

Safety is the new workplace 'perk' job seekers will be evaluating when applying to companies

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Aaron Holt spoke with *Business Insider* about how safety is more top of mind for employees now. Workplace safety in the United States is governed by the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), under the "general duty clause." "That requires every employer to provide a place of employment which is free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees," said Aaron. According to a report by the Society for Human Resource Management, 34 percent of employers didn't have an emergency preparedness plan before COVID-19. Among employers that had emergency policies, more than half didn't have one covering communicable diseases. Now, 53 percent of employers said they're revising their emergency preparedness plans. "We've seen a lot of employers proactively taking steps [in COVID-19] to make their workplaces safer in a pandemic," Aaron said, such as increasing ventilation and air circulation, closing communal spaces and meeting rooms, partitioning workspaces, intensifying cleaning, and enforcing social distancing. "I think that is going to eventually be a perk for employment once everyone starts to figure out how to make this COVID workplace productive and profitable," he added. "Then it's about attracting the best talent. Maybe that includes offering a flex schedule, some type of teleworking environment, or a workplace that employees will generally feel safer at."

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