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Downtown Hartford businesses take cautious approach to May 20 reopening

By Greg Bordonaro, Joe Cooper and Sean Teehan

<excerpt>

Connecticut is now less than 24 hours away from the first phase of its economic reopening amid the coronavirus pandemic, but don't expect a major surge in activity.

Nearly a dozen downtown Hartford companies contacted by Hartford Business Journal said they weren't reopening their offices right away on Wednesday, or are doing it gradually over the weeks and months to come.

Meantime, some restaurants are prepared to launch outdoor services, while others aren't, arguing it doesn't make economic sense.

Connecticut, which released its reopening plan May 9, is set to allow restaurants, offices, retail stores and outdoor museums and zoos to reopen with certain restrictions on Wednesday. Hair salons and barbershops were initially included in that first phase, [but their reopening has been delayed to June to align with neighboring Rhode Island](#).

Gov. Ned Lamont said Monday that Connecticut will be able to meet its criteria for a safe reopening, which includes a two-week long decline in hospitalizations and the ability to perform at least 42,000 tests a week.

As of Monday, there were 920 COVID-19 patients in the state and 3,449 virus-associated deaths.

Below are some insights on how Hartford companies are planning for Wednesday's reopening.

Meantime, here are the [reopening guidelines](#).

The state has also put together a [“Small Business Reopening Resource Guide”](#) that answers various questions businesses may have regarding reopening rules and regulation.

Marcum’s accountants head back to office May 26

Most professional services firms were considered essential businesses under Gov. Ned Lamont’s executive orders, which means they were allowed to stay open during the last two months.

But many firms, including national accounting and consulting firm Marcum, allowed their employees to work remotely since mid-March.



Michael K. Brooder

That’s about to change.

Marcum’s 70 downtown employees will begin to head back to the firm’s 17th-floor CityPlace II office space May 26, according to Michael K. Brooder, Marcum’s Hartford office managing partner.

But it won’t be a return to normal as numerous safety precautions will be in place.

“We will require some type of face mask in all common areas,” Brooder said. “We will work with two teams (A and B) and alternate weeks in the office. I.e. Team A works the first week and Team B works the second week in the office. The team not in the office will be working remotely. There will be no café or kitchens open. We will provide hand sanitizer throughout the office. Workspaces will also be sanitized.”

Brooder said COVID-19 certainly created some disruption for Marcum but the firm was “ready and able to seamlessly transition ... into a remote workforce.”

“The pandemic struck in the middle of our first busy season of the year. But there was virtually no impact on our ability to serve our clients,” Brooder said. “All of our offices and our people have been working from home and if needed can continue to do so for as long as necessary. As different regions of the country begin to open up, we will start to reopen our offices observing a stringent protocol for everyone’s health and safety, as described above.”