

▶ Building resilience during and after the COVID-19 pandemic

 COVID-19 guide & action checklist

 For garment factories & managers

Organizing the factory for safer and more efficient operations

This guide aims to assist factory owners and managers re-organize their factories in order to provide better safety measures and improve their operational efficiency during and after the COVID-19 outbreak.

Getting started



Includes:
Action plan,
checklist and
template

In this guide:

- ▶ Why your factory layout matters during the pandemic
- ▶ A safer and more efficient factory operation
- ▶ What is a well-organized layout?
- ▶ Key steps to organizing the factory



1. Why your factory layout matters during the pandemic

In COVID-19 times, it is especially important for your factory to stay tidy and clean, to ensure that you follow proper safety protocols when it comes to hygiene and protecting your workers. In a disorganized factory, cleaning and disinfecting areas is more challenging, increasing the risk of the virus transmitting in your factory.

Organize your factory operations for better efficiency and safety



A well-thought-out layout can also reduce the need for close proximity among your employees while supporting the flow of materials in a logical fashion. As you look at re-opening or continuing operations during this time of COVID-19, maintaining proper social distancing will depend on optimizing use of your space. Organizing your factory could also increase efficiency and reduce costs, which will be vital to ensure resilience during and after the outbreak and will increase factories competitiveness in the long term.



2. A safer and more efficient factory operation

Organizing your factory efficiently will help you make your production operations more efficient, gain time, and protect your workers' health and safety. It will also help reduce unnecessary costs by avoiding damage or waste of materials.

You might have excess time available that could be used to implement improvements in your factory that haven't been possible to implement in the past due to busy production schedules. Improving your organization now will not only help you to protect your workers but also to become more efficient and therefore save costs in this time of crisis, which will increase your competitiveness in the future.



3. What is a well-organized factory?

A well-organized factory displays the following characteristics:



1. Keeping the factory tidy



2. Good factory layout



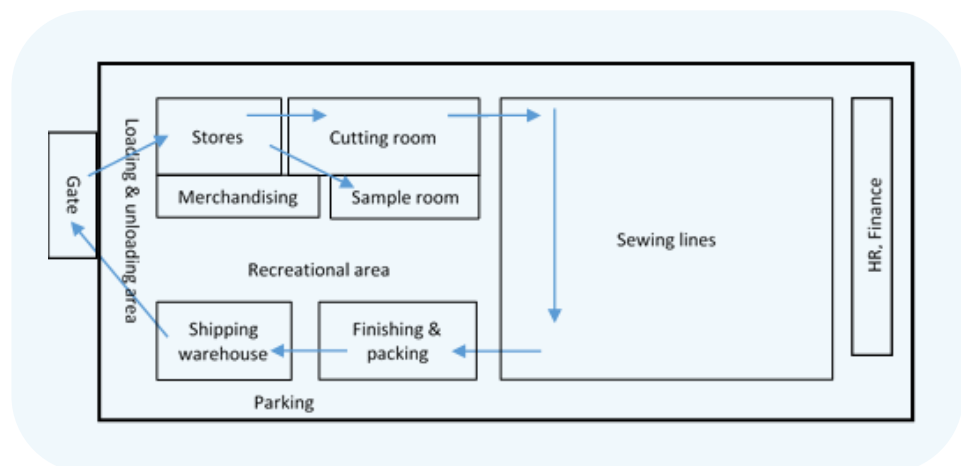
3. Regular communication & involvement of staff



A **practice of keeping the factory tidy** and orderly is important to avoid damage to or waste of materials or garments, and to protect your workers' health and safety. In tidy factories, staff store their personal belongings in lockers, all material and tools are placed in designated rooms and areas and are not stored in between rooms or on the floor. Each room's purpose is designated with a sign and workers are guided from one room to the next with paths on the floor. To keep the factory tidy, bins are provided in each room and by each desk, unnecessary and unused items are discarded, and inspections regularly take place.

Moreover, a **good factory layout** will make your production process more efficient, safer, faster and will help you gain time. In factories with a good layout, all rooms follow one continuous direction, which corresponds to the production flow (from start to end). The production direction is indicated on the floor with colour markings and the staff easily navigates the layout.

