COVID-19 Restaurant Operations UPDATE

Guidance from California Department of Public Health – Food and Drug Branch

April 10, 2020

These recommendations are based on the release of substantial guidance from the California Department of Public Health ("CDPH") Food and Drug Branch April 10, 2020 updated guidance.

Intended audience (including but not limited to): retail food stores, restaurants, and food pick-up and delivery services.

Below are several frequently asked questions, pertaining to food facility operations specific to employee health and hygiene and customer self-service beverage stations, self-service bulk bins and the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

On April 9, 2020 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released updated information on best practices for retail food stores, restaurants, and food pick-up and delivery services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The best practices document addresses key considerations for how foods offered at retail food establishments can be prepared safely and delivered to the public, as well as key best practices for employee health and personal hygiene, cleaning and sanitizing. FDA and CDC continues to confirm that coronavirus/COVID-19 is transmitted through infected person-to-person contact and there is no evidence to date that the virus is transmitted through food. The document has updated the guidelines of discontinuing retail food operations, such as salad bars and buffets to include discontinuing self-service beverage stations that require customers to use common utensils or dispensers. This FDA document is attached to this end of this CDPH Update.

Q. How do I handle customer self-service beverage stations and self-service bulk dry goods dispensers in a retail setting related to COVID-19?

1. Nevada County retail markets and restaurants shall discontinue the use of customer self service beverage dispensers at this time.
2. Nevada County retail markets shall discontinue the use of customer self service bulk dry goods dispensers at this time.
3. Retail markets and restaurants may place beverage dispensers, disposable cups, lids and straws behind the check out counter and offer customers to go cups of beverages upon request. Employees shall fill single use cups for customers. Customers shall not serve themselves from common dispensers at this time.
4. Retail markets may pre-bag dry goods from bulk bins and offer those for sale to customers. No opened product allowed at this time.
5. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or possibly eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. The coronavirus is mostly spread from one person to another through respiratory droplets. However, it is still important to keep surfaces clean and sanitized and hands washed frequently.
Q. Should employees in retail food and food production settings wear face coverings to prevent exposure to COVID-19?

1. On April 3, the CDC released an updated recommendation regarding the use of cloth face coverings to help slow the spread of COVID-19. CDC recommends the use of simple cloth face coverings as a voluntary public health measure in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies).
2. For workers on farms, and in food production, processing, and retail settings who do not typically wear masks as part of their jobs, consider the following if you choose to use a cloth face covering to slow the spread of COVID-19:
   a. Maintain face coverings in accordance with parameters in FDA’s Model Food Code sections 4-801.11 Clean Linens and 4.802.11 Specifications.
   b. Launder reusable face coverings before each daily use.
   c. CDC also has additional information on the use of face coverings, including washing instructions and information on how to make homemade face covers.
3. The cloth face coverings recommended by CDC are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance.

Q. Is COVID-19 a reportable disease?

Yes – the “Novel Coronavirus Infection” is a reportable condition under CCR Title 17- Reportable Diseases and Conditions that needs to be reported immediately by the healthcare provider or “any individual” in the absence of a healthcare provider. The information can be found at the bottom of page 1 at: Title 17, California Code of Regulations (CCR) Reportable Diseases and Conditions.

California Retail Food Code (Cal Code) sections that may be useful in reference to the Coronavirus COVID-19 and food facilities are as follows:

1. Restrict ill food workers and emphasis that employee should stay home if sick. Cal Code, Chapter 3, Article 3 – Employee Health.
2. Implement strict hand hygiene practices by all employees. Cal Code, Chapter 3, Article 4 – Handwashing.
3. Perform routine cleaning and sanitizing of food contact surfaces. Cal Code, Chapter 5 – Cleaning and Sanitizing of Equipment and Utensils.

As A Reminder: Staff with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have indicated that person-to-person spread is the primary transmission method for coronavirus. Currently, we are not aware of any data that indicates the virus that causes COVID-19 can be transmitted through the ingestion of food.
If a food facility reports that a food worker was sent home ill or has a concern that an ill patron visited their food facility, please contact our Department and provide all of the information surrounding the concern and possible ill patron/customer. Our Department will work with our Public Health Department to determine the risk and appropriate response for the incident.

The Nevada County Environmental Health Department is here to support you and to answer any questions or concerns that you may have regarding your business or event operations.

