California Department of Industrial Relations
Division of Occupational Safety & Health
Publications Unit

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
CAL/OSHA
DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

SAFETY AND HEALTH GUIDANCE
COVID-19 Infection Prevention in Grocery Stores

California employers are required to establish and implement an Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) to protect employees from all worksite hazards, including infectious diseases. This guidance does not impose new legal obligations. It contains information for employers operating grocery stores on ways to update their IIPPs to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. This is mandatory in most California workplaces since COVID-19 is widespread in the community.

Photo: U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Employee Training on COVID-19

Provide training in a form that is readily understandable by all employees on the following topics:

- Information related to **COVID-19 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**, including:
  - What COVID-19 is and **how it is spread**.
  - **Symptoms of COVID-19 and when to seek medical attention**.
  - **Preventing the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick**.
  - How an infected person can spread COVID-19 to others even when they are not sick.
- Additional helpful information on **California's COVID-19 Response** webpage.
- The importance of frequent hand-washing and scrubbing with soap for at least 20 seconds (or, in non-food-handling areas, using hand sanitizer where soap and water are not available), including:
  - When employees arrive at work and before they leave work.
  - Before and after eating or preparing food.
  - After close interaction with other persons.
  - After contacting shared surfaces, equipment, or tools.
  - Before and after using the toilet.
  - After blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Methods to avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Coughing and sneezing etiquette, including covering a cough or sneeze with a tissue or a sleeve instead of a hand.
- The use of cloth face covers, including:
  - **CDC guidelines** that everyone should use cloth face covers when around other persons.
  - Cloth face covers can help protect persons around the user of the cloth face cover when combined with physical distancing and frequent hand-washing.
  - Cloth face covers are not protective equipment and do not protect the person wearing a cloth face cover from COVID-19.
- When customers bring their own bags, employees should be instructed to:
  - Not touch or place groceries in customer-brought bags.
  - Ask customers to leave their own bags in the shopping cart.
  - Ask customers to bag their own groceries.

Note: Hand sanitizers are less effective than hand-washing in preventing the spread of COVID-19

- Not touching or handling containers or recycling returned for reuse or redemption without personal protective equipment (PPE). Employees must be trained to wear and remove PPE safely without self-contamination.

- Safe use of cleaners and disinfectants, which includes:

  ◦ The hazards of the cleaners and disinfectants used at the worksite.

  ◦ Wearing PPE (such as disposable gloves).

  ◦ Ensuring cleaners and disinfectants are used in a manner safe for employees.

- Maintaining more than six feet of separation from others as much as possible and limiting close contact (see physical distancing information below).

- The importance of not coming to work if they have a frequent cough, fever, or difficulty breathing, or if they or someone they live with has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Increase Cleaning and Disinfection

Establish and implement procedures to routinely clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and objects (e.g., keypads; cash registers; scanners; shared utensils, equipment, or surfaces in food handling or prepping areas; equipment controls; carts) throughout the workday, including:

- Using products that are **EPA-approved** for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 and are also safe for food establishments.

- Providing EPA-registered disposable wipes for employees to wipe down commonly used surfaces before use and for employees and customers to wipe down shopping carts and baskets.

- Following the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., safety requirements, protective equipment, concentration, contact time).

- Ensuring there are adequate supplies to support cleaning and disinfection practices, including cleaning products and gloves.

- Creating procedures to close access and deep clean, preferably with a professional cleaning service, an area where a person confirmed or presumed to have COVID-19 has been. Any person cleaning the area should be equipped with proper PPE for COVID-19 disinfection (disposable gown, gloves, eye protection, and mask or respirator) in addition to PPE required for cleaning products.

- Requiring frequent cleaning and disinfection of collection points and areas where recyclable and reusable containers are processed.

  ◦ Use available methods to handle these materials remotely.

  ◦ Employees should not handle or process these materials by hand without appropriate PPE (impermeable disposable gloves and coveralls, eye protection, and a mask that is protective against splashing liquids).

  ◦ Employees must be trained on the safe use and removal of PPE.

Procedures to Increase Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is an infection control measure that can prevent the spread of an infectious disease by keeping people six feet apart and limiting physical contact between people. Use the following physical distancing measures to stop or slow down the spread of COVID-19:

- Stagger break and lunch times, and spread out breakroom chairs.

- Limit crew size by staggering or increasing the number of work shifts.

- Only use every other checkout register.

- Mark the floor so customers stay 6 feet apart in checkout or other lines.

- Limit the number of employees gathered at the start of day or in trainings or meetings to allow employees to spread out.

- Perform job interviews and orientations over the phone or using video conferencing.

- Post signs at all entrances with infection control information to customers, including:

  ◦ To use cloth face covers in the facility when possible.

  ◦ To only touch products they intend to purchase.