An example of a logical factory layout:



Finally, **regularly informing and involving your staff when making any changes** ensures that they understand and can maintain the organization system. It therefore helps you keep the factory organized in the long term. In well-organized factories, staff follow the layout, put back any tools and material to where they belong and know how they can contribute to keep the factory clean.



4. Getting ready for action

Now that we've reviewed the importance of a good factory layout and maintenance process, the following steps and resources can help you re-organize your factory layout for better safety and production flow.

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5 ways garment factories can organize their operations for a safer and more efficient set-up

- 01** **Prepare the factory for COVID-19 operation**
Implement social distancing measures and pandemic guidelines
- 02** **Tidy up your factory**
Provide a safe work environment and avoid damage and waste
- 03** **Create routines to stay tidy and clean**
Put systems in place to keep things organized
- 04** **Improve your factory layout**
Use excess time to change the overall layout of your factory.
- 05** **Inform and involve your workers**
Keep your staff updated and engaged as things change





Putting the measures in action: Factory checklist

1. Prepare your factory for operations during COVID-19

To be able to fulfil the requirements of social distancing in your factory and to keep everyone safe, you need to implement several measures before your factory can resume operations.

For a comprehensive overview of actions to take in your factory during the COVID-19 outbreak to enable social distancing, it is strongly recommended that you seek advice from the [“COVID-19 Management Guidance”](#) for garment factories developed by the ILO’s Better Work. The below actions are a sample of recommended actions in this guide.

Action	Ease of implementation	Timeline	Check
Clean your factory and complete disinfection prior to workers’ return to the factory.	✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set up hand washing stations at the gate so that all visitors and employees wash their hands before entering your factory. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure at least two meters distance from one tap to another. ▶ Hand washing stations should have clean, dry cloth, single-use towel or hand drier – avoid reusable towels. ▶ Consider installing foot rather than hand operated taps. 	✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adjust the layout of the sewing machine so that it provides a physical distancing of at least 2 meters (6 feet) from other people, distance between workers who work in the sewing department.	✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure similar physical distancing of at least 2 meters (6 feet) in cutting and finishing sections.	✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Modify the dining area to accommodate for social distancing by sitting at different tables or introducing barriers between tables.	✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase ventilation in the work environment by installing more pedestal or ceiling fans and/or opening the windows more.	✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Install air purifiers, especially in areas which are closed and / or air-conditioned.	✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Tidy up your factory

You need to keep your factory tidy not only to provide a safe work environment for everyone but also to avoid damage and waste. Use the excess time you may have available during this crisis to clean up your factory. The following actions will help you immediately improve the tidiness of your factory.

Action	Ease of implementation	Timeline	Check
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Clean all floors, tables, equipment, shelves and tools.	✓✓✓	»»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discard the waste in your factory.	✓✓✓	»»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear up all spaces outside or in between production rooms so that they allow for easy transportation and circulation.	✓✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Return all excess materials to the dedicated storage areas. Try to consider how you can get rid of any excess materials as it will cost you money over time to store it in the factory (for more information, check out the Reducing Costs guide).	✓✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organize paper documents on shelves and in filing cabinets to avoid damage.	✓✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Place waste bins in each room, by each desk or at the end of each table and by each machine for workers to throw waste	✓✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create locker rooms, where your staff can keep their personal belongings in lockers.	✓✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remove machinery that is not in use nor will be in the future.	✓✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Create routines to enable your factory to stay tidy and clean

Cleaning and tidying up is important. So is creating routines and putting systems in place that enables your factory to stay tidy, clean and organized in the long term. Make sure that you assign the new tasks to some of your staff and make it part of their responsibility to perform tasks regularly according to the plan.

Useful tip: You can use the template in Appendix A to decide on your own cleaning schedule.

