

Pennsylvanias Real Estate Industry Now Open for Business

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Pennsylvania has changed course and has decided the real estate industry as a whole is now considered "life-sustaining" and can resume social-distancing-altered operations immediately.

This includes real estate professionals, appraisers, notaries, title companies, settlement service providers, escrow officers, home inspectors, mortgage loan originators, processors and underwriters, and other necessary office personnel, including administrative and information technology staff to maintain officer operations.

One of the industries originally deemed non-life-sustaining in Pennsylvania, yet one of the most active in fighting that designation, the real estate industry has been shut down in the state under the governor's stay-at-home order from mid-March.

The [restoration of the industry](#) comes without restrictions as to a county's color designation for reopening. Real estate businesses in counties with yellow designation are being treated the same as companies in counties remaining in the red designation.

There are restrictions, however, on how real estate businesses can operate. The state released a [four-page guidance document](#) detailing how the industry can go forward under social distancing. The guidance includes items such as:

- Using separate transportation to travel to property showings
- For property showings, the real estate professional and no more than two people should be allowed in a property
- Stagger scheduled property showings by 30 minutes or more
- Telework should continue as allowed
- No food can be provided during in-person activities
- Group activities - such as open houses, broker opens and office tours - are prohibited
- Settlements should be handled via remote notarization, power of attorneys or mailing of documents or if not possible, then having limited attendance of just required signatories and their legal counsel or real estate agent using social distancing guidelines

The full list of allowable and unallowable business practices is available at [the state's guidance](#).

This is welcome news for both commercial and residential real estate agencies, but it is in no way business as usual. The state is encouraging companies to continue virtual property tours where possible and having discussions away from the property via remote means. With properties bound to start coming on the market amid closures from the COVID-19 pandemic, real estate agencies should make sure they are following the state guidelines concerning showings at all properties, and other real estate professionals should follow suit to permit a successful transaction from beginning to end.

If you have any questions about this new guidance or have any questions about reopening your real estate business, please [contact me](#) or anyone in the [Barley Snyder Real Estate Practice Group](#).

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