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Our branch offices are currently open for essential services only.  
We continue to process Food Service License applications received via  
mail.

We will continue to provide you with information as we receive it from the  
State of Michigan regarding extending the deadline to apply for a Food  
Service license past April 30<sup>th</sup> 2020.

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Executive Order 2020-21 that took effect on March 24, 2020 does not  
prohibit food service workers from travelling to work and allows for  
restaurants to conduct curbside, drive through and to go food service  
business

## An Update on COVID-19

### **COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Food Establishments**

*March 26, 2020*

Dear Michigan Food Establishments,

This message is to provide an update on the novel coronavirus currently circulating as it relates to food safety. While food has not been identified as a likely source of the novel **coronavirus** disease, called “COVID-19,” we wanted to reach out to you because food safety practices you routinely perform at home and work can help reduce the spread of coronavirus among your workers and in our community. We also want to make sure you have a resource to have your food safety questions answered.

The following includes guidance from our office in response to questions we’ve received from you. We plan to continue to add information and we will share with you when it is available—as well as it when it changes. We are also working to post the information to the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) website <https://www.mmdhd.org/novel-coronavirus/> or visit our Facebook page for your ease of access and to help keep the information updated as more is known with this dynamic situation.

### **Prevention Recommendations**

Again, food has not been identified as a likely source of COVID-19 infection at this time. However, following current food safety standards will help protect your workers and customers from COVID-19. In addition, expanding your current food safety practices will help slow the spread of respiratory viruses in the community and help reduce working days lost due to illness.

**Review Employee Health Policies and Procedures:**

Be sure your employee health policies prohibit food workers from working in food establishments while sick.

- Talk with your workers about employee health requirements and expectations. Now is a good time to retrain your employees as needed to make sure everyone is aware of symptoms to monitor and how to notify you if they are sick and unable to work.
- Workers that are possibly sick with the symptoms matching COVID-19 should stay home. If possible, employees with family members/caregivers with symptoms matching COVID-19 should also stay home. Signs and symptoms of infection with COVID-19 include fever (100.4°F or greater with an oral thermometer), cough, and shortness of breath. Symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus.
- Food workers and managers suspected of illness should not return to work until they are symptom-free. Current guidance is to stay home until at least 14 days after symptoms have gone away; however, this may be altered by medical diagnosis, local health authority, changing conditions, or other factors.
- Encourage employees to practice social distancing with customers and coworkers. The CDC suggests maintaining a distance of approximately six feet from others.

### **Increase Hand Hygiene**

- Ensure all employees wash their hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Make sure each handwashing station is always stocked with soap, paper towels, and warm, running water.
- Even with proper handwashing, Michigan requires that food workers use a barrier such as tongs, gloves, or other utensil to prevent direct hand contact with ready-to-eat food.
- Remind employees to avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth to help slow the spread of germs. The current food safety rule requires workers wash their hands whenever they touch their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Consider providing alcohol-based hand sanitizer in areas customers can pick up food orders (with at least 60% ethyl alcohol as the active ingredient) in customer areas.

### **Clean and Sanitize**

- It is expected that the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is, like other coronaviruses, also susceptible to EPA-registered sanitizers and disinfectants.
- The EPA has a [list of registered sanitizers](#) labeled for use against the novel coronavirus. *Note: There may be additional disinfectants that meet the criteria and EPA will update the list as needed. If you have questions about your particular sanitizer, please carefully read the package label or reach out to your chemical provider for more information.*
- *Be sure to follow the label directions for FOOD CONTACT SURFACES when using the chemical near or on utensils and food contact surfaces.*

**Read the label carefully and train employees thoroughly. Certain disinfection chemicals or increased concentrations may not be used on food contact surfaces or may need to be rinsed prior to use with food.**

- All food contact surfaces, such as utensils and cutting boards must be washed, rinsed, and sanitized (either with chemical sanitizer or high-temperature dish machine) often throughout the day. When using chemical sanitizers with dishes or in food prep areas, be sure staff use the concentration and directions listed on the product's label for FOOD CONTACT SURFACES.
- Only use sanitizers registered with EPA as a sanitizer. Read the sanitizer label and follow usage directions. Be sure staff monitor the concentration of the sanitizer with test strips to make sure the active ingredient is available and at proper concentration.

