

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for Food Facilities

In order to appropriately respond to the COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) outbreak, the County of Los Angeles Health Officer issued the Safer At Home Order on March 21, 2020. This Order, issued by the Department of Public Health, placed new requirements on retail food facilities, including grocery stores and restaurants. Public Health is issuing this guidance to assist retail food facilities in remaining in compliance with the Order and lowering the risk of exposure to both customers and employees.

The Order requires retail food facilities to take the following actions:

### Social Distancing / Risk Reduction

- Enforce social distancing by requiring members of the public to be separated by at least six (6) feet from others, as much as possible. Persons who are family members or household contacts, may stand or move together but must be separated from others by at least six (6) feet.
- Provide public access to handwashing facilities with soap and water or to hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.
- [Post a sign](#) in a visible place at all public entries that instructs members of the public to not enter if they have symptoms of respiratory illness, including fever or cough.
- Follow communicable disease control recommendations provided by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, including guidance for cleaning and disinfecting the site. See guidance posted at [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/).

### Dine-in Food Facilities

- All restaurants and retail food facilities are not allowed to serve food for dining on-site either indoors and outdoors. No table service is permitted.
- Restaurants and retail food facilities may continue to operate for purposes of preparing and offering food to customers via delivery service, to be picked up, or for drive-thru.
- Bars that do not have a food facility permit may not remain open.
- Breweries or wineries that also have a food facility permit may remain open for purposes of continuing to prepare and offer food to customers via delivery service or to be picked up. Wineries and breweries may not offer tastings to the public but may continue non-public wholesale and production operations.
- For food facilities offering food pick-up options or delivery, food facility operators are to establish social distancing practices for those patrons in the queue when ordering or during pick-up.
- Restaurants offering grocery type products (e.g. raw ingredients, products, etc.) for retail sale may only include them on their menu for delivery or take-out. They are not allowed to set-up a grocery store in their dining room for customer self-selection as this defeats the purpose of closing dining rooms to customers and is outside of their existing permit.
  - Public Health will not enforce labeling of packaged products that are packaged for convenience purposes, provided they are able to provide ingredients to customers upon request.
  - Restaurants are strictly prohibited from engaging in high-risk packaging:
    - Reduced-oxygen packaging that has not been approved by CDPH.
    - Bottles of sanitizer solution being sold without any of the required EPA labeling.

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- If a restaurant is using a portion of their dining room as back-up storage for non-food items, they must prohibit customer self-selection of these items. These products are to be provided as part of the delivery or take-out purchase.

***Cafeterias, commissaries, and restaurants located within hospitals, nursing homes, or similar facilities are exempt from the prohibition on on-site consumption; however, Public Health strongly recommends that these facilities ensure that diners practice appropriate social distancing requirements (6 feet from other customers) while present.***

### **Grocery Stores and Convenience stores**

- Ensure there is a way to sanitize shopping cart and basket handles – either by making wipes easily accessible to customers or by having employees manage the process and sanitize between each customer use.
- Monitor customer capacity to ensure customer social distancing. This is especially important for wait lines such as check-out counters. In areas of high-volume traffic, utilize spacing tools for checks and lines. Put tape on the floor to keep customers adequately spaced.
- Grocery stores with on-site consumption areas may not provide any dine-in options, either indoors or outdoors.
- Grocery stores and convenience stores that offer self-service of unpackaged food (e.g. salad bar, soup bar, bulk bins of food) must discontinue allowing customer self-service.
- Prohibit product sampling.

### **Mobile Food Facilities (e.g. food trucks, food carts)**

- Only mobile food facilities that have a valid health permit are allowed to offer food for off-site consumption or take-out.
- Monitor customer capacity to ensure customer social distancing. This is especially important for wait lines such as ordering counter lines.

### **Customer Service Considerations**

- Recommend designating an employee that will ensure the social distancing requirements to any lines that form inside or outside of the store are met. In areas of high-volume traffic, utilize spacing tools for checks and lines. Put tape on the floor to keep customers adequately spaced.
- Recommend providing customers with additional napkins or tissues to use when they cough or sneeze.
- Ensure that restrooms are fully stocked with soap, single-use towels/hand dryers, and no-touch trash receptacles.
- Recommend providing alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for customers to use in common areas, such as entering the facility.
- Consider offering free delivery services for high-risk customers so they can avoid coming into grocery stores.
- Recommend limiting conversations at ordering counter and check-out lines between food employees and customers.