Please reach out to our department via email: Env.Health@co.nevada.ca.us or via telephone (530) 265-1222 option #3. An EH staff member will return your email or phone call as quickly as possible.

RESOURCES
CDPH https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx
County of Nevada: https://www.mynevadacounty.com/Coronavirus
CDPH Public Face Covering Guidance: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Face-Coverings-Guidance.aspx
Best Practices for Retail Food Stores, Restaurants, and Food Pick-Up/Delivery Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic

FDA is sharing information about best practices to operate retail food stores, restaurants, and associated pick-up and delivery services during the COVID-19 pandemic to safeguard workers and consumers.

This addresses key considerations for how foods offered at retail can be safely handled and delivered to the public, as well as key best practices for employee health, cleaning and sanitizing, and personal protective equipment (PPE). This is not a comprehensive list. We encourage consulting the references and links provided below by CDC, FDA, EPA, and OSHA for more detailed information. This will be updated as FDA receives further information and inquiries.

Managing Employee Health (Including Contracted Workers)

- Instruct employees with symptoms associated with COVID-19 to report them to their supervisors. Instruct sick employees to stay home and to follow the CDC’s [What to do if you are sick with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)]. Consult with the local health department for additional guidance.

- If employees are sick at work, send them home immediately. Clean and disinfect surfaces in their workspace. Others at the facility with close contact (i.e., within 6 feet) of the employee during this time should be considered exposed.

- Instruct employees who are well, but know they have been exposed to COVID-19, to notify their supervisor and follow CDC-recommended precautions (see below).

- Inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace, if an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, while maintaining confidentiality.

- Implement workplace controls to reduce transmission among employees, such as those described below that are included in [CDC’s Interim Guidance for Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19].
  - Employers - Pre-screen (e.g., take temperature and assess symptoms prior to starting work).
  - Employers - Disinfect and clean work spaces and equipment, and consider more frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces.
  - Employees - Regularly self-monitor (e.g., take temperature and assess [symptoms of coronavirus]).
  - Employees - Wear a mask or face covering.
  - Employees - Practice social distancing and stay at least 6 feet from other people whenever possible.

- For additional information when employees may have been exposed to COVID-19, refer to [CDC’s Interim Guidance for Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19].

- For additional information on employee health and hygiene and recommendations to help prevent worker transmission of foodborne illness, refer to [FDA’s Employee Health and Personal Hygiene Handbook].
  - If FDA recommendations differ from CDC’s regarding employee health and COVID-19, follow CDC.

- For returning previously sick employees to work, refer to [CDC’s Guidance for Discontinuation of Home Isolation for Persons with COVID-19].

- Follow [CDC] and [FDA] information on PPE (i.e., gloves, face masks/coverings, and protective gear).

- Frequently review CDC’s [Interim Guidance for Business and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019].

- Understand risk at the workplace — use [OSHA’s Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19].
Food Safety Information

Personal Hygiene for Employees

- Emphasize effective hand hygiene including washing hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Always wash hands with soap and water. If soap and water are not readily available, then use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol and avoid working with unwrapped or exposed foods.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Use gloves to avoid direct bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods.
- Before preparing or eating food, always wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds for general food safety.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash hands after.

Managing Operations in a Foodservice Establishment or Retail Food Store

Continue to follow established food safety protocols and best practices for retail food establishments and important COVID-19 recommendations, including the following:
- Follow the 4 key steps to food safety: Always — Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize food contact surfaces dishware, utensils, food preparation surfaces, and beverage equipment after use.
- Frequently disinfect surfaces repeatedly touched by employees or customers such as door knobs, equipment handles, check-out counters, and grocery cart handles, etc.
- Frequently clean and disinfect floors, counters, and other facility access areas using EPA-registered disinfectants.
- Prepare and use sanitizers according to label instructions.
- When changing your normal food preparation procedures, service, delivery functions, or making staffing changes, apply procedures that ensure:
  - Cooked foods reach the proper internal temperatures prior to service or cooling.
  - Hot foods are cooled rapidly for later use — check temperatures of foods being cooled in refrigerators or by rapid cooling techniques such as ice baths and cooling wands.
  - The time foods being stored, displayed, or delivered are held in the danger zone (between 41°F and 135°F) is minimized.
  - Proper training for food employees with new or altered duties and that they apply the training according to established procedures.
- Help customers maintain good infection control and social distancing by:
  - Discontinuing operations, such as salad bars, buffets, and beverage service stations that require customers to use common utensils or dispensers.
  - Finding ways to encourage spacing between customers while in line for service or check out in accordance with the applicable State or local requirements.
  - Discouraging customers from bringing pets — except service animals — into stores or waiting areas.
- Continue to use sanitizers and disinfectants for their designed purposes.
- Verify that your ware-washing machines are operating at the required wash and rinse temperatures and with the appropriate detergents and sanitizers.
- Remember that hot water can be used in place of chemicals to sanitize equipment and utensils in manual ware-washing machines.
- If you donate food to food recovery or charitable organizations, check for State and local guidelines. You can also find further information at Conference for Food Protection.
Food Safety Information

