

The Health Department is closely monitoring the rapid developments in the outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus, COVID-19. Vermont is responding to protect and support Vermonters. Everyone has a role in keeping our community healthy, and that includes our business partners in food and lodging establishments. Information is available on the Health Department [website](#) and updated requirements are included here to support social distancing and mitigation measures.

**If unable to abide by the provisions required in the Executive Orders – such as implementing measures for social distancing and limiting non-essential gatherings – food service or other businesses deemed essential should not continue operating in the interest of public health.**

## “Stay Home, Stay Safe”

ACCD has developed a [business FAQ](#) for how this Executive Order applies.

This policy does not change the Governor’s [executive order on restaurants](#). Restaurants can continue take-out, curbside and delivery services.

Pursuant to the Governor’s [Executive Order 01-20, as amended](#), except as set forth below, effective Wednesday, March 25, 2020 at 5 p.m., subject to closures and limitations provided in prior orders, all businesses and not-for-profit entities in the state shall suspend in-person business operations. These businesses and not-for-profit entities are encouraged to develop business strategies, procedures and practices such as using an on-line presence, telephone and web-based service delivery and phone or online orders for curb-side pick-up and delivery.

Businesses and entities providing services or functions deemed critical to public health and safety, as well as economic and national security shall remain in operation. Services or functions in Vermont deemed critical to public health and safety, as well as economic and national security include:

- e. critical manufacturing, including **food and animal feed manufacturing, processing and supply**, pharmaceuticals and other manufacturing necessary to support the COVID-19 response as well as economic and national security;
- f. retail serving basic human needs such as **grocery stores**, pharmacies, **other retail that sells food, beverage**, animal feed and essential supplies, provided, these retail operations shall be conducted through on-line and telephone orders for delivery and curb-side pickup to the extent possible;

## I. Lodging, to the extent required to support COVID-19 response, critical infrastructure and national security;

Other businesses may be determined to be critical to public health and safety, as well as economic and national security after requesting an opinion from [ACCD](#).

Commercial entities, non-profits, employers and others with questions about acceptable continuation of business operations should contact the Agency of Commerce and Community Development via this online form: <https://bit.ly/covid-vt-business-operations>.

Please refer to [Addendum 7](#) for details of the Executive Order that further clarify suspension of lodging operations unless these entities provide services or functions deemed critical to public health and safety. On-line reservations shall be suspended and lodging providers shall post a prominent notice on their web platforms which advises potential guests that reservations for lodging in Vermont, as allowed above, shall be accepted by phone only. Lodging providers may permit existing guests to remain through the end of their scheduled stay, however, may not allow extended stay or new reservations, except for the purposes set forth above.

## Stopping On-premise Consumption

Pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order 01-20, as amended, effective Tuesday, March 17, 2020 at 2:00 p.m., any restaurant, bar, or establishment that offers food or drink shall not permit on-premises consumption of food or drink. Establishments may continue to offer food for take-out and by delivery.

Businesses that adjust operations to implement this order and remain operating must ensure that food safety provisions are followed for take-out and delivery service.

The Health Department urges establishments to evaluate if additional measures to reduce contact can be taken, such as:

- Offering pre-packaged food items
- Temporarily discontinuing self-serve operations. Examples of such operations include continental breakfast, salad bars, buffets and dispensers.
- Delivering food to customers directly

## Non-essential Gatherings

Pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order 01-20, as amended, to protect public health all non-essential gatherings of more than ten (10) people at the same time in a space such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, theater or any other confined indoor or confined outdoor space which encourages congregation are prohibited.

A "non-essential gathering" does not include normal operations at airports, bus or railway stations where persons may be in transit; typical office, construction, manufacturing, grocery, food production, retail and retail banking, professional or other employment environments; gatherings of the press; or operations of the Vermont Judiciary or General Assembly consistent with their constitutional authority.

## Social Distancing

Consider measures to achieve the social distance guidelines of six (6) feet distance between people:

- Physically space workers and stagger work schedules.
- Consider opening more registers to reduce the number of people in customer lines, with baggers to reduce the amount of time people are in line.
- [Post signs](#) that remind customers to implement social distancing at registers and check-out lines.
- Consider creating six-foot markers to remind customers to distance themselves.
- Add additional staff (e.g., stocking shelves, cashiers, baggers) as needed to reduce the amount of time people are in the store.
- Reduce the number of customers allowed in, if customer lines are frequently overcrowded.
- Ensure all employee break areas accommodate social distancing.

## Everyday Preventive Measures

Person-to-person spread of the virus is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Much is still unknown about how the virus spreads. Take these everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

## Stay home when 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 on the same page.
- Food workers and managers with coughing, shortness of breath, fever, or other symptoms of illness should not return to work until they are symptom-free. Current guidance is to stay home until at least 72 hours after symptoms have gone away. This may be altered by medical diagnosis, changing community conditions, or other factors. Ensure that your sick leave policy makes it easy for employees to stay home if they need to. Make sure employees know these policies and understand your expectations.
- Plan for absenteeism by identifying essential functions and creating plans for continuity of operations.
- Cross-train staff to perform essential functions so you can operate if key people are absent.
- Consider what you need to maintain critical operations (identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, temporarily suspend some operations, if needed).

