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## **COVID-19 Risk Mitigation Measures for Food Facilities**

### **Updated May 8, 2020**

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**Background** COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus. It is primarily spread through the air via respiratory droplets from an infected person or by touching contaminated surfaces. Symptoms include fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath. COVID-19 is circulating in the community in Santa Clara County, surrounding areas, and around the country.

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**Legal Order** The Santa Clara County Health Officer has issued a mandatory legal order (“Order”) extending shelter in place requirements through May 31, 2020. This new Order went into effect on Monday, May 4, 2020.

The Order directs all individuals living in the County to continue sheltering at their place of residence except to perform essential work or activities. It also allows certain additional essential businesses and a limited number of other businesses and activities the Health Officer has found to be low risk to resume.

To ensure access to food, personal hygienic products, and important household consumer products, the Order allows the continued operation of:

- Grocery stores, certified farmers’ markets, farm and produce stands, supermarkets, food banks, convenience stores, and similar retail establishments selling significant amounts of food as well as certain hygienic products and/or household consumer products. To qualify, at least 25% of the total floor area your store regularly uses for products sales must be currently occupied by these essential products.
- Restaurants and other establishments that prepare and serve food to the public but *only* on a delivery or carryout basis. Dining at the premises (either indoors or outdoors) is prohibited.
- Charitable feeding operations but only on a delivery or take-away basis. Dining at the premises (either indoors or outdoors) is prohibited.

You are encouraged to continue operating if you meet these criteria. To do so, you must now: (1) require all personnel and customers to wear a face covering in your facility, (2) post an updated Social Distancing Protocol, and (3) comply with social distancing requirements and other risk mitigation measures in this guidance.

Consult the Order and visit the Santa Clara County Public Health Department website for details: <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Pages/home.aspx>

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## Social Distancing Protocol

To continue operating, all essential businesses must complete and implement a revised Social Distancing Protocol for each of their facilities in the County frequented by the public or personnel. Post a copy at or near each public entrance of your facility and provide a copy to all personnel.

An updated Protocol template is included as Appendix A to the May 4 Order: <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Documents/Appendix-A-Social-Distancing-Protocol.pdf>.

Appendix A is available in English, Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese. It should be posted in English and any other language spoken by a significant portion of your personnel and/or customer base.

The Protocol must explain how your business will achieve certain social distancing, employee and customer health, and hygiene and sanitation measures. These measures and others specifically applicable to food facilities are set forth below.

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## Public Signage

Post signage at each public entrance of the facility to inform all personnel and customers to:

- Avoid entering the facility if they have a cough or fever
  - Maintain a minimum six-foot distance from one another
  - Sneeze and cough into a cloth or tissue or, if not available, into one's elbow
  - Wear face coverings, as appropriate, and
  - Not shake hands or engage in any unnecessary physical contact
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## Face Coverings

You must require face coverings to be worn by all personnel and customers entering your facilities, except for those exempted from this requirement. The only exemptions are for people for whom face coverings may not be safe:

- Children 6 years old or younger.
- Anyone who has trouble breathing, is incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.
- Anyone who has been advised by a medical professional not to wear a face covering.
- Any worker to the extent wearing a face covering creates a safety hazard at work under established health and safety guidelines.

Face coverings *should not be* surgical or medical masks, which are in short supply and urgently needed by healthcare workers. Instead, face coverings such as bandanas, scarfs, or home-sewn fabric coverings should be used.

***Note that wearing a cloth face covering does not eliminate the need to follow social distancing and hygiene measures, including physically distancing yourself from others and frequently washing your hands.***

See the County Health Officer's April 17 Critical Guidance on Facial Coverings for more detail: <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Pages/learn-what-to-do.aspx#howto>.

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**Maintain  
Adequate  
Social  
Distancing**

Ensure that customers maintain adequate social distancing (at least six feet between one another) at all times, including when standing in line by:

- Limiting the number of people who can enter your facility at any time to ensure that people can easily maintain social distance at all times.
- Place tape or other markings on the ground where lines form to show customers where to stand to maintain at least six feet social distance.
- Separate order areas from delivery/pick-up areas to prevent customers from gathering.

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**Prevention –  
Handwashing**

Provide adequate soap and water, hand sanitizer (60% alcohol or higher), and/or disinfectant at or near the facility entrance and at other appropriate locations for use by the public and personnel, including at locations where there is frequent interaction between personnel and the public (like at the cash register).

As of April 18, 2020, food facilities are required by California law (Executive Order N-51-20) to allow employees to **wash their hands every 30 minutes and additionally as needed.** Staff must **wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds** as often as necessary to prevent contamination of food and food contact surfaces, including:

- When entering the kitchen
- Before starting food preparation
- After touching their face, hair, or other areas of the body
- After using the restroom
- After coughing, sneezing, using a tissue, smoking, or drinking
- Before and after eating
- When handling raw food then ready-to-eat food
- After cleaning, bussing tables, or touching any items customers have used
- Before putting on gloves
  - For information on glove use, visit: [www.ehinfo.org/coronavirus](http://www.ehinfo.org/coronavirus)
- Between handling food and handling money, credit cards, phones, pens or other high-touch items
- After engaging in other activities that may contaminate the hands

***Other Measures***

- *Avoid bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food*
- *Assign an employee to keep soap and paper towels stocked at handwash stations at least every hour*
- *Protect food and drinks from contamination when preparing and packing for delivery and carryout by customers*
- *Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth*
- *Minimize touching your phone or other personal items*
- *All staff must wash hands more frequently than normal*
- *Provide extra garbage cans near restrooms exits*

**Provide regular staff training to ensure proper protocols are followed!**

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**Prevention –  
Sanitizing  
Equipment  
and the  
Facility**

Regularly disinfect all high-touch surfaces exposed to customers or employees routinely throughout the day.

