



County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency ♦ Environmental Health Division

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What to Do If We Suspect or Have Confirmed a Food Service Worker is COVID-19 Positive

Background

COVID-19 or “coronavirus” is a disease that causes respiratory illness and is spread through air via respiratory droplets from an infected person or by touching contaminated surfaces and subsequently touching mucous membranes.

As of 5:00 PM., June 3, 2020, at least 219 COVID-19 cases have been reported in Santa Cruz County and two deaths. At least 119, 807 cases and at least 4,422 deaths have been reported in California.

To mitigate spread, State and Local Health Officers have issued a directive to screen all essential service staff before start of work, monitor employee health during the day and send home staff that become ill during the workday.

Screening entails asking incoming staff if they have the following COVID-19 symptoms before they enter work areas:

- Fever or chills
- Persistent cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

It is also recommended that employee temperature be taken daily.

Any sick staff should be sent home with instructions.



COVID-19 is Suspected

Ask the individual to stay home or send them home immediately. **Individuals with trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion inability to wake or stay awake and bluish lips or face should seek immediate emergency medical care.**

Individuals with mild or moderate symptoms should be evaluated by a physician. Take note of individuals in close contact with the worker. Screen these individuals to determine if they have symptoms. Send anyone with symptoms home and ask they be evaluated by a physician.

Increase outside air circulation and conduct a deep disinfection of high touch surfaces using a disinfectant approved by the EPA for use against COVID-19. Instructions are included below. Staff should wear personal protective equipment like masks, gloves, and aprons.

While a significant percentage of COVID-19 lab tests come back negative, it is important to take measures to protect others while you await the results of a medical evaluation or contact from public health staff.

There are HIPAA protections that restrict sharing of personal medical information. You cannot force someone to provide this information, but they are free to volunteer this information. Staff should be encouraged to share their results for the benefit of their peers and assured that they will not be in trouble to notifying you.

If a person with constant contact with others in your business is COVID-19 positive, you will be contacted by the Santa Cruz county Communicable Disease Unit to discuss interactions within the business. An Exposure Letter will be issued to you noting that someone had contact with your business, was COVID-19 positive and that other staff may show symptoms within 14 days. A date will be noted indicating when 14 days have passed.

The Environmental Health Division may follow-up with you depending on the results of the investigation by the Communicable Disease Unit. Feel free to call or e-mail this Agency with questions at (831) 454-2022 or at env.hlth@santacruzcounty.us respectively.



Unfortunately, some employees may be falsely claiming they have COVID-19. Take all reports seriously and conduct your due diligence by investigating the allegation and checking in with all other staff to ensure that people are healthy while at work.

Be sure you train your staff to self-monitoring as well. Staff should be diligent about maintaining social distance and wear mouth coverings while at work. Provide a point of contact to report COVID-19 like symptoms and positive lab results.

COVID-19 is Confirmed

Contact the Environmental Health Division at (831) 454-2022 immediately anytime you encounter a COVID-19 positive individual in your facility. Increase outside air in the facility and discontinue all work if a COVID-19 positive person was within the facility within the last 7 days. The facility should be allowed to air out for at least 24 hours before entering to disinfect. See disinfection procedures noted below.

Staff must be excluded according to the instructions that follow.

COVID-19 Positive Individuals

These individuals must remain in isolation until the following is met:

1. The individual has not had a fever for **72 hours (3 days)** without use of fever-reducing medication;
2. Other symptoms have improved (cough, or shortness of breath); and
3. At least **10 days** have passed since symptoms first appeared

You will likely be contacted by the Communicable disease unit with further questions and or be issued a Exposure Notice.

COVID-19 Positive with No Symptoms

These individuals must remain in isolation until the following is met:

1. At least **10 days** have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test and
2. They remain asymptomatic

Symptoms but No Testing

These individuals must remain in isolation until following is met:

1. The individual has not had a fever for **72 hours (3 days)** without use of fever-reducing medication;
2. Other symptoms have improved (cough, or shortness of breath); and
3. At least **10 days** have passed since symptoms first appeared

Close Contact, COVID-19 is Unconfirmed, and Without Symptoms

These individuals can continue with essential work after disinfection if they wear a face mask, are screened daily, continue to have no symptoms, practice proper handwashing and sneeze/ sporadic cough etiquette, respect social distancing protocols and surfaces are disinfected frequently.

No Close Contact with COVID-19 Positive Individuals and No Symptoms

These individuals can continue to work after disinfection if they wear a face mask, are screened daily, continue to have no symptoms, practice proper handwashing and sneeze/ sporadic cough etiquette, respect social distancing protocols and surfaces are disinfected frequently.

Effective April 25, 2020, all essential food workers and patrons visiting food service facilities must wear mouth coverings to prevent exposure by asymptomatic individuals.

