

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Guidance: Requirements for Grocery and Convenience Stores

05/07/2021

This guidance applies to all business and places of public accommodation (“businesses”)—as defined by Executive Order 21-11, as amended by Executive Order 21-21 (“EO”)—operating grocery stores, supermarkets, retail food-outlets, pharmacies, wholesale clubs, convenience stores, farmers markets, liquor stores, gas stations, and other similar convenience establishments. This guidance applies from Friday, May 7, 2021 at 12 p.m. (noon) through May 27, 2021. Businesses must continue to follow all other applicable [Stay Safe Industry Guidance \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp). The EO requires all businesses to have and implement a written COVID-19 Preparedness Plan that addresses EO requirements and applicable Stay Safe Industry Guidance. For more information about Plan requirements, see the applicable [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities webpage \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp).

Food and beverages may be offered for on-site consumption if the establishment complies with all requirements found in [Guidance for Restaurants and Bars \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safedining.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safedining.pdf).

Recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19

COVID-19 is primarily spread through respiratory droplets, so the risk of COVID-19 transmission increases when people gather with other households. Several key strategies can reduce the risk of getting sick or transmitting COVID-19:

- ✓ Wear a well-fitting face covering. See [Frequently Asked Questions About the Requirement to Wear Face Coverings \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html).
- ✓ Keep at least 6 feet of physical distance from other households and wash hands often.
- ✓ Get tested. See [COVID-19 Testing \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html) for information about who should get tested and how to get a test.

- ✓ Stay home if you are sick or were exposed to COVID-19. See [If You Are Sick: COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html) and [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf).
- ✓ Get vaccinated. See the [MDH COVID-19 Vaccine webpage \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/index.html).
- ✓ Work from home. Working from home is strongly recommended and businesses are strongly encouraged to allow employees to work from home when possible. Employers must provide reasonable accommodations as required under existing federal and state law. Employers are strongly encouraged to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with one or more members of their household who have underlying medical conditions and who are unable to be vaccinated.

Required Plan Sections

Follow the requirements in the applicable [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp) and the following:

1. [Use of face coverings](#)
2. [Maintaining social distance between people indoors](#)
3. [Cleaning and disinfecting](#)
4. [For workers and cashiers](#)
5. [Counter service and self-service areas](#)

Requirements and Recommendations

1. Use of face coverings

Requirements

- ✓ Require workers to wear face coverings indoors and wear face coverings outdoors when physical distancing of 6 feet cannot be maintained and establish procedures for overseeing their compliance.
- ✓ Require customers and visitors to wear face coverings indoors and take reasonable steps to ensure compliance.

2. Maintaining 6 feet of social distance between people indoors

Requirements

- ✓ In indoor areas, establish procedures for workers, customers, and visitors to maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet from other people. Limit indoor occupancy as needed to ensure compliance.

Recommendations

- Discourage customers and workers from congregating.
 - Use in-store audio messages to remind customers and workers to stay 6 feet apart when possible.
- Control the flow of traffic
 - Control the flow of traffic into and out of the establishment by ensuring that maximum capacity plans are adjusted and managed at the front door.
 - Designate one way entrances and exits to control traffic flow and make it easier to maintain 6- foot distancing between customers.
 - Institute one-way movement through aisles using floor markers.
- Provide remote shopping alternatives for customers and set up designated pick-up areas.
- For workers
 - Mark 6-foot distances or circles for workers while they wait to punch in, conduct health assessments, perform handwashing, wait for transportation and in other areas where they would normally congregate.
 - Spread out or remove tables and chairs in break areas so they are at least 6 feet apart and install barriers where necessary.

3. Cleaning, disinfecting, and hand hygiene

Requirements

- ✓ Follow cleaning, disinfecting, and hand hygiene requirements in the applicable [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp).

4. For workers and cashiers

Recommendations

- Have the same groups of employees work together when possible.
- Reduce store hours to allow for proper cleaning and stocking.
- Schedule as much stocking and deep cleaning as possible during hours the business is not open for customers.
- Separate cashiers by not opening all registers. Open every other register.
- Install barriers, guards, or partitions where customers and workers interact (e.g., check-out lanes, customer service desks, pharmacy).
- Move the electronic payment terminal or credit card reader away from the cashier to increase the distance between customer and cashier.
- Mark 6 feet between cashiers and customers in check-out lanes.
- Use floor decals, colored tape markings, and signs to designate where customers should stand.

- Institute no-touch payment methods and practices.

5. Counter service (e.g., bakery, meat and seafood, and deli) , and self-service areas

Requirements

- ✓ Follow safety guidelines provided by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.
- ✓ Self-service food and beverage areas are allowed as long the area is monitored to ensure physical distancing is maintained and other requirements are followed. Refer to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture guidance [Customers Best Practices For Reusable Bags and Food Takeout Containers \(www.mda.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/inline-files/COVID-19%20Reusable%20Bags-Takeout%20Containers%20BPs%20Mar%202020.pdf\)](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/inline-files/COVID-19%20Reusable%20Bags-Takeout%20Containers%20BPs%20Mar%202020.pdf).
- ✓ For additional guidance involving food service and on-site consumption inside stores, refer to [Industry Guidance for Safely Reopening: Restaurants & Bars \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/restaurants-bars.jsp\)](http://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/restaurants-bars.jsp).

Recommendations

- Maintain utensils behind the counter (e.g., napkins, straws, forks), and provide according to order.
- Provide for individually wrapped products (e.g., condiments).
- Sanitize self-service beverage machines and counters frequently.