Action	Ease of implementation	Timeline	Check ✓
Create properly labelled storage areas for items such as samples, pattern boards, defective items or waste.	✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set up a system to ensure floors, tables, equipment, shelves and tools are cleaned on a specified regular basis.	✓✓	»»»» Mid-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set up a system to ensure washrooms and other facilities are cleaned regularly as specified.	✓✓	»»»» Mid-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set up a system to ensure waste bins are emptied and waste is discarded as regularly as needed.	✓✓	»»»» Mid-term	<input type="checkbox"/>

Set up a system to ensure that you periodically check for pests and insects in the factory.	✓✓	»»»» Mid-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set up a maintenance schedule to check your machines and equipment on a recommended basis so as to minimize breakdowns.	✓✓	»»»» Mid-term	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Improve your factory layout

At this point, you could also use excess time to look at the overall layout of your factory. Maybe you already have some ideas of how some restructuring could enable work to proceed much more efficiently but you have not had the chance to make these changes before.

A logical, simple, safe and well-indicated factory layout helps reduce material transportation time and walking time and avoids damage, accidents and unnecessary movement of human traffic and contact. Whilst it might be difficult and challenging to have an ideal factory layout, you can come up with a layout (given the guidelines for the new normal that is evolving) that helps you to re-organise and optimize your factory space within the floor space that is available, in the short term.

Action	Ease of implementation	Timeline	Check ✓
Draw an overview of your factory layout if you do not have one already. Useful tip: You can use the template in Appendix C to draw your layout.	✓✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assess whether your layout fulfils the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Rooms follow one single continuous direction ▶ Directions follow the production flow ▶ Layout is easy for staff to understand and navigate ▶ Layout is safe for staff, with proper distances maintained between workers ▶ Layout minimizes material transportation and walking time ▶ Space is used as efficiently as possible <p>Layout adheres to the social distancing and hygiene requirements for operating during the COVID-19 pandemic (check the "COVID-19 Management Guidance" by ILO's Better Work)</p>	✓✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Based on the criteria above, consider how you could improve your layout. Write down the changes that you would like to make and draw an overview of your new layout. Useful tip: You can use the template in Appendix C to draw your layout.	✓✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implement the changes to your factory layout. Ensure that you keep track of all the changes that you are making so that you easily can inform your staff about the new layout once they return to the factory. Useful tip: You can display your new layout on the Notice Board(s).	✓✓	»»»» Mid-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involve your key representative staff when making the changes to your factory layout. Inform them about how to follow the new organization system (see recommendation 5 below).	✓✓	»»»» Mid-term	<input type="checkbox"/>

Useful tip: You can use the Workers Council or CFT or any other representative team.			
Evaluate your factory layout on a regular basis and re-adjust as needed. Useful tip: Ask for suggestions and ideas and have a separate Employee suggestions Box for this or use a WhatsApp group or similar app.	✓✓	»»»»»» Long-term	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Inform and involve your workers

To make sure that everyone complies with the new social distancing and hygiene measures, as well as to keep the factory tidy, clean and organized, it is important that you inform and involve your staff in the process. This is also important to ensure that workers feel safe at the workplace.

Action	Ease of implementation	Timeline	Check ✓
Organize a training for all your employees (limited people at a time) once you resume operations in the factory to create awareness about the measures that are in place in the factory to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Useful tip: Use the concepts of a Townhall meeting or Team briefing (maintain social distancing).	✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
When resuming operations, brief your staff regularly about already implemented and upcoming measures to prevent the risk of transmitting the COVID-19 virus.	✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use different channels of communication to inform your workers about measures taken in the factory, such as notice boards, posters, meetings, leaflets and audio messages and / or popularly used Apps (faster and more economical).	✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assign tasks to staff members to ensure that new measures taken keep the factory clean, tidy and organized are performed timely and also in the long term.	✓✓	»»» »»» Mid-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Whenever new workers join your factory, train them on the COVID-19 measures before they start work, the organization in the factory and how they can contribute to keeping the factory and their workplace clean, tidy and organized and safe.	✓✓	»»» »»» Mid-term	<input type="checkbox"/>

Useful tip: To plan and implement all these actions, you can use the template in Appendix B.

Appendix C: Templates to draw your existing and new factory layout

Template to draw your existing factory layout

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for drawing the existing factory layout. The box occupies most of the page below the title bar.

Template to draw your new factory layout





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For more guides and resources to help you navigate the global COVID-19 pandemic, visit:

▶ ilo.org/covid19

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A better world starts here.