- Wash and rinse equipment of visible dirt or debris before sanitizing. Sanitizers work better on clean surfaces.
- All nonfood contact surfaces, such as equipment, counters, and doors should be cleaned of spills as needed. To help reduce the potential for coronavirus, it is recommended to also wash, rinse, and sanitize nonfood contact surfaces that employees touch throughout the day.
- To help protect your workers and customers, increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing customer-access areas. Use a separate wiping cloth and sanitizing solution when sanitizing the front of house/customer-access areas.
- Consider removing decorative objects, papers, and other unneeded materials from counters to allow for thorough sanitization of unobstructed surfaces.
- Sanitize 'touchpoints' such as the outside of condiment containers and other items frequently handled such as doorknobs, backs of chairs, faucet handles, tabletops, and menus at least daily.

### **Get set and staffed for curbside pick-up.**

For drive-up service, designate a parking space curbside or in your parking lot with signage. Work with your local municipality to designate public spaces for curbside pick-up if you need them.

- **Rethink payment options.** More restaurants are opting for cashless transactions (which are often touchless) through mobile payment apps and credit card readers. If they're willing, customers can pay by giving their credit card over the phone, as well. Don't use payment methods that require a pen signature.
- **Take care with cash.** Make sure you have a strict employee handwashing policy in place and sanitize after point of sale components often.

### **Streamline your drive-thru**

- Making sure the drive-thru station hand sink is clear and accessible so employees can wash hands often. It should be stocked with soap and paper towels.
- An air curtain keeps temperatures in and insects out, but it's also an added barrier between customer and employee.
- Adding or restocking an undercounter fridge, because some customers are asking for bottled beverages instead of fountain drinks.

### **Packaging recommendations**

- Clear lids: Being able to see the food after it's packed keeps employees from opening to verify what's packed and helps keep orders straight. This also reduces deterioration and contamination risk. Using sticker systems can help identify orders without reopening packages as well.
- Bags need to be sealed in some way. There are bags that have sticker seals for tamper-proof delivery, or you can use the old faithful stapler to staple the bag shut.
- Do not provide communal condiments or utensils. Condiments and utensils should be prepackaged in the takeout order to reduce interaction.
- It is recommended that hand sanitizer be provided at any customer contact area.

### **Enforce food safety training**

Just because the focus of operations is moving to a drive-thru, curbside or delivery framework, essential food handling practices in the back of the house **MUST** remain the same.

- Ensure foods are prepared and held within safe time/temperature parameters.
- Prevent cross contamination.
- Follow cleaning and sanitizing protocols.
- Tell ill employees to stay at home.

### **Revise your menu**

Focus on menu items you can prepare and package easily for drive-thru, pick-up and takeout. Some restaurants continue to offer their entire menu for takeout. Others are limiting items due to the high cost of maintaining inventory when sales are down. Consider your menu items that are popular, quick to serve, travel well, and fulfill the needs of homebound families and individuals.

## Communicate with customers

Let your customers know on your website, social media channels and through emails what your hours, menu and policy will be for takeout, pick-up and drive-thru service.

### Where to turn for more information:

- [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- [Coronavirus Disease 2019](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- [Coronavirus and Pandemic Preparedness for the Food Industry](#), FMI Food Industry Association
- [Coronavirus: What Can You Do?](#) National Restaurant Association
- [Interim Guidance for Business and Employers to Plan and Respond to COVID-19](#)Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- [Getting Your Workplace Ready for COVID-19](#) World Health Organization
- [Guidance for Travelers](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**Thank you for your work in food safety and for sharing your food safety knowledge and practices with your staff and customers.**

Please let us know if you have additional questions or have requests for more information. We will keep updated information coming your way as it is available. Please be safe out there.

Sincerely,

Liz Braddock  
Environmental Health Director  
Mid-Michigan District Health Department

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