



As the COVID-19 crisis continues in Oregon and counties move into the various phases of reopening at different times, the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Food Safety Program (FSP) is working to provide guidance for our licensed firms.

This updated guidance document focuses on what firms need to know to maintain a healthy environment for employees and customers. This guidance document is primarily for retail food establishments, bakeries, meat sellers, warehouses, and food processing establishments, but all licensed firms should consider reading and becoming familiar with the guidance. The guidance also contains a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section, which may address some specific industry questions.

These guidelines were in part developed by OHA, however they have been modified to meet the specific needs of firms licensed by the ODA, especially firms conducting food service activities.

This updated version replaces the Guidance Document issued on 06-30-2020. On an as-needed basis, this guidance document will be updated to reflect the latest requirements put forth by OHA, ODA, and the Governor's office.

### **Retail establishments and firms conducting food service activities**

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#### ***Face masks***

Retail food establishments and all firms conducting food service (immediate consumption) must follow the requirements for wearing face masks or other suitable face coverings. All retail food store employees regardless of job tasks are required to wear face coverings at all times while in the establishment unless they are not in a public-facing location where six (6) or more feet of distance can be maintained.

Effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, all customers and visitors must wear a mask, face shield, or facial covering at businesses and indoor spaces open to the public. This includes retail grocery stores. Some exemptions are permitted to this statewide requirement. To view the most current Face Mask guidance document visit: [guidance on the wearing of face masks](#)

Firms should post signs about the mask, face shield, or face covering requirements in languages that are commonly spoken by customers and visitors.

#### ***Self-service***

In contrast to the OHA and local Public Health agencies which license and inspect restaurants, the ODA did not adopt the rules which prevent self-service in retail grocery stores and stores conducting food service. Although the ODA discourages the practice, customers may continue to self-fill beverage cups (e.g. soda, coffee), obtain foods out of bulk bins and other bulk containers, and similar activities.

#### ***Physical distancing***

Establishments offering food or drink for off-site consumption must implement physical distancing protocols of at least six (6) feet between customers ordering, waiting, or in line that is consistent with

applicable OHA guidance. Firms must also implement physical distancing of at least six (6) feet for staff when possible.

For establishments serving foods for immediate consumption on-site, they must:

- 1) Ensure tables are spaced at least six (6) feet apart so that at least six (6) feet between parties is maintained, including when customers approach or leave tables.
- 2) Businesses will need to determine seating configuration to comply with these physical distancing requirements.
- 3) Remove or restrict seating to facilitate the requirement of at least six (6) feet of physical distance between people not in the same party.
- 4) If booth seating is back-to-back, only use every other booth.
- 5) In Phase 1 and 2, limit parties to 10 people or fewer. Do not combine parties/guests at shared seating situations who have not chosen to congregate together. People in the same party seated at the same table do not have to be six (6) feet apart.

If a business is unable to maintain at least six (6) feet of distance, except for brief interactions (for example, to deliver food to a table), it may operate **only** as pick up/to go service. This applies to both indoor and outdoor seating.

Retail food establishments do not need to have someone at the entrance who is tasked with counting the number of people entering the store to determine the maximum occupancy and limit number of customers on premises in order to maintain physical distancing requirements. However, it is the responsibility of management to assure physical distancing measures are achieved once customers are inside the food establishment.

Consider placing clear plastic or glass barriers in front of cashiers or customer service counters, or in other places where maintaining six (6) feet of physical distance between employees and customers is more difficult.

### ***Posting of Signage:***

Retail stores must post clear signs listing COVID-19 symptoms, asking employees and customers with symptoms to stay home, and listing who to contact if they need assistance. Firms will also need to use signs to encourage physical distancing.

Retail firms should consider one-way flow with marked entrances and exits while not blocking egress for fire exits. They should use signs and tape on the floor to maintain physical distancing while waiting for cashiers.

### ***Cleaning/disinfectants/sanitizers***

Retail food establishments and firms conducting food service must frequently clean and sanitize work areas, high traffic areas, and commonly touched surfaces in both customer/public and employee areas of the store.