Re-Opening After a COVID-19 Case

The Environmental Health Division will review your social distancing protocols and provide instructions for re-opening. Environmental Health Staff will need to re-evaluate your operation, staffing and control measures if a significant number of staff become ill.





Disinfecting

Disinfection

You must increase outside air and wait 24 hours before entering the facility to conduct disinfection after closing due to a COVID-19 case. Disinfection is the act eliminating a specific agent from a surface- in this case COVID-19. Disinfection must occur using a chemical or method approved by the EPA to disable the COVID-19 virus. Chlorine (also known as bleach) can be used. Use 1/3 cup of bleach per gallon of water to disinfect surfaces and properly disable the virus. This is more than what is regularly required to sanitize food service equipment.

Alcohol of at least 60% Ethanol or 70% Isopropyl concentration can be used to wipe surfaces that cannot withstand chlorine and will not be in contact with food. Below are links to other disinfectants that are effective against COVID-19 (some may not be adequate for surfaces or utensils in contact with food, use chlorine or other approved sanitizers for these areas):

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

<https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>

Use the disinfection process to address surfaces that may have been handled or contaminated by the ill person. Examples of some surfaces are:

- Entrance/ exit door handles
- Employee lockers
- Time clocks
- Sink handles
- Refrigerator handles
- Food preparation equipment
- Food preparation tables and cutting boards
- Menus
- Cash registers and counters
- Grocery carts
- Restrooms

Staff must wear personal protective equipment like gloves, face shields, anti-slip shoes and aprons while conducting disinfection.

Be aware of the contact time. The contact time is the time the chemical must be in contact with the virus to ensure it is no longer contagious

Visit the CDC web site for additional guidance on disinfection of different types of surfaces:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>



Sanitizing

Sanitizing

Sanitizing is the typical process used to treat food utensils and equipment. Food service goods that are unlikely to be contaminated with COVID-19 can be sanitized as usual using an approved method. Wash utensils with soap and hot water, rinse them with clean water, and then immerse them in a solution of 100-200 PPM chlorine for 30 seconds, 200-400 PPM quaternary ammonium for one minute or other EPA approved sanitizer as directed by the manufacturer. Dishwashers must be set to dispense 50-200 PPM chlorine or heat the utensil to 160°F. Sanitizer or temperature verification must be provided and used to ensure proper sanitizing.

Prevention



Health and Training

It is critical that food service workers or volunteers be screened for symptoms of illness **prior** to being allowed to commence food service work. Staff must also be trained to identify conditions or illnesses that would exclude them from food service so that they know when to stay home. It is not a good idea to pressure individuals to come in to work when they are ill. Inform staff of your exclusion policy and paid leave procedures.

Individuals with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing must be excluded due to the risk of COVID-19. Individuals with symptoms of other illness like diarrhea, vomit, nausea, nose drip and any illnesses communicable by food must also be excluded as is currently required under California Retail Food Code regulations.

In addition to knowing when to stay home, staff must have working knowledge regarding processes needed keep food safe. Training must be provided based on their assigned duties before being allowed to work on their own.

All workers must wear a face cover while at work unless they have a doctor's note noting they cannot wear a face cover due to an underlying condition.



Handwashing and Food Handling

In addition to illness exclusion, handwashing is key to preventing the spread of most illnesses. Adequate handwashing supplies must always be present, functional and equipped during service. A person must be in charge of ensuring these remain usable and stocked while preparing food and conducting clean-up activities.

We recommend use of alcohol-based (at least 60% Ethanol or 70% Isopropyl) hand sanitizer after handwashing. **Hand sanitizer shall not be used in lieu of handwashing.**

Gloves must be changed at a frequency required for handwashing. Staff shall wash their hands before putting on and upon changing gloves.

Food service staff shall wash their hands under, but not limited to, the following conditions:

- When entering the kitchen and before starting food preparation
- After touching the face, hair, and other areas of the body
- After using the restroom
- Between handling raw meat and ready to eat foods
- After sneezing, coughing, or using a tissue
- After smoking, eating, drinking and using a phone
- After cleaning tables, bussing, handling dirty dishes, and touching items in contact with patrons
- When hands become soiled

Provide a garbage can near the restroom exit door so that staff can dispose of paper towels used to open the door.



Measures must be taken to prevent contamination of food and spreading of illness by:

- Washing hands between changes in activity including handling money
- Sneezing away from food and into an area that will prevent spreading of aerosol droplets like an elbow
- Minimizing bare hand contact with ready to eat food
- Removing any non-essential individuals in the food service area
- Preventing non-service animals from entering the facility
- Avoiding using cups or containers provided by the public for now

Proper sneezing procedure can help protect others from colds, flu and COVID-19.

Additional Information

Up to date legal orders, information, status reports, and web site links are available in the Santa Cruz County Public Health Communicable Disease Control web site at:

www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus

Any questions regarding food safety can be directed to the Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Division for triage at: env.hlth@santacruzcounty.us