## Employees with COVID-19

Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 by food. Unlike foodborne gastrointestinal (GI) viruses like norovirus and hepatitis A that often make people ill through contaminated food, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is a virus that causes respiratory illness. Foodborne exposure to this virus is not known to be a route of transmission. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or possibly eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality. Sick employees should follow the CDC's [What to do if you are sick](#)

[with coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). Employers should consult with the health department for additional guidance.

While the primary responsibility in this instance is to take appropriate actions to protect other workers and people who might have come in contact with the ill employee, facilities should re-double their cleaning and sanitation efforts to control any risks that might be associated with workers who are ill regardless of the type of virus or bacteria. For example, facilities are required to maintain clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces.

## Promote proper handwashing

- Make sure handwashing signs are put where employees can see them.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Dry hands with paper towels and throw the paper towels in the trash.
- Even with proper handwashing, Vermont requires that food workers use a barrier such as tongs, gloves, or other utensil to prevent direct hand contact with food. The virus is likely to be inactivated by proper cooking temperatures; it is important to use gloves or other barriers to prevent touching foods that will not be fully cooked.

## Remember to wash hands:

- After coughing, sneezing, and wiping your nose.
- After using the bathroom.
- When preparing foods.
- When switching from preparing uncooked foods to working with ready-to-eat foods.
- After touching your face or hair.
- After touching animals.
- After eating and using tobacco/nicotine.
- After handling money or other forms of payment.
- After handling dirty equipment or utensils.
- Before putting on disposable gloves.
- Whenever hands become dirty.

## Use routine cleaning procedures

It is expected that the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is, like other coronaviruses, also susceptible to EPA-registered sanitizers and disinfectants. Special processes beyond routine cleaning and sanitizing are not recommended at this time.

- Remember, cleaning and sanitizing are not the same. Clean with soap and water to remove dirt and food from surfaces. Sanitize with chemicals or heat to reduce germs. Surfaces that look clean may still have germs on them that you can't see. Sanitizing reduces these germs to safer levels.
- Clean and sanitize surfaces that are frequently touched. Surfaces such as remote controls, kitchen counters, doorknobs, bathroom surfaces, keyboards, tables and chairs, faucet handles, tabletops, menus, phones and tablets, the outside of condiment containers and other items frequently handled.
- Follow the instructions on your cleaner for how long the surface needs to remain wet for it to be effective.
- Food-contact surfaces should be washed, rinsed, and sanitized after each use.
- Only use sanitizers registered with EPA as a sanitizer. Read the sanitizer label and follow usage directions. Be sure to measure the concentration of the sanitizer with test strips to make sure the active ingredient is available.
- 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.
- When disinfecting for coronavirus, EPA recommends following the product label use directions for enveloped viruses, as indicated by the approved emerging viral pathogen claim on the master label. If the directions for use for viruses/virucidal activity list different contact times or dilutions, use the longest contact time or most concentrated solution.
- Note: These disinfection concentrations may exceed the allowable levels allowed for use on food contact surfaces such as dishes and utensils. Be sure to follow the label directions for FOOD CONTACT SURFACES when using the chemical near or on utensils and food contact surfaces.
- If you have questions about your particular sanitizer, please carefully read the package label or reach out to your chemical provider for more information.
- If you use disinfectant wipes, use according to package directions. Do not reuse the wipes to wipe down multiple surfaces. Throw used wipes in the trash.

## Protect your employees and customers

- Keep restrooms stocked with soap and towels or hand dryers.

- Make sure alcohol-based hand sanitizer is available for customers to use, especially if there is no soap and water.
- Be sure to clean and sanitize any objects or surfaces customers may touch, including restroom surfaces, menus, condiments, etc.

## Resources

The Vermont Department of Health website contains guidance and answers to frequently asked questions. View these resources at [healthvermont.gov/covid19](https://healthvermont.gov/covid19)

The CDC is regularly updating its guidance at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html).

FDA Food Safety and COVID-19 Q&A: <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

Guidance for Vermont Businesses from ACCD: [https://accd.vermont.gov/about-us/disaster-planning/covid-19-guidance-vermont-businesses?fbclid=IwAR34-1JU65wcSZXUFVLYmcdFhMmRKe\\_Rzytsj8HGZmfwg0QWtmCGQ-PstY](https://accd.vermont.gov/about-us/disaster-planning/covid-19-guidance-vermont-businesses?fbclid=IwAR34-1JU65wcSZXUFVLYmcdFhMmRKe_Rzytsj8HGZmfwg0QWtmCGQ-PstY)