



COUNTY OF IMPERIAL

PUBLIC HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

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COVID-19 Risk Mitigation Measures for Food Facilities

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a novel coronavirus that causes respiratory illness. The virus is primarily spread through the air via respiratory droplets from an infected person or by touching contaminated surfaces. Symptoms include fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath.

On March 17, 2020, the Imperial County Health Officer issued a legal order (“Order”), which is in effect from 12:01 am on March 20, 2020 through 11:59 pm on March 31, 2020.

To ensure access to food and consumer products, the Order **permits** the continued operation of:

- Grocery stores, food banks, convenience stores, and similar food retail establishments serving grocery and non-grocery products.
- Restaurants and other establishments (such as permitted mobile food facilities) that prepare and serve food to the public but only on a delivery, drive-thru, or carryout basis. Dining at the premises is prohibited.
- Charitable feeding operations but only on a delivery or take-away basis.

To meet the public’s nutritional needs, food facilities are encouraged to continue operating subject to the specified restrictions. These facilities must also follow the Social Distancing Requirements set forth below to the maximum extent feasible.

These restrictions may be modified or extended and new ones imposed. Consult the Order and visit the Imperial County Public Health Department website for up to date information <http://icphd.org>.

SOCIAL DISTANCING REQUIREMENTS

It is strongly encouraged that essential businesses, including food facilities, comply with the following Social Distancing Requirements to the maximum extent feasible:

- Maintain at least six-foot social distancing between individuals, including employees and customers and including while customers are waiting in line.
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least twenty seconds as frequently as possible and provide hand sanitizer to customers.
- Cover cough and sneezes (into the sleeve or elbow, not hands).
- Regularly clean high-touch surfaces.

RISK MITIGATION MEASURES FOR FOOD FACILITIES

The following additional protocols are recommended to mitigate spread of COVID-19 among employees and customers:

Ensure that there are adequate supplies for hand washing including soap, paper towels, and waste receptacles. If a food facility runs out of supplies, the facility is to cease operation until supplies are available.

Require employees to wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Employees' hands should be washed:

- When entering the kitchen
- Before starting food preparation
- After touching their face, hair, or other areas of the body
- Before putting on gloves
- After using the restroom
- After coughing, sneezing, using a tissue, smoking, eating, or drinking
- When handling raw food then ready-to-eat food
- After cleaning, bussing tables, or touching any items that patrons have used
- Between handling money/credit cards/phones/pens and handling food
- After engaging in other activities that may contaminate the hands

Tips!

- Minimize bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food
- Assign an employee to keep soap and paper towels stocked at handwash stations at least every hour
- Protect food and drinks from contamination when preparing and packing for delivery and carryout by patrons
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Minimize touching your phone or other personal items
- Wash hands more frequently for all staff
- Provide extra garbage cans near restrooms exits
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer for customers to use
- Provide regular staff training to ensure proper protocols are followed!

Prevention - Sanitizing Equipment and the Facility

Chlorine-based (bleach) sanitizer at 100 ppm or quaternary ammonium-based sanitizers at 200 ppm are effective sanitizers. Use test strips to ensure that sanitizer is at these required concentrations. Sanitize equipment, utensils, and food preparation areas, as well as tables, seats, service counters and any other area exposed to customers or employees routinely throughout the day.

Tips!

COVID-19 can last for days on surfaces. Increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing all high-touch areas such as:

- Door knobs, touch screens, cash registers, faucet handles, and cabinet/drawer pulls
- Condiment dispensers and napkin dispensers
- Other items and surfaces frequently touched by employees or customers

At this time, avoid accepting reusable utensils from customers (food containers, traveler cups, etc.)

- Provide condiments, utensils, and napkins to customers upon request rather than on a self-serve basis to minimize contact

Any employee who is experiencing any fever (≥ 99.5 degrees Fahrenheit) and respiratory symptoms should stay home until 3 days after they are symptom-free to prevent the spread of any virus. Maximize flexibility in use of sick leave to facilitate such time off.

If an employee is confirmed positive for COVID-19 and the employee worked at any time after their symptoms began, cease operations until the facility can be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized. The facility may reopen after that has occurred. Coworkers should monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days and may continue to work during this 14-day period only if they do not have any symptoms.

Social Distancing

To the extent feasible, you must ensure that all individuals at your facility are able to maintain at least six-feet of social distance at all time, including while standing in line. Arrange your space to allow for adequate social distancing (ex: placing tape on floor or other visual methods to provide adequate spacing for patron to keep the necessary distance from each other). Mobile food facility operators should also encourage social distancing.

Imperial County Public Health Cards “Health Cards”

The Public Health Department has temporarily suspended the requirement of obtaining or renewing the local Health Card (Yellow Health Card) until further notice. Food facility employees are still required to maintain their existing California Food Handler Card and California Food Safety Certification.

Additional Information

The information and requirements pertaining to COVID-19 may change as more is learned about this virus and its transmission. It is responsibility of the food facility owner to make every effort to obtain the latest information on food safety for their food facility’s operation. Up to date legal orders as well as additional information, status reports, and website links can be accessed on the Imperial County Public Health website: <http://icphd.org>.

Sincerely,



Jeff Lamoure, Deputy Director