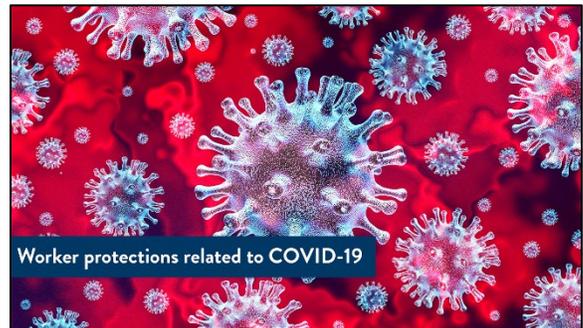


COVID-19: Protecting grocery store workers

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) requires employers to implement Gov. Tim Walz's Executive Order 20-33, Extending the COVID-19 Peacetime Emergency Declared in Executive Order 20-01 (see <https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp>).

As provided in guidelines from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), employers must ensure: social distancing for employees and customers; frequent and adequate handwashing; regular cleaning and disinfection of workplaces; and sick employees are encouraged to stay home. Employers must also provide basic workplace hazard education about coronavirus and how to prevent transmission in languages best understood by employees.



Plan for effective handwashing for all

- Install hand-sanitizing dispensers and disinfecting wipes at store entrances and at key locations inside the store for customers and workers to use.
- Require workers – and allow them the time – to wash their hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, in particular: when they arrive and depart from work; before and after they use the restroom; before eating, drinking or using tobacco; when they leave their workstation; and after handling money.
- Ensure disposable gloves are used by workers for retrieving carts, when handling money, when using a common cash register or keypad, when necessary for food safety and when conducting cleaning and disinfecting activities.
- Set up a schedule to keep needed supplies well stocked, handwashing areas clean and trash emptied.

Plan for effective social distancing

- Require all workers to stay at least six feet away from customers and coworkers.
- Limit the number of customers entering the store to facilitate social distancing at store entrances, throughout the store and at checkout lanes. For example: Set a specific number of customers allowed in based on the square footage and configuration of the store to allow for workers and customers to maintain social distance.
- Mark six-foot increments (using colored tape, chalk, etc.) on the ground or floor to ensure social distancing at checkout counters, pharmacy windows, meat counters or other high-traffic and waiting areas.
- Post large, printed, attention-getting signs that are readable from a distance (or use portable, electronic signs) to inform customers of the social distancing and hygiene practices the store is using. Include store practices and request, such as: the store is limiting the number of shoppers to one for each family;

customers are asked to use masks or face coverings, and dispose of disposable wipes, gloves and masks in store trash cans; and customers are asked to respect set-aside shopping times for seniors and other vulnerable populations.

- Designate workers to monitor and facilitate social distancing and hygiene practices.
- Discontinue self-serve foods, product demonstrations and free product samples.

Ensure sick workers are not at work

- Monitor employees for signs of illness, including using health status questions and checking temperatures at the beginning of shifts, and require sick workers to stay home or return home if they are experiencing symptoms.
- Ensure employees know the signs and symptoms of the COVID-19 virus, such as a cough, fever or sore throat, or muscle aches.

Workplace discrimination is always prohibited

- It is against the law for any employer to take any adverse action, such as firing a worker or threatening a worker for exercising their safety and health rights. Such rights include: raising safety and health concerns to their employer; participating in union activities concerning safety and health; filing a safety and health complaint; or participating in a Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MNOSHA) Compliance investigation. Workers have 30 days to file their complaint with MNOSHA Compliance and/or with federal OSHA.

Educate workers about how to prevent coronavirus transmission

- Teach workers about social distancing, proper handwashing, hygiene etiquette and other storewide safety procedures related to COVID-19.
- Teach workers the importance of proper handwashing, covering coughs and sneezes, and avoidance of touching their eyes, nose or mouth.
- Teach workers when and how to use gloves, masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Prohibit the sharing of utensils, phones, tools, equipment and other workplace items that are not sanitized between each use.
- Communicate important safety messages and updates (possibly daily) with posters, electric signs, monitors, etc.

Checkout stand and counter considerations

- Consider closing self-checkout stands if the surfaces cannot be sanitized between customers and if it is not possible to ensure at least six feet between users.
- Consider installing “sneeze shields” at checkout stands and ask customers to stand behind them, or relocate pay station keypads farther from the workers.

- When supplies are available, provide disposable wipes and hand sanitizer at each checkout stand for employee and customer use.
- Prohibit the use of reusable shopping bags and provide single-use bags for grocery items.

Stocking shelves and cleaning surfaces

- Schedule as much shelf-stocking and deep-cleaning as possible during closing hours. If it is a 24-hour store, stock during the slowest period of the night.
- Appoint a designated sanitation worker (or workers) at all times to continually clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces on a significantly increased schedule. Use the environmental cleaning guidelines set by the CDC (see www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html).
- When disinfecting for coronavirus, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends using the longest recommended contact time and most effective method for the surface. Be sure to follow the label directions for **food contact surfaces** when using a chemical near or on utensils and food contact surfaces.
- Ensure workers use protective gloves and eye or face protection (face shields or goggles) when mixing, spraying and wiping with liquid cleaning products, such as diluted bleach.

Other protective measures

- Provide ways for workers to express their concerns about and ideas to improve safety and health.
- Alert store managers or shift supervisors of strategies for handling customers who are not following social distancing practices or demonstrate signs of illness during their visit. For example, it might be helpful to move a coughing customer out of line to a separate checkout station distant from others.
- Update the store A Workplace Accident and Injury Reduction (AWAIR) program to include awareness and prevention measures for diseases and viruses.

Resources

DLI: Updates related to COVID-19 – www.dli.mn.gov/updates

MNOSHA Compliance: Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) – www.dli.mn.gov/business/workplace-safety-and-health/mnosha-compliance-novel-coronavirus-covid-19

Get help

For a free workplace safety and health consultation, visit www.dli.mn.gov/about-department/our-areas-service/minnesota-osh-workplace-safety-consultation or call MNOSHA Workplace Safety Consultation at 651-284-5060 or 800-657-3776.