Chlorine-based (bleach) sanitizer at 100 ppm or quaternary ammonium-based sanitizers at 200 ppm are effective sanitizers. Use test strips to ensure that sanitizer is at these required concentrations. Change sanitizer when the solution becomes cloudy or dirty or does not meet the required concentration.

Reduce physical contact by providing for contactless payment systems. If it is not feasible to do so, disinfect all payment portals, pens, and styluses *after each use*.

***Other Measures***

⇒ *COVID-19 can last for days on some surfaces. Assign designated staff to continuously clean and disinfect all high-touch areas. In addition to customer payment systems, these include:*

- *Door knobs, faucet handles, and cabinet/drawer pulls*
- *Cash registers*
- *Shopping carts and shopping baskets*

⇒ *Provide disinfecting wipes that are effective against COVID-19 near shopping carts and baskets for customers.*

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**Prevent  
Unnecessary  
Contact**

Implement measures to prevent unnecessary physical contact:

- You may but are not required to prohibit customers from using reusable bags from home. If you allow customers to use reusable bags, impose mitigation measures to prevent contact between the bags and staff—such as requiring customers to bag their own groceries at the point of sale. Post your reusable bag protocol at the facility entrance to notify customers.
- Do not permit customers to bring their own mugs, food containers, or other reusable items from home (except for bags, with precautions above).
- Disallow self-service by customers, including from bulk-item food bins and food bars. Have employees provide customers with all beverages and unpackaged food items.
- Have employees place additions/condiments into products (like cream into coffee), rather than allowing customers to do so.
- Prohibit product sampling.
- Staff should provide lids for cups, condiments, utensils, and napkins to customers upon request
- Do not shake hands

***Tips!***

⇒ *You may choose to offer certain store hours that will only be available to customers at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19 to minimize their risk of exposure. People who are at high risk for severe illness include people **50** or older, people with underlying health conditions or weakened immune systems, and people who are pregnant.*

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## Employee Health

Essential businesses must monitor employee health.

- Screen personnel at the beginning of each shift for symptoms of illness.
    - Ask if they are experiencing any of the following: fever, tiredness, cough, muscle or body aches, shortness of breath nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, chills, night sweats, sore throat, headaches, confusion, or loss of sense of taste or smell.
    - If a worker shows any of these symptoms, send them home and instruct them to follow the instructions on the County's COVID-19 Learn What to Do – If You Think You are Sick webpage: <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/phd/DiseaseInformation/novel-coronavirus/Pages/learn-what-to-do.aspx#sick>  
Workers who are living with someone who has tested positive should also follow applicable instructions on this webpage.
  - If a worker tests positive with COVID-19 and was working while showing symptoms, the following steps shall be taken:
    - Immediately cease operation, close facility, and thoroughly sanitize it. Instructions for sanitizing your facility may be found at this link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>  
Your facility can reopen as soon as it has been sanitized.
    - Instruct the worker to follow the instructions on the County's COVID-19 Learn What to Do – If You Think You are Sick webpage.
    - Inform other workers that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 and the day(s) on which the potential exposure occurred. If you take this step, you should also instruct your personnel to closely monitor themselves for any symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, coughing, and/or shortness of breath) for 14 days.
  - If you have personnel who are at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19, consider temporarily re-assigning them to non-public-contact duties.
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## Sick Leave Requirements

Effective April 16, 2020, California Executive Order N-51-20 requires that all employers with 500 or more employees nationwide who are engaged in the food supply chain are required to provide up to 80 hours of sick leave for full-time workers (as well as leave calculated on prior hours for those who work less than full-time). This includes grocery workers, restaurant or fast food workers, worker at warehouses where food is stored, and workers who pick-up or delivery any food items. Workers can access sick leave if they are (1) subject to a quarantine or isolation order, (2) advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine or self-isolate due to concerns related to COVID-19, or (3) prohibited by their hiring entity to work because of concerns related to the transmission of COVID-19.

Employers not subject to this law are strongly encouraged to expand access to emergency sick leave for their personnel. These measures reduce the chance that employees who need to work to support their families will try to return to work earlier than the quarantine or self-isolation period.

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**Additional Information**

The information and requirements pertaining to COVID-19 may change as more is learned about this virus and its transmission. Up to date legal orders as well answers to Frequently Asked Questions, status reports, and other helpful information can be found on the Santa Clara County Public Health website:

<http://sccphd.org/coronavirus>

Please send specific questions related to food service operations to [dehweb@cep.sccgov.org](mailto:dehweb@cep.sccgov.org). For additional updates, follow us on Facebook at @cepascc and @sccpublichealth.

Other Resources:

- If your operation provides food deliveries, follow the Santa Clara County Department of Environmental Health’s Food Safety Guidelines During Transport/Delivery in addition to the measures in this document, available at: [www.ehinfo.org/coronavirus](http://www.ehinfo.org/coronavirus)
- For information on COVID-19 testing in the County—including who should get tested and where—visit the County Public Health Department website: [www.sccgov.org/cv19testing](http://www.sccgov.org/cv19testing)
- For COVID-19 information from the California Department of Public Health visit: [www.cdph.ca.gov/covid19](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/covid19)
- For COVID-19 information from the CDC visit: [www.cdc.gov/covid19](http://www.cdc.gov/covid19)
- For information from the CDC for grocery and food retail workers, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/grocery-food-retail-workers.html>