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### Food Facility Employees

- Daily check employees for illness (either self-check or employer check) and ensure employees stay home when they are sick.
- Employees with fever or respiratory illness are advised to stay home and not return to work until at least 3 days (72 hours) after recovery, which means fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medications and there is improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), **AND** at least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
- Employees who appear to be ill upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be sent home immediately.
- Recommend scheduling employees to the same shift and not shifting employees between shifts to minimize spread in the event that an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Consider temporarily assigning employees at high risk for serious illness due to COVID-19 to duties that limit their exposure to the public. High risk refers to older adults, pregnant women, and those with compromised immune systems or underlying medical problems.
- Instruct wait staff and counter staff, as much as possible, to keep a 6-foot distance between both themselves and customers.

### Confirmed COVID-19 Requirements

Upon notification that a food employee has tested positive for COVID-19 or is presumed positive based on symptoms associated with COVID-19, the food operator is required to take the following actions:

1. Ensure affected employee is excluded from the food facility and adheres to the Health Officer Order (HOO) for the Control of COVID-19:

[http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/HOO\\_Coronavirus\\_BlanketIsolation\\_03.25.20.pdf](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/HOO_Coronavirus_BlanketIsolation_03.25.20.pdf)

⇒ Additional guidance for those confirmed with COVID-19 can be found at

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/docs/HomeisolationenCoV.pdf>

Identify all potential “close contacts” and require that they adhere to the HOO quarantine orders: Close contacts include all household members, any intimate contact, and all individuals who were within 6 feet of the ill employee for more than 10 minutes, starting 48 hours before the employee’s symptoms began until their isolation period ends. In addition, anyone who had contact with the employee’s body fluids and/or secretions (such as were coughed on/sneezed on, shared utensils or saliva should be in quarantine.

[http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/HOO\\_Coronavirus\\_Blanket\\_Quarantine\\_03.25.20.pdf](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/HOO_Coronavirus_Blanket_Quarantine_03.25.20.pdf)

⇒ Additional guidance for close-contacts can be found at

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/docs/COVHomeQuarantine.pdf>

2. Clean and sanitize the facility according to CDC guidance at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

⇒ Existing cleaning and sanitizing requirements for food-contact surfaces are effective

4. Retail food facilities should not require doctors notes for persons identified as close contacts of an employee identified as a COVID-19 case, as that exposed person is required to self-quarantine for 14-days from the date of last exposure in compliance with the Order.

The Department of Public Health’s Environmental Health Division will work with the food operator to provide guidance and ensure that all required actions are completed.

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### Handwashing Instructions for All Employees

- Ensure employees wash hands and arms with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds upon first arriving to work, after using the restroom, before and after eating, frequently throughout the day and as specified in the [California Retail Food Code \(CRFC\)](#), Section 113953.3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Recommend assigning an employee at every shift to ensure that handwashing sinks are stocked with soap and paper towels at all times.
- Recommend using gloves appropriately as an additional tool, but it is important to remember that gloves do not replace the need to wash hands and practice good hand hygiene.

### Adhere to Basic Food Safety Practices

- Keep hot food hot (135 °F or above) and cold food cold (41 °F or below).
- Thoroughly cook foods as required in the CRFC.
- Clean and sanitize utensils and equipment at the required frequency outlined in the CRFC.
- Adhere to employee health and hygiene practices—don't work when ill and wash hands frequently and when required as noted above.
- Ensure all food and food ingredients are from an approved food source.

### Special Considerations

- Restrict the use of refillable containers that customers bring in for beverages or food.
- Beverage dispensers that are used to refill self-serve beverages shall be cleaned and sanitized frequently.
- Maintain single-use items such as cups, cutlery, plates, and packaged condiments behind the counter and provide upon request.

### Enhanced Cleaning Practices

- Designate employees to clean and disinfect all “high-touch” surfaces such as serving counters, tabletops, refrigeration doors handles, cash register counters, credit card machines, bathroom fixtures, toilets, doorknobs, trash cans, and phones, frequently.
- Use an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered product that cleans (removes germs) and disinfects (kills germs). Always follow the instructions on the labels of cleaning products and disinfectants.

### Effective Disinfectants (For use on non-food contact surfaces)

- To make a bleach solution, mix 4 teaspoons of bleach to 1 quart (4 cups) of water. For a larger supply, add 1/3 cup of bleach to 1 gallon (16 cups) of water. Use the solution within 20 minutes.
- Other EPA-approved disinfectants may be used if they are effective against Coronaviruses. Consumers may contact the “1-800” number on the product label for its effectiveness against “COVID-19”.

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### Proper Handling of Disinfectants, Items, and Waste

- Use chemicals in a well-ventilated area.
- Avoid mixing incompatible chemicals (read label).
- Prevent chemical contact with food during cleaning.
- Manage waste safely and dispose in a secure trash container.
- Store chemicals in an approved manner.

For more information on preventing a communicable illness in a food facility setting, contact Consultative Services at (888) 700-9995. For more information on COVID-19, visit <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov>.