Managing Food Pick-Up and Delivery

- Observe established food safety practices for time/temp control, preventing cross contamination, cleaning hands, no sick workers, and storage of food, etc.
- Have employees wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, after blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing, or after touching high touch surfaces, e.g., doorknobs, and doorbells.
  - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty. See, CDC’s How to Protect Yourself & Others.
- Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces such as counter tops and touch pads and within the vehicle, by wiping down surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
  - Make sure to read the label and follow manufacturer’s instructions on use.
- Establish designated pick-up zones for customers to help maintain social distancing.
- Practice social distancing when delivering food, e.g., offering “no touch” deliveries and sending text alerts or calling when deliveries have arrived.
- Conduct an evaluation of your facility to identify and apply operational changes in order to maintain social distancing if offering take-out/carry-out option by maintaining a 6-foot distance from others, when possible.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold by storing in appropriate transport vessels.
  - Keep cold foods cold by keeping enough coolant materials, e.g., gel packs.
  - Keep hot foods hot by ensuring insulated cases are properly functioning.
- Keep foods separated to avoid cross contamination, e.g., keeping raw foods separated from cooked and ready-to-eat foods.
- Ensure that any wrapping and packaging used for food transport is done so that contamination of the food is prevented.
- Routinely clean and sanitize coolers and insulated bags used to deliver foods.
Summary of Best Practices for Retail Food Stores, Restaurants, and Food Pick-Up/Delivery Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic

**BE HEALTHY, BE CLEAN**

- Employees - Stay home or leave work if sick; consult doctor if sick, and contact supervisor
- Employers - Instruct sick employees to stay home and send home immediately if sick
- Employers - Pre-screen employees exposed to COVID-19 for temperature and other symptoms

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- If soap and water are not available, use a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer per CDC
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Wear mask/face covering per CDC & FDA

- Never touch Ready-to-Eat foods with bare hands
- Use single service gloves, deli tissue, or suitable utensils
- Wrap food containers to prevent cross contamination
- Follow 4 steps to food safety: 
  - Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill

**CLEAN & DISINFECT**

- Train employees on cleaning and disinfecting procedures, and protective measures, per CDC and FDA
- Have and use cleaning products and supplies
- Follow protective measures

- Disinfect high-touch surfaces frequently
- Use EPA-registered disinfectant
- Ensure food containers and utensils are cleaned and sanitized

- Prepare and use sanitizers according to label instructions
- Offer sanitizers and wipes to customers to clean grocery cart/basket handles, or utilize store personnel to conduct cleaning/sanitizing

**SOCIAL DISTANCE**

- Help educate employees and customers on importance of social distancing:
  - Signs
  - Audio messages
  - Consider using every other check-out lane to aid in distancing

- Avoid displays that may result in customer gatherings; discontinue self-serve buffets and salad bars; discourage employee gatherings
- Place floor markings and signs to encourage social distancing

- Shorten customer time in store by encouraging them to:
  - Use shopping lists
  - Order ahead of time, if offered
  - Set up designated pick-up areas inside or outside retail establishments

**PICK-UP & DELIVERY**

- If offering delivery options:
  - Ensure coolers and transport containers are cleaned and sanitized
  - Maintain time and temperature controls
  - Avoid cross contamination; for example, wrap food during transport

- Encourage customers to use “no touch” deliveries
- Notify customers as the delivery is arriving by text message or phone call

- Establish designated pick-up zones for customers
- Offer curb-side pick-up
- Practice social distancing by offering to place orders in vehicle trunks

For more information, see Best Practices for Retail Food Stores, Restaurants, and Food Pick-Up/Delivery Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic

April 2020