



COVID-19 GUIDANCE: Retail Food/ Food Manufacturing –

Procedures for Sanitization and Diagnosed Employees

Good retail and manufacturing practices should be emphasized for all retail food facilities and food establishments including handwashing procedures, cleaning and sanitizing using appropriate chemicals, and personal hygiene to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This document serves as guidance to food facility operators, owners, and other individuals to incorporate into their procedures in addition to regular operational protocols. Although this document is targeted for retail and manufacturing facilities, the below information is applicable to all food preparation and distribution entities. All life sustaining businesses producing, processing, packaging, or distributing food (food banks, grocery stores, soup kitchens, and others) should utilize the below best practices.

The [Food and Drug Administration](#) (FDA) has stated that currently there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19. It is important to note that the FDA has stated that foodborne exposure to this virus is not known to be a route of transmission. COVID-19 is spread by human to human contact and therefore personal hygiene is critical to limiting the spread of this virus.

Governor Wolf has identified the food supply chain as life-sustaining businesses, and it is critical that these businesses implement social distancing and regular cleaning throughout their standard operating procedures to protect and maintain their workforce. Governor Wolf and PA Department of Health Secretary Dr. Levine issued an [order](#) containing directives for safety measures for all employees and visitors at life-sustaining businesses that have remained open during the COVID-19 disaster emergency, effective April 19, 2020. All life sustaining businesses must review and comply with the order. Those mandatory requirements can be found in *green italics* throughout this document.

In industry guidance updated on [March 23, 2020](#), FDA addressed how to maintain social distancing in a food production/processing facility and food retail establishment where employees typically work within close distances, and the guidance references CDC recommendations. To prevent spread of COVID-19, CDC is recommending individuals employ social distancing or maintaining approximately 6 feet from others, when possible. In food production/processing facilities and retail food establishments, an evaluation should be made to identify and implement operational changes that increase employee separation. The April 19th Order includes required social distancing practices for food facilities and more details can be found in [PDA guidance documents](#) for specific food industry.

IMPORTANT: Maintaining social distancing in the absence of effective hygiene practices may not prevent the spread of this virus. Food facilities should be vigilant in their hygiene practices, including frequent and proper hand-washing and more frequent cleaning of all surfaces.

What sanitation procedures need to be put in place with COVID-19?

HANDWASHING

- *Employers must provide employees access to regular handwashing with soap, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant wipes*
- *Employers must provide employees handwashing breaks every hour.*
- To appropriately handwash: Use warm water, apply soap and lather for at least 20 seconds, and rinse. Use single-use paper towels to dry and use paper towel to turn off faucet.
- Wash hands frequently including:
 - ✓ After using the restroom
 - ✓ Before and after eating
 - ✓ Before handling food
 - ✓ After removing gloves and before re-applying
 - ✓ After touching shared equipment, touching face, cellphone, or personal items
 - ✓ After sneezing, coughing, or blowing nose

PERSONAL HYGIENE

- *Employers must implement measures to facilitate social distancing of 6 feet or more among employees and between employees and customers.*
- *Employers must provide masks for employees to wear during their time at the business, and make it a mandatory requirement to wear masks while on the work site, except to the extent an employee is using break time to eat or drink, in accordance with the guidance from the Department of Health and the CDC. Employers may approve masks obtained or made by employees in accordance with Department of Health guidance.*
- *Employers must require all customers to wear masks while on their premises, and deny entry to individuals not wearing masks, unless the business is providing medication, medical supplies, or food, in which case the business must provide alternative methods of pick-up or delivery of such goods. (However, individuals who cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition (including children under the age of 2 years per CDC guidance) may enter the premises and are not required to provide documentation of such medical condition.)*
- Employees should be instructed to cover coughs and sneezes with elbows and dispose of soiled products immediately after use.

CLEANING AND SANITIZING

- *Maintain pre-existing cleaning and sanitizing protocols established by the business for all areas of the building.* FDA-regulated food manufacturers are required to follow Current Good Manufacturing Practices (CGMPs). CGMPs require food safety plans to include requirements for maintaining clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces. See: [FSMA Final Rule for Preventive Controls for Human Food](#). Retail Food Facilities must follow all cleaning and sanitizing requirements outlined in the [FDA Food Code](#).
- *In addition to maintaining pre-existing cleaning protocols established in the business, clean and disinfect high touch areas routinely in accordance with guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in spaces that are accessible to employees, customers or other individuals;*
- Ensure high contact surfaces and priority locations are being cleaned and sanitized on a routine basis. Time needs to be allocated for all cleaning, with greater and more frequent emphasize on commonly touched surfaces.
- Cleaning removes dirt and soiled residue while sanitizing kills germs remaining on surfaces. Both are required to effectively disinfect surfaces.

- Employees cleaning should be trained on how to properly clean and sanitize the type of surface they are working on.
- *Employers must ensure that the facility has a sufficient number of employees to perform all measures listed effectively and in a manner that ensures the safety of the public and employees;*
- Examples of high priority surfaces:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Restroom/locker room areas ✓ Registers/keypads/remotes ✓ Computer/telephones ✓ Any shared electronic device ✓ Door handles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Floors and Walls ✓ Light switches ✓ Tables and chairs ✓ Shared food equipment ✓ Handrails
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- *Where carts and handbaskets are available for customers' use, employers must assign an employee to wipe down carts and handbaskets before they become available to each customer entering the premises.*