  ◦ To use hand sanitizer when entering the facility and prior to checkout.

- To leave their own bags in the shopping cart and bag their own groceries so that employees do not contact the bags.

- Limit direct contact with the public and customers.

  - Limit the number of customers in the store at one time.

  - Protect cashiers, pharmacy workers, and other workers who normally have regular, close interaction with the public with engineering controls such as Plexiglas screens or other physical barriers, or spatial barriers of at least six feet.

  - Use handheld scanners to minimize handling of purchased products.

  - Encourage customer use of payment cards and contactless payment. Clean frequently to prevent transmission between customers and provide hand sanitizer.

  - Self-checkout may make physical distancing a challenge because of the frequent need for customer assistance. If used, make sure there are protocols to allow for physical distancing when providing customer assistance. Clean frequently to prevent transmission between customers and provide hand sanitizer.

  - If customers bring their own bags, ensure:

    - Bags are not placed on conveyor belts or any other area outside of shopping carts.

    - Bags make no contact with employees.

    - Customers bag their own groceries.

    - Customers do not bag groceries in the checkout area if they cannot maintain physical distancing. Groceries can be placed in a cart and bagged elsewhere by the customer.

    - Increase the frequency of disinfection in bagging areas used by customers.

  - If a delivery driver requires a signature, have the store employee use their own pen or wear gloves.

  - Encourage customer use of online order and pickup. Place groceries directly into the customer's trunk instead of handing them to the customer, or permit customer to load them.

  - Discontinue providing samples to customers.

- Encourage employees to avoid large gatherings and practice physical distancing during non-work hours.

Good Hygiene Practices

Grocery employers must ensure bathrooms and hand-washing facilities are readily accessible to all employees at all times.

- Allow extra time for employees to wash their hands, including providing additional breaks for hand-washing. For cashiers and baggers, hand-washing every 30 minutes is a good rule of thumb.

- If employees have limited access to hand-washing, employees can use disposable gloves to prevent contact with potentially contaminated surfaces. Encourage employees to change gloves frequently and remove them before touching their face, smoking, eating, or using the restroom. Provide an adequate supply of gloves and make them readily available.

- Provide hand sanitizer at every checkout register and throughout the store.

What to do if Workers Might be Sick with COVID-19

Employers can encourage sick workers to stay home by implementing work policies that do not penalize workers for missing work because they have been diagnosed with or suspect they may have COVID-19. Such policies may include paid time off, increased sick leave, suspending "no-fault" absentee policies, and job protection for those staying at home.

Employers can implement health-screening programs to ensure that employees showing up to work are healthy. Employers may choose to prohibit employees with an elevated temperature (e.g., above 100.4°F) from entering the worksite. Train employees on self-screening before they come to work. If conducting workplace screening, provide employees performing screening with appropriate personal protective equipment. In light of personal protective equipment shortages, use gloves, eye protection, and a face covering. Have screened employees wear a face covering

or cover their nose and mouth with cloth or other material during screening. If possible, use touchless thermometers. Disinfect contact-thermometers between employees. Ensure screeners maximize their distance from the employee being screened.

Immediately send employees with acute respiratory illness symptoms home or to medical care as needed. Establish procedures to notify local health officials upon learning that someone has a COVID-19 infection. These officials will help employers determine a course of action.

> At this time, health experts do not recommend the use of respirators or face masks by the general public to protect against COVID-19 so they may be prioritized for health care workers. However, if available and controls such as barriers to block or create physical distance between the employee and the customer are not feasible, employers should provide face masks to those workers in the grocery industry with regular close contact with the public, such as cashiers, pharmacy workers, and baggers. Employers should train and encourage workers to wear the face covering of their choice voluntarily while at work to help prevent community transmission.

Additional COVID-19 Resources for Grocery Employers

Grocery Employers

- California Department of Public Health. **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and the Food Supply Chain**

- Food and Drug Administration. **Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**

- Oregon Department of Agriculture. **Effective Disinfectants to Help Prevent the Spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) on Food Contact Surfaces**

- Western New York Council on Occupational Safety and Health. **WNYCOSH Guidance for Cashiers in Retail Establishments During COVID-19 Outbreak**

General Information

- California Division of Occupational Safety and Health. **Cal/OSHA Interim Guidelines for General Industry on 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)**

- California Labor and Workforce Development Agency. **Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) Resources for Employers and Workers**

- **California Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. **Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. **Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. **Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Symptoms**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. **Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): How It Spreads**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. **Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Steps to Help Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 if You Are Sick**

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. **Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2** (the virus that causes COVID-19)

This document is available with active links at www.dir.ca.gov/COVID19GROC
For assistance regarding this subject matter, employers may contact
Cal/OSHA Consultation Services at: 1-800-963-9424 or **InfoCons@dir.ca.gov**
www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/consultation.html