Tacoma-Pierce County is Open for Business!

Pierce County is “Open for Business”, carefully navigating the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, and working to answer the many questions in the business community. The situation is evolving, as we all know. There are some resources available now and additional resources are being planned. The goal of this guide is to help you get valuable information and connect you with resources for your business.

Bottom-line: we know that you are all working to keep your businesses running and profitable and we want to do everything we can to help.

For the latest, please continue to visit our website which is updated daily.

https://www.edbtacomapierce.org/covid-19/

In addition, please check your local jurisdiction websites for information on potential relief packages.

These are truly uncharted times and we’re learning right alongside you as we navigate COVID-19 together.

Stay healthy.

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Local Business Information Webinars

Ongoing Business Information Webinar
Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County are launching a series of regular conference calls to discuss the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation. We will cover what is known to date about existing and emerging assistance to companies and employees impacted by COVID-19. Meeting times subject to change to ensure the availability of speakers and to be respectful of other important news events. Please check our website and social media for daily updates on meeting times.

Health and Safety

- Centers for Disease Control
- Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
- Washington State Official "One Stop" COVID-19 Website
- World Health Organization

Employer and Employee Resources

Employment Security Department (ESD)
Employment Security Department has programs designed to help individuals and employers during this unprecedented time.

Shared Work - Layoff Aversion
The Shared Work program is a valuable business-friendly resource to help you reduce payroll and retain your skilled talent. It is confidential and there is no cost to determine eligibility, to apply and be approved. Go online to SharedWorkwa.com and learn more or call a Shared Work specialist during regular business hours at 800-752-2500. In less than 60 seconds, you will find out if you're eligible.

Paid Family and Medical Leave
ESD's Paid Family and Medical Leave program can provide paid leave benefits for Washington workers who need to take time off from work due to a serious health condition or to care for a family member with a serious health condition. Certification by a healthcare provider is required for applications for Paid Family and Medical Leave due to a serious health condition.

Rapid Response - Layoff Assistance
If COVID-19 disrupts a Washington business and causes a mass layoff or closure, ESD and its local workforce development board partners can respond with Rapid Response services and funding to help impacted workers get connected to unemployment benefits and re-employment services, including re-training, worker support services, and referrals to other social services.
Financial Assistance

**Internal Revenue Service (IRS)**
The Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service are providing special payment relief to individuals and businesses in response to the COVID-19 Outbreak by extending the date for paying any Federal Income Tax due April 15th (up to certain amounts) to July 15th, 2020. The filing deadline for tax returns remains April 15, 2020. The IRS urges taxpayers who are owed a refund to file as quickly as possible. For those who can’t file by the April 15, 2020 deadline, the IRS reminds individual taxpayers that everyone is eligible to request a six-month extension to file their return.

**Small Business Administration (SBA)**
The federal Small Business Administration (SBA) may be able to provide assistance through the Economic Injury Disaster Loans program to businesses that have suffered substantial economic injury in an eligible disaster area. Congress approved up to $7 billion in low-interest disaster loans specifically to assist small businesses impacted by COVID-19. These loans can help small businesses meet financial obligations and cover operating expenses. For additional information, you can directly contact the SBA disaster assistance customer service center at 1-800-659-2955 or e-mail disastercustomerservice@sba.gov.

**Washington State Department of Revenue (DOR)**
The Washington State Department of Revenue (DOR) can work with impacted companies that request an extension on tax filing. The law grants the department authority to extend the due date for excise tax returns. A business may request an extension from the department prior to the due date of the return, and, if granted, the business would be allowed to delay reporting and paying its tax liability. If a business needs an extension of more than 30 days, the law requires the department to collect a deposit from the business. The amount of deposit required is based on the business’ reporting history and how many reporting periods are covered under the extension WAC 458-20-228 (13).

- DOR may also waive penalties under limited circumstances if a business is late in paying its tax obligation. The law also grants the department authority to provide a one-time, 24 month, late payment penalty waiver if the business has not owed a late payment penalty during the previous 24 months WAC 458-20-228
- DOR may also work with businesses that cannot file or pay their taxes on time if they are impacted by a declared state of emergency.

Contact DOR at 360.705.6705

**Washington State Insurance Commissioner**
The Washington State Insurance Commissioner can help answer questions about insurance coverage for damages related to COVID-19. 1.800.562.6900
Utility Assistance

Puget Sound Energy (PSE)

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) will not be disconnecting customers during this time of crisis as well as waiving late fees. PSE is also working with their customers on options such as payment plans and choosing a new bill due date and they have launched a new energy assistance portal to improve access to funds available to low income customers. And the PSE Foundation, which is a nonprofit entity operating independently of PSE but helps the communities PSE serves, is donating $250,000 to support relief efforts in the community through the Seattle Foundation as well as donating to foodbanks to cover emergency preparations.

Tacoma Public Utilities

(TPU) provides electric, water, and Click! Services, is offering a 12 week extended payment plan for customers, residential and business. They will be proactively offering the extension to customers. In addition, TPU announced On Tuesday, March 17, 2020 the creation of a new Emergency Assistance Program for low-income customers, funded for up to $1 million. The new program will support Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU) customers whose incomes are within 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines, as established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Emergency Assistance Program will provide a utility credit of up to $250 for eligible single-family households, usable toward TPU bills. The eligibility requirements for this new program will allow more TPU customers to qualify for bill pay assistance than under the existing Bill Credit Assistance Plan (BCAP).
Business Continuity and Resiliency

**FEMA National Business Emergency Operations Center**
FNEOC Dashboard is a live portal for posting questions for FEMA staff to answer. NBEOC is also hosting ongoing conference calls every Tuesday and Thursday for private sector businesses. Call-in information is 1.800.593.7177, #7963614.

**Impact Washington**
Impact Washington created a [how-to guide on preparation](#) for Washington State Manufacturers.

**StartUp Washington**
Part of the Washington State Department of Commerce, StartUp Washington has a list of information and updates as well as their startup, entrepreneur, and small business strategy programs.

**U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation**
The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation has activated its [Disaster Helpdesk](#) for Business. An information concierge is available to assist small businesses with disaster readiness, relief & long-term recovery.

**Washington Small Business Development Center**
The WSBDC is providing advising, [business resiliency information](#) as well as daily business resilience training webinars.

**Ways to help**
Help your family, your neighbors, your local restaurants, your non-profits, your customers, and your community. Be creative. We will get through this together.