

COVID-19 Best Practices for Food Stores

*InfraGard National Disaster Resilience Council
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Situation: Food stores are a critical element of society and they will stay open out of necessity. They are a gathering place where social distancing is not always possible. New procedures are required to address the unique Covid-19 situation.

Mission: Create a “best practices” for stores to minimize Covid-19 threats in order to maintain the safety of stores and store workers, trucks and truckers, and customers from Covid-19.

Best Practices:

Overarching

- Establish store hours for elderly and other at-risk groups.
- Visually screen shoppers at entry (and throughout store). Offer alternative shopping (curbside, masks etc.) to identified ill.
- Authorize food truck vendors to operate in parking lots as a potential replacement for in store prepared foods.
- Encourage farmers markets, farm stands, and outdoor sales in order to limit indoor shopping.
- Limit purchase amounts for hard to get items.
- Establish controlled disposal procedures for used Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE) that limit transmission risk.
- Establish more frequent cleaning and sanitation (wipe down) schedules with EPA approved chemicals.
- Establish individual and store procedures for infected employees.
- Publicly advertise procedures and store compliance with procedures on store front, near registers, and website.

- Control inside store numbers through a well-spaced outdoor metered entrance line.
- Ensure recordkeeping of deliveries and work shifts to allow for forensic backtracking in case of infection.

Loading Dock (prevent transmission from widely travelled truckers to store personnel and vice versa)

- Truck Drivers stay in loading area and do not enter store. Loading area may be loading dock or loading bay.
- Store personnel conduct transactions at the truck.
- Establish offload procedures for trucks where truckers and store personnel do not physically interact (e.g. Truck Drivers offload or store personnel offload).
- Truck drivers wear masks (if available) and gloves in loading dock area. Truck drivers have masks with truck (if available).
- Store personnel wear gloves in loading area.
- Spray offloaded containers/boxes as necessary.

Store personnel (keep store personnel and customers and truckers separate and safe)

- Visually prescreen and verbally confirm health of every employee upon shift check-in (some stores include temperature prescreen).
- Gloves may be worn if glove policy and procedures have been developed (e.g. when to replace, type).
- Adjust sick leave policy so associates do not feel obliged to work while sick (e.g. pay salary to those positively diagnosed with Covid-19 while they are on sick leave).
- Establish return to work policy after positive diagnosis. Storage Area
- Provide guidance regarding virus control

- cleaning procedures and frequency. Store
- Offer wipes to customers for their carts/hand baskets.
 - Offer hand sanitizer (if available) to customers upon entry.
 - Offer gloves/tissues to customers for handling merchandise.
 - Caution customers not to directly handle merchandise that they are not buying.
 - Keep bakery and deli open with additional sanitization.
 - End self-serve (open package) items such as salad bars and bread/donut stands.
 - Regularly clean and sanitize shopping cart handles (at least daily).
 - Disinfect hand baskets on a regular basis (at least daily).
 - Clean and Sanitize service counter and equipment between customers.
 - Regularly clean and sanitize timeclock, lottery, Coinstar, Redbox, ATM and other public machines.
 - Clean and sanitize door handles, phones, PC keyboards and mouse, scan guns, desktops and cart handles.
 - In addition to increased regular maintenance, provide paper towels to use when touching restroom door handles.

Pharmacy

- Visually prescreen pharmacy customers as they may be ill. Establish and offer curbside process or mitigation (e.g. mask) for identified ill.

Checkout

- Designate positions in line that are separate by 6 feet. Mark on floors with tape.
- Have one cash line. Discourage cash purchases.
- Install check stand sneeze guards (clear plastic/plexiglas barrier between

- customer and cashier).
- Eliminate One More Item (OMI) stands and magazine stands near register as these items are often handled by multiple customers in a short period of time.
- Ensure checkout personnel are moving customers quickly to reduce exposure time in lines.
- Offer hand sanitizer at registers.
- Clean and sanitize self-checkout screens, scales and bagging stations between customers.
- Clean and sanitize checkout machines (especially credit card machines/touchpads) after each customer.
- Clean and sanitize customer check writing counter, conveyer belt and belt dividers regularly. IT (curbside service)
- Create a curbside grocery service if possible.
- Coordinate with volunteer organizations for home delivery (e.g. church groups). Parking Lot/store front
- Coordinate with charity groups for food distribution efforts in parking lots.
- Control entry into store in the case of large shopping numbers. Ensure outside lines are designated and separation maintained (tape markers every 6 feet).

Miscellaneous

- Regularly sanitize/"spray down" all grocery carts in their entirety (daily)(outside).
- Encourage customers to sanitize/wash their personal grocery bags after each use.
- Rigorous leadership and supervision are required for these processes to be implemented.
- Ensure store workers have identification/permit to allow movement in case of community lockdown.

- Caution customers (by placard or handout or verbally) to:
 - When home, treat grocery bags as potentially contaminated.
 - When home, do not place grocery bags on counters near food prep area.
 - When home, throw away store grocery bags (do not reuse).

Disclaimer

In today's litigious society, we must provide some general disclaimer language.

- This paper is focused on practices that can be considered for rapid use within retail grocery stores. It does not address other issues such as, but not limited to: the use of High-Efficiency, Air Particulate (HEPA) filtration systems, considerations associated with stores that do use HEPA filtration systems or high air exchange systems, grocery warehouse air exchange ratios being increased at night when less populated, and reduced when populated, tracing infected individuals who have entered or been employed by the store or supply chain, "air-gap" practices related to offloading delivery truck cargo. Nor has the InfraGard National Disaster Resilience Council (NDRC) performed scientific analysis or research regarding the paper's content.
- Scientific and other findings can be expected to emerge over time that may provide better guidance.
- Neither InfraGard's National Disaster Resilience Council nor the InfraGard National Members Alliance (INMA) warrants that the "best practices" recommendations in this Paper will adequately safeguard against Coronavirus infection. There is no express or implied warranty as to the suitability of recommendations for protection from COVID-19 or other hazards.
- This information contained herein is intended to provide a general guide to basic practices with the intent of helping to start the conversation around COVID-19 related issues; and to provide a set of basic suggestions. These suggestions should be evaluated in the context of the organization and maturity of your health and safety programs.