Cleaning and sanitizing of high contact areas are a priority NOW to prevent the spread of COVID-19 if an area would become affected by an individual with the virus. According to FDA, with the detection of the coronavirus in asymptomatic people and studies showing survival of coronavirus on surfaces for short periods of time, as an extra precaution, food facilities must implement a more frequent cleaning and sanitation schedule for high human contact surfaces. Facilities must ensure that common areas (including but not limited to break rooms, locker rooms, dining facilities, rest rooms, conference or training rooms) are cleaned on a regular basis, including between any shifts;

- **Restrooms:** All surfaces including toilet seats and handles, door knobs, faucets, paper towels dispensers, floors, mirrors, soap dispenser.
- **Food equipment:** Common shared equipment include scoops, deli slicers, can openers, keypads, thermometers, tables, floors, refrigeration handles, pot and pan handles.
- **Customer and employee common areas:** tables, chairs, shopping carts/baskets, counters, breakrooms
- **First Aid/health and utility areas:** first aid kits, laundry equipment, linens
- **Locker rooms:** disinfect at least daily-lockers, tables, chairs, surfaces
- **Other frequently touched surfaces:** clean and disinfect frequently.

Chemicals

- All sanitizers must be EPA approved. There is a list of EPA-registered "disinfectant" products for COVID-19 on the [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 list](#) that have qualified under EPA's [emerging viral pathogen program](#) for use against SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.
- All chemicals being used on food contact surfaces must be approved for food equipment on the label and utilized at the proper concentration per the label instructions.
- Make sure all chemicals containers and spray bottles are labeled.

What to do if an employee is a probable or diagnosed case of COVID-19?

COVID-19 is known to be spread via respiratory droplets among close contacts, generally within 6 feet. Although there is currently no CDC evidence that the disease is spread by food, and no *documented* evidence that the virus is transmitted to persons from contaminated surfaces, evidence does suggest that the virus may live on surfaces for several hours to days depending upon the environment. Therefore, foodborne exposure is not considered a route of transmission. CDC and FDA continue to update their guidance and recommendations as more is learned

about COVID-19 during this dynamic and changing situation. Once an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19, priority is to prevent further spread to other individuals through person to person contact or through contaminated surfaces.

- If you have not already done so, send employee home.
- Contact your county or state health department and follow protocols discussed.
- *Implement Established cleaning and disinfection protocols upon discovery that person(s) suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility:*
 - *Close off areas visited by the ill persons. Open outside doors and windows and use ventilating fans to increase air circulation in the area. Wait 24 hours, or as long as practical, before beginning cleaning and disinfection.*
 - *Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.*
- Identify employees that were in close contact (within about 6 feet for about 10 minutes) with a person with a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 during the 48 hours period before symptom onset to the time at which the patient isolated; If the employee(s) remains asymptomatic, the person should follow the CDC, April 8, 2020 [Interim Guidance for Implementing Safety Practice for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#). The CDC Interim Guidance states in part “Critical Infrastructure workers who have had an exposure but remain asymptomatic should adhere to the following practices prior to and during their work shift:
 - Pre-Screen:** Employers should measure the employee’s temperature and assess symptoms prior to them starting work. Ideally, temperature checks should happen before the individual enters the facility. Send employees home that have an elevated temperature or fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Ensure employees practice social distancing while waiting to have temperatures screened.
 - Regular Monitoring:** As long as the employee doesn’t have a temperature or symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer’s occupational health program.
 - Wear a Mask:** The employee must wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace. Employers shall provide facemasks or can approve employees’ supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.
 - Social Distance:** The employee should maintain 6 feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit in the workplace.
 - Disinfect and Clean work spaces:** Clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment routinely.”

- *If the employee becomes sick during the workday, the person should be sent home immediately:*
 - *The employee's workspace surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected.*
 - *Determine who had contact with the ill employee during the time the employee had symptoms and during the 48 hours prior to symptoms—employees at the workplace with close contact (within 6 feet) of the employee during this time would be considered exposed;*
 - *Notify employees who were in close contact with suspected or confirmed infected person while maintaining confidentiality of ill employee*
- *Ensure that the facility has enough employees to perform the above protocols effectively and in a timely manner.*

PA Department of Health advice on returning to work after a diagnosis

- *Sick employees should follow CDC recommendations: [What to Do if You Are Sick](#). Employees should not return to work until CDC criteria to discontinue home isolation are met in consultation with healthcare providers, state and local health departments. Consider liberal attendance policies and paid time off and/or incentivizing attendance of healthy employees*
- Your county or state health department will monitor the affected individual during quarantine until their recovery and will be involved clearing the employee to return back to work.
- DOH is recommending that persons with COVID-19, under home isolation be released from isolation after a minimum of 7 days after symptom onset and after 72 hours of feeling well and without a fever.
- People with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 who have not had ANY symptoms may discontinue home isolation when at least 7 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test and have had no subsequent illness.
- After returning to work, employees must maintain good personal hygiene including hand washing procedures and frequencies.

Other Employee Wellness Mitigation

Employers must implement temperature screening before an employee enters the business, prior to the start of each shift or, for employees who do not work shifts, before the employee starts work, and send employees home that have an elevated temperature or fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.

Ensure employees practice social distancing while waiting to have temperatures screened. Employees must report any signs of COVID-19 symptoms (shortness of breath, fever, aches) to their supervisors and stay home.

Employers MUST ensure that all employees are made aware of these required procedures by communicating them, either orally or in writing, in their native or preferred language, as well as in English or by a methodology that allows them to understand.

For more information: We recommend regularly checking the FDA, CDC, and PA DOH websites as information continues to be updated.

- FDA: [Food Safety and COVID-19](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Interim Guidance for Business and Employers](#)
- [Pennsylvania Department of Health COVID-19 Information for Businesses](#)