more about your EAP or to request services.**

## Music at Work

You probably already know that music can boost your mood — pleasant sounds help encourage the release of dopamine in the reward center of the brain. But did you know that music can also boost your productivity?

Listening to music has been shown to help people complete repetitive tasks quicker, and with fewer errors. However, the choice of music matters.

According to research from Ohio Wesleyan University, relaxing and repetitive background music works better than other background sounds or even silence to improve concentration, focus, and performance, while also reducing stress. Classical music and songs featuring nature sounds (such as rain or ocean waves) work best. Energetic and upbeat music can improve physical performance by increasing alertness and delaying fatigue.

Music with lyrics can actually hurt productivity, as the information load is too high. New melodies can also distract your brain, so choose familiar instrumental music.

If your environment doesn’t allow you to listen to music while you work, you can still get a boost by tuning in between tasks. Dr. Amit Sood, Professor of Medicine at the Mayo Clinic, said it takes just 15-30 minutes of listening time to regain concentration.

Want some inspiration? Check out these work-friendly playlists curated by Courtney E. Smith at Refinery29: [www.refinery29.com/en-us/2020/03/9580184/work-from-home-productivity-playlists](http://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2020/03/9580184/work-from-home-productivity-playlists)



Call Toll-Free 1 (833) 746-8337  
TTY: 1 (877) 344-0499  
[www.MyLifeExpert.com](http://www.MyLifeExpert.com)  
Company Code: FLORIDA



# WEBINAR

An email blast will be sent from the State Loss Prevention Program prior to each of these webinars with registration information.

## UPCOMING TRAINING WEBINARS FOR 2019:

7/1

**FACILITY & EQUIPMENT INSPECTIONS**

7/15

**PROMOTING EMPLOYEE SAFETY**

8/12

**JOB SAFETY ANALYSIS**

9/9

**ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS**

9/23

**SAFETY COORDINATOR ORIENTATION**

10/7

**HOW TO GET THE MOST VALUE OUT OF YOUR SAFETY COMMITTEE**

All webinars will be offered on each date through GoToMeeting at both 10:00 am and 2:00 pm (Eastern Time).

For questions, contact Juana Powell in the Division of Risk Management / Loss Prevention:  
[Juana.Powell@myfloridacfo.com](mailto:Juana.Powell@myfloridacfo.com)

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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