



# County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency  
1080 Emeline Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

## Food Facility Operators Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### **Health Officer Shelter in Place Order (April 29, 2020) Appendix A: Social Distancing Protocol**

#### **Why do I need to have a Social Distancing Protocol?**

You must have a Social Distancing Protocol to show that you have assessed your facility and taken steps to safely provide service to the public during the Shelter in Place Order.

#### **Do I have to use the Appendix A: Social Distancing Protocol provided in the Shelter in Place Order?**

Yes. You are required to fill out the [Appendix A](#) and post..

#### **What do I do with my Social Distancing Protocol (Appendix A)?**

The Social Distancing Protocol must be posted at each entrance. A copy should also be given to each staff member. More importantly, the social distancing protocol must be applied.

#### **Do I need to address everything on Appendix A: Social Distancing Protocol?**

No. You must apply the protocols that relate to your business and type of service. For example, you do not need to disinfect carts if you are a restaurant.

You may not need to provide handwashing at the door if your doors open automatically and carts are disinfected. While you should disinfect at every point possible, focus on high-use areas.

### **Signage**

#### **Do I have to provide signs outside my facility?**

Yes. Signs must be posted at every entrance. Both staff and the public must be aware of the social distancing requirements to enter the facility.

## **What are the required signs?**

- No One Should Enter if Sick
- Maintain 6-foot distance
- Practice Proper Hygiene
- Face Coverings Required
- Completed Appendix A

## **Where can I find printable signs?**

Printable signs are available at: [www.sceeh.com](http://www.sceeh.com). Click on [Important Information for Food Facility Operators](#).

## **Any other recommended signage?**

Yes. We advise signs near any handwashing, hand sanitizing, and wipe-down area to explain their intended use. There should also be signs noting no sit-down service.

We also recommend signs advising that it is best to shop alone. Large groups increase crowding and make it hard to stay 6 feet away from others. It also increases the risk that more family members will be exposed.

## **Measures to Protect Employee Health**

### **I am not a doctor. How do I screen my workers?**

Someone in charge should ask staff if they have a fever, cough, or shortness of breath before start of work and throughout their shift. Inquire about someone's status if they appear to be showing signs of illness. If possible, take staff temperatures before start of work.

### **How can I prove that I have told staff they cannot work while sick?**

We recommend having a form that staff sign acknowledging they are aware they cannot work with fever, cough, or shortness of breath. You can add it to your existing Employee Health and Hygiene policy.

### **How often should I disinfect employee area surfaces?**

Frequently used surfaces in employee restrooms and break rooms should be disinfected at least every two hours or when they become contaminated due to sneezing or coughing.

Frequently used surfaces include but are not limited to:

- sink and door handles
- break room tables
- break room refrigerator handles
- time clocks

- lockers
- and similar surfaces.

### **What disinfectants are effective against COVID-19?**

A solution of 1/3 cup of bleach per gallon of water can be used.

A list of EPA approved COVID-19 disinfectants can be found at:

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>  
<https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>

Please note some disinfectants may not be appropriate for contact with food preparation surfaces. Use chemicals according to the manufacturer's specifications.

### **What kind of hand sanitizers are effective against COVID-19?**

Hand sanitizers should contain at least 60% Ethanol or 70% Isopropyl alcohol to be effective against COVID-19. Products should not be scented to avoid allergic reactions or incompatibility with food.

### **Are staff handwash stations required or is hand sanitizer enough?**

Handwashing is always best! Staff must have access to handwashing after using the restroom and near any open food handling area. Hand sanitizer is not enough to protect against food borne illness and is less effective if your hands are dirty.

Hand sanitizers are effective against COVID-19 if used properly. Hand sanitizer should be used between handwashing and when food contamination is not a problem. For example, cashiers should use hand sanitizers when handling money and scanning customer groceries.

Staff must have the ability to wash their hands and use hand sanitizer frequently during their course of work.

### **Are staff required to wear face coverings?**

Yes. Staff must wear a face covering in areas where customers are regularly present. This is true even if no customers are currently there. Staff do not need to wear a face covering in a private area when others are not present.

### **Are customers required to wear face coverings?**

Yes. Signs must be posted telling customers to wear face coverings. Staff must take reasonable steps to keep people who are not wearing a face covering from entering the business. They must refuse service to anyone who is not wearing a face covering (other than children under 12 and others who are exempted from the order).

### **I am limiting access to restrooms to decrease exposure. Do staff need access?**

Yes! Staff must have access to restrooms when needed. These must be safe, sanitary, and equipped with soap and water.

### **Measures to Prevent Crowds from Gathering**

#### **How can I determine the maximum capacity for my facility?**

You must first determine the square footage of the customer area. Then divide by 133. For example, 1000 square feet divided by 133 = 7 people allowed at once. The number of people must include any staff working in the public areas. For example, if you have 2 staff working in the store, only 5 customers can be inside at any time. Note this information on your Social Distancing Protocol to remind staff.

#### **How can I keep track of the number of people in my facility?**

At least one person should be stationed at the main entrances. This person should keep count of who comes in and out. Once you reach maximum capacity, additional people can enter only after an equal amount leave. One in, one out. Please keep in mind that each member of a family must be counted.

Have several staff members track how many people are in the customer area. Adjust staff as necessary if you see groups gathering in certain departments.