Sanitizers and Disinfectants are often the same compounds, however disinfecting and sanitizing are not the same. Disinfecting refers to eliminating nearly 100% of microorganisms on surfaces at much higher

concentrations. Sanitizing refers to lowering the number of microorganisms on a food contact surface to a level that meets safe public health standards. Disinfectants at higher concentrations may be used on non-food contact surfaces, while sanitizers should be used on food contact surfaces.

Firms must always follow the instructions on the chemical container. The EPA has pre-approved certain products that are effective against similar viruses to COVID-19. This list can be found on the [EPA website](#).

Not all disinfectants are approved for food contact surfaces and should be rinsed according to the label instructions.

### ***Hand washing/glove use***

Oregon's Food Code requirements for hand washing and glove use in food service and retail food stores have not changed as a result of the pandemic. Employees in stores inspected by the ODA may not contact exposed, ready-to-eat foods with their bare hands and shall use suitable utensils such as deli tissue, spatulas, tongs, single use-gloves non-latex gloves, or dispensing equipment. Gloves and hand sanitizers are not a substitute for hand washing or good hand hygiene.

### ***Hours of Operation***

For firms conducting food service activities, the requirements for Phase 1 and Phase 2 are different with respect to times at which firms must cease activities. You can learn about the different times to cease food service activities and close by using the following guidance:

- Phase 1: <https://oda.fyi/Phase1Guidance>
- Phase 2: <https://oda.fyi/Phase2Guidance>

### **Food Processors**

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Workers involved in food processing are not exposed to COVID-19 through the products they may come in contact with, however their work environments where they have close contact with coworkers may contribute substantially to their potential exposures. Therefore, manufacturers of food products must institute measures to ensure physical distancing or have employees wear facial coverings that protect employees.

Food manufacturers that also have a food service activity (i.e. a winery with tasting room, a brewery with restaurant, bakery with sit-down in-house coffee service) in addition to food processing must follow the requirements for Retail Food Establishments with food service identified above.

Food processors should remain vigilant in routine cleaning and sanitizing of food and non-food contact surfaces in accordance to chemical manufacturer instructions. Consider referring to the [EPA list of disinfectants for COVID-19](#).

Food processors should review the document titled "Make A Plan for COVID-19 Prevention in the Workplace" issued by the ODA, OHA, and Oregon OSHA to be better prepared in the event of a positive COVID-19 illness.

<https://oda.direct/FPPlaybook>

<https://oda.direct/FPToolkit>

## FAQs

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### ***Self-service:***

- Q. Is self-service permitted in retail food establishments? May I offer customers to fill up a soda beverage cup? May customers select foods out of self-serve bulk bins? May I offer foods in a self-serve salad bar?
- A. Yes, however this practice is still discouraged. Grocery stores may continue to permit customer selection of produce, grinding and bag filling of coffee, and alike activities.

### ***Face masks/facial covering:***

- Q: Are all employees in grocery and convenience stores required to wear face coverings?
- A: Yes. All retail food store employees regardless of job tasks are required to wear face coverings at all times while in the establishment. The exception to this requirement is employees in non-public facing locations where six (6) or more feet of distance can be maintained. Employees can use either disposable masks or cloth face coverings.
- Q. Must I provide masks or facial covering to my customers?
- A. No, businesses should provide at no cost at least disposable face coverings for customers and visitors who do not have one.
- Q. I own a food processing establishment with no food service to the public. Must my employees wear a face covering?
- A. At this time, employees in food processing plants are not required to wear face covering, but we highly encourage you to have your employees wear face coverings to prevent the spreading of COVID-19.
- Q. Are employees required to wear mask or can they wear face shields instead?
- A. The Oregon Health Authority guidance document permits allowances for alternatives to wearing a face mask, and face shields are an approved alternative. See [more information on facial coverings](#).
- Q. In wineries, breweries, bakeries and other industries that have food service, do all employees need to wear face masks?
- A. Yes, unless the facility has a true physical separation between the food service activities and the making of wine, beer, or baked goods. Examples of a true separation are a separate building or a wall between the food service activities and food processing where equipment, restrooms, breakrooms, etc. are not shared.

