

COVID-19 Health & Safety Tips for Essential Businesses

Grocery stores, hardware stores, pharmacies and other businesses that provide necessary goods and services are considered essential and must operate in a way that keeps employees and customers safe. Because every business is unique, the Health Department cannot give guidance that covers every situation. Here are some general health and safety tips for employers to consider.

Health and Safety Tips

- Have workers wear [cloth face coverings](#). Even while wearing a face covering, all workers should still stay 6 feet away from others, wash hands often, and avoid touching their face.
- Regularly sanitize credit card machines, shopping carts, door handles, countertops and other high-traffic or high-touch areas.
- Install a plastic shield between customers and staff.
- Assign one register for cash only, and provide gloves to that cashier.
- Have a cup of clean pens for the customer to take, and ask them to return the pen to a different cup of used pens. Disinfect the used pens before returning them to the clean cup.
- Avoid sharing phones, headsets or other objects that are used near the mouth or nose.
- Stagger breaks to limit the number of people in the break room or kitchen area.
- Move workspaces to 6 feet apart.

Business Operation Tips

- Offer dedicated shopping hours for higher-risk populations.
- Remove self-serve stations.
- Increase air exchanges in rooms.
- Shop for customers while they wait outside, or take phone or online orders.
- Limit the number of customers inside at one time, and make aisles one-way.
- Set up the checkout area so that customers have 6 feet of space between them.
- Make sure hand washing stations or hand sanitizers are readily available.
- Make sure that all employees stay home if they are sick.
- Create protocols for employees [returning to work after a possible exposure \(CDC\)](#).
- Inform employees about leave eligibility under the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#).

Additional Resources

[Stay Home Stay Safe Guidance to Retailers](#) • VT Agency of Commerce & Community Development

[Coronavirus Preparedness Checklist](#) • VT Retail & Grocers Association

[Coronavirus Resource Guide](#) • VT Retail & Grocers Association

[Keeping Employees Safe](#) • VT Retail & Grocers Association

[What You Need to Know About COVID-19? Food Safety Webinar](#) • VT Retail & Grocers Association

[Best Practices for Retail Food Stores, Restaurants and Food Pick-Up/Delivery Services](#) • FDA

[Interim Guidance for Business and Employers](#) • CDC

[Vermont Department of Health COVID-19 Website](#)