



Guidance for Rural Grocery Stores – COVID-19

Grocery stores and grocery store workers are considered essential critical infrastructure during the COVID-19 pandemic. This document is meant to help provide recommendations for rural grocers to help protect their employees and customers. This document combines information from the CDC and the FDA to recommend best practices for environmental health in a rural grocery store setting.

General recommendations for employees to reduce the spread of COVID-19 include:

- Practice proper hand hygiene. Gloves are not a substitute for handwashing. Employees should wash their hands after:
 - Eating, drinking, using tobacco
 - Coughing, sneezing, or using a tissue
 - Preparing raw animal products
 - Going to the bathroom
 - Handling dirty or shared equipment (handling cash)
 - Touching their face or other part of their body
- If a task requires direct contact with ready-to-eat food:
 - Wash hands and exposed portions of arms for 20 seconds
 - Wear appropriate glove(s)
 - Complete the task involving ready-to-eat food or food contact surfaces
 - Wash hands immediately after removing gloves
- Employees should stay home if they are sick.

Recommendations for store operations:

- Start a delivery service or curbside pick-up for those who are elderly, pregnant, or medically compromised.
- Create specific hours where only elderly, pregnant, and medically compromised people are allowed in the store.
- Prohibit children from the store unless they are the shopper for their household.
- Advise shoppers to make a shopping list and know exactly what they need beforehand to eliminate browsing.
- Require the use of cloth face coverings for both store employees and customers.
- Post signage and guiding tape on the floor to remind patrons to maintain a distance of 6 feet at check out and service counters.
- Limit the number of shoppers in the store based on the store's square footage. Consider only permitting one shopper per 200 square feet with a maximum of 10 people in the building total.

Administrative control recommendations:

- Promote physical distancing by extending store hours.



- Require frequent cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces.
 - Provide hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes for staff and patrons.
 - Ensure sinks have soap and clean towels for hand drying.
- Encourage employees to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19.
 - The most common symptoms are fever, tiredness and dry cough. Some people experience nasal congestion, aches and pains, runny nose, sore throat and diarrhea.
- Consider making traffic one-way in the aisles.
- Consider a staggered work schedule to reduce the need for employee contact.
- Freight can be “quarantined” to ensure that any virus living on packaging does not make it into the community.
 - COVID-19 can live on cardboard for 24 hours, plastic for 72 hours and steel for 48 hours.
 - Hard surfaced packaging like plastic and steel can be disinfected prior to stocking.

Surface disinfection recommendations:

- Increase regular cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces such as door handles, light switches, countertops, tabletops, phones, toilets, faucets, sinks, and keypads.
- For disinfectants that meet criteria for use against COVID-19, please see the EPA list.
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
 - If a surface is visibly dirty, it should first be cleaned off with soap and water.
 - The surface should then be disinfected with a household disinfectant or a bleach solution.
 - To make a bleach solution, mix 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) bleach with 1 gallon of water or 4 teaspoons bleach with 1 quart of water.
 - Always follow the products instructions and never mix bleach with ammonia or any other cleaner.
 - If you are using Clorox bleach, the surface should remain visibly wet for 10 minutes to achieve disinfection for COVID-19.

For sick employees:

- Instruct employees that are symptomatic of COVID-19 to contact their supervisors via phone.
- If an employee becomes sick at work, send them home immediately. Clean and disinfect all surfaces in their workspace.
- Employees that have been around sick people or have recovered from being sick should contact their health care provider before returning to work.