### ***Physical distancing:***

- Q: How does a retail food establishment determine “maximum occupancy” to meet the Governor’s reopening guidance?
- A: The Governor’s guidance does not specify a maximum occupancy for a grocery store. The operator will need to determine how many customers they can accommodate while effectively maintaining the physical distancing standard of six feet between customers and staff. Stores will need to evaluate areas in the store prone to crowding (like check-out stands) and take steps to promote physical distancing.

Within a restaurant or the portion of a grocery store conducting food service activities, businesses will need to ensure tables are positioned at least six (6) feet apart so that at least six (6) feet between parties is maintained, including when customers approach or leave tables.

Businesses will also need to limit parties to 10 or fewer people. Do not combine parties/guests at shared seating situations who have not chosen to congregate together. People in the same party seated at the same table do not have to be six (6) feet apart.

- Q. Do deli's and seating areas for food consumption in grocery stores have to follow the same OHA guidance for restaurants and bars?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Does the six-foot physical distancing requirement apply to outdoor seating?
- A. Yes. Six (6) feet of physical distance must be maintained between parties regardless of whether they are seated indoors or outdoors.
- Q. Is the six (6) foot rule from table to table? Or from seated customer to seated customer at another table?
- A. Tables need to be spaced at least six (6) feet apart so that there is at least six (6) feet of physical distance between people not in the same party.
- Q. Does a grocery store need to restrict access to sinks, urinals or toilets to ensure that customers meet the six-foot physical distancing requirements?
- A. No. However, to the extent possible, facilities should assign an employee(s) to monitor customer access to common areas such as restrooms to ensure that customers do not congregate.

### ***Cleaning/sanitizing and operations:***

- Q. Can tables be pre-set?
- A. No. Tables cannot be pre-set and left to sit without patrons. If an employee wants to pre-set a table immediately prior to seating a party to minimize interaction between staff and customers, that is an acceptable practice. Stores must use single use condiment packets or condiment containers be disinfected between customer use.
- Q. Must condiments be provided in single service packets?
- A. Retailers are encouraged to provide condiments such as salt and pepper, ketchup, hot sauce and sugar, in single- service packets or from a single-service container. If that is not possible, condiment containers should not be pre-set on the table and must be disinfected between each customer or dining party. Disinfection must be done in a way that does not contaminate the food product.
- Q. Does one server have to conduct all activities at the table?
- A. No, but food service establishments should consider strategies to limit the number of wait staff at a table. Firms should also consider having a designated greeter or host to manage customer flow and monitor distancing while waiting in line, ordering, and during the entering and exiting process.
- Q. What cleaning and sanitizing compounds may a grocery store with food service use? Do the cleaning and sanitizing compounds it need to be a stronger concentration in certain places?

A: Employees must always follow the instructions on the chemical container. Cleaning food contact surfaces in food service and food processors should be done in accordance with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA has pre-approved certain products that are effective against similar viruses to COVID-19. This list can be found on the [EPA website](#). Not all disinfectants are approved for food contact surfaces and should be rinsed and sanitized following the label instructions.

Q: Are restrooms required to be disinfected between each customer use?

A: No. Restrooms should be cleaned and disinfected frequently and as necessary but it is not required between use by each customer.

**Occupancy:**

Q: What time must I end food service activities?

A: Firms must end all on-site consumption of food and drinks, including alcoholic beverages by 10 p.m. Businesses may open the next day based on regularly scheduled opening business hours but no sooner than 4 a.m. (continued on next page)

For establishments conducting food service activities 24 hours a day, it may not open earlier than 4 a.m. the next day to ensure that it can properly disinfect and clean the food service areas of the business.

Q. Can tasting rooms have outside music?

A. Musicians that are able to maintain at least six (6) feet physical distance from customers and each other is allowable.

Q. Are outdoor barbecues permitted at grocery stores at this time?

A. Yes, a firm may elect to have a barbecue but must take precautions to physical distance (six feet) between customers and store employees. Follow the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture Food Code 3-201.18 requirements for outdoor cooking.