#### **How does selling goods per limit prevent crowding?**

Selling goods per limit reduces crowding by preventing people from spending long periods of time loading large quantities in their cart. It prevents people from racing to get products out of concern they will run out. It also prevents long lines at time of opening.

### **Measures to Keep People at Least 6 Feet Apart**

#### **How can I get people to stand 6 feet apart?**

Signs must be posted where patrons enter the building reminding them to stay 6 feet away from others. These signs lay the ground rules for entering the building.

Indicator tape should be placed on the floor at six-foot intervals at the following locations:

- Outside the facility, if people must stand in line waiting to enter
- At the cash registers
- At pick-up counters
- And at other high-use areas

Employees should be told to follow this policy to ensure that they are leading by example.

## **Measures to Prevent Unnecessary Contact**

### **Why do I need to stop serving from bulk bins?**

Bulk bin foods have a high risk of contamination. People must share scoops, pens, and bulk bin lids. Bulk bins are also in areas that are not supervised by staff.

### **I own a bakery; can patrons bag their own bread?**

No. Self-serve bakery cases are not allowed for the same reasons that bulk bins are not allowed. A staff person can dispense bread upon customer order or bread must be bagged and labeled for sale.

### **Can I operate a self-service soda, coffee or slushie machine?**

Self-service beverage units are discouraged. Cups and lids must be provided by staff and the unit disinfected frequently if in use. We recommend selling bottled drinks or beverages dispensed by an employee.

### **Can I have a self-service condiment, salsa, or topping area?**

No. Condiments, salsas and toppings must be prepackaged.

### **Can customers bring their own bag or container?**

No. Under normal circumstances, reusing bags and containers is a good thing. However, due to risk of contamination, these are not allowed at this time.

### **How can I limit exposure during payment?**

Touchless systems should be used if possible. These include: taking on-line orders and delivery; having scan-enabled credit card machines or machines that allow you to insert the card without touching the machine. Payment equipment should be disinfected regularly. Be prepared to disinfect equipment immediately if someone sneezes or coughs on equipment.

### **How do we handle cash safely?**

While we encourage use of hands-free payment systems, some people do not have a credit card. These customers still need access to food. Be prepared to accept cash while taking steps to protect yourself and the public.

Do not touch customers when taking cash. Ask the customer to put money on the counter, not in your hand. Return change by placing it back on the counter. Then disinfect the counter and your hands.

Food workers handling **unpackaged** food must wash their hands after handling cash and before returning to food service work.

Use gloves whenever possible. Change gloves as often as you would wash your hands. Staff handling unpackaged food must wash their hands between change of gloves.

## **Measures to Increase Sanitization**

### **What types of wipes are effective against COVID-19?**

A list of approved wipes can be found at:

<https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>

A towel can be used if soaked in a solution of 1/3 cup bleach per gallon of water. You can also use this as a spray. Do not re-use an empty chemical spray bottle. Use a new bottle or refill a bleach bottle and label properly.

### **How often must I disinfect carts?**

Carts must be disinfected at least every two hours if busy and less frequently when it is slow. We recommend they be disinfected when they are pulled from the parking lot to keep track.

### **How often must I disinfect all other surfaces?**

It depends on frequency of use and other disinfection opportunities throughout the building. The goal is to create a system where disinfection is maximized. On average, surfaces in contact with the public should be disinfected at least every two hours. High-use equipment like styluses and payment portals may need to be disinfected after every use in a busy grocery store. This is especially true if there are no sanitizing wipes or hand sanitizer at the entrance for customer use. Appendix A is not all inclusive and you can be creative in how you approach disinfection based on your business. It is important that you establish a protocol and that your staff follows it.

Regardless of established frequency, surfaces must be disinfected if visibly soiled or if someone is seen sneezing or coughing on them. Include procedures to address contaminated items and surfaces.

### **Am I required to provide a handwash station or hand sanitizer at the entrance to my facility for customers? There is a shortage of hand sanitizer.**

You must maximize sanitizing at your facility. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Providing hand sanitizer and handwashing is an option. You can choose to disinfect door handles more often, use hands-free doors, and provide disinfected carts. You can allow use of your restroom for handwashing. You can disinfect credit card payment equipment. You can establish a hands-free system where customers pay online, and food is delivered. You can have drive-thru service, handle payment at the window, and disinfect hands after each customer.

## **Employee Health: COVID-19 in the Workplace**

### **What can I do if I suspect or confirm that one of my employees has COVID-19?**

Contact the Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Division at (831) 454-2022. This agency will apply current CDC guidelines and work with the Communicable Disease Unit to proceed. Some immediate guidance is available at [www.scceh.com](http://www.scceh.com).

### **What can I do if someone is claiming they have COVID-19?**

Do not take such claims lightly. Conduct an investigation. Proceed with caution and take action to exclude and disinfect surfaces as required with a confirmed case. It is better to take prevention steps than to find out later that you have exposed others.

### **Can the Environmental Health Division press charges against people reporting false COVID-19 results and reimburse me for losses as a result of bad press, loss of income from closing, and medical bills?**

No. The Environmental Health Division is an enforcement agency and can take action to ensure correction of unhealthy conditions. We are not able to award damages. You must consult with a lawyer if you feel that you have experienced financial loss as a result of a false allegation, report, or social media story.