COVID-19 Guidelines for Restaurants

On May 4, Governor Inslee announced “Safe Start Washington” a phased approach to recovery during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Phase 1, restaurants are essential businesses that have remained open if they provide pick-up, drive-through, or delivery services and make changes to ensure customer and worker safety. No onsite dining is allowed during Phase 1. Once a county moves into Phase 2 or Phase 3, restaurants may reopen onsite dining if they meet the governor’s Dine-In Restaurant and Tavern Requirements. At this time, Phase 4 industry specific information is not available. We will update our guidance when it becomes available.

Use the guidance below to help comply with the governor’s requirements for each phase and to ensure employee and customer safety while operating during this pandemic. Washington State Retail Food Code and the governor’s requirements are listed below. Recommendations are included under the heading “recommendations”. Consult with your local health department for county specific requirements or restrictions.

Public Health Investigations

- Notify your local health department within 24 hours if you suspect COVID-19 is spreading in your workplace, or if you are aware of 2 or more employees who develop confirmed or suspected COVID-19 within a 14-day period.
- Cooperate with public health authorities in the investigation of cases, suspected cases, outbreaks, and suspected outbreaks of COVID-19; cooperate with the implementation of infection control measures, including but not limited to isolation and quarantine and environmental cleaning; and comply with all public health authority orders and directives.

COVID-19 Safety Plan

- Develop a written plan that addresses physical distancing, protective equipment, hygiene, cleaning, communication, screening, and disinfection of contaminated areas. Use the Phase 3 Safe Start Plan Template. This plan must be retained onsite and made available to regulatory agencies upon request.

Styles of Service & Occupancy

Phase 1

- Onsite dining is not allowed. Provide pick-up, drive-through, or delivery services.

Recommendations

- Remove or stack tables and chairs if dining areas can be accessed by customers.
- Work with your local health department to ensure safe processes if making changes to your menu or style of service.
• If you choose to close, consider donating food using food safety recommendations in this [guide](#).

**Phase 2 & Phase 3**

**Indoor dining:**
- Do not exceed 50% of the maximum building occupancy determined by the fire code. Occupancy limit does not include employees.
- Limit to no more than 5 members of the same household per table.
- Prohibited at taverns, breweries, wineries, and distilleries that do not have a restaurant license from Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB). To convert alcohol service to a restaurant license, submit a request via email to [retailliquorlicensing@lcb.wa.gov](mailto:retailliquorlicensing@lcb.wa.gov). You will need to submit a menu and floorplan. Please note: changes to your menu, plumbing, or kitchen layout will also need review by the local health department.

**Outdoor dining:**
- Do not exceed 50% capacity. Outdoor seating is not added to the maximum building occupancy, but must include physical distancing between tables.
- Limit to no more than 5 guests per table. Guests from the same or different households may share a table.
- Permanent or temporary outdoor structures may not have more than two walls to provide adequate ventilation. The limitation applies to both rigid and flexible walls.
- For businesses who want to modify or add outdoor liquor service, visit the LCB website to access the Liquor Alterations Request Form.

**Bar-area seating:**
- Do not allow seating at a bar table or counter where customers sit or stand side-by-side. Close bar area seating that allows for the congregation of customers from separate parties.
- Dining tables and seating booths are allowed if they follow the same dining requirements in this guidance.

**Prohibit** alcohol service, including beer, wine, and spirits, after 10:00pm.

**Recommendations**
- Work with your [local health department](#) if making changes to add more outdoor seating.
- Facilities, such as nursing homes, that serve people at [higher risk](#) for severe COVID-19 illness should not allow onsite dining. Provide in-room dining, pick-up, drive-through, or delivery services instead.

**Phase 4:** Information will be posted when available.
Customer Log

Phase 1, Phase 2, & Phase 3

Maintain a daily log of all guests that voluntarily provide contact information, including customer names, phone/email, and time/date they were in the facility. Maintain the log for 30 days to help with contact tracing. For more information see:

- Governor’s Customer Log Memo
- Customer Log Template

Phase 4: Information will be posted when available.

Customer Self-Service

Phase 1

- Close self-service at salad bars and buffets.
- Provide wrapped self-service condiments and disposable service ware, such as single-service packets or carry-out utensils.

Recommendations

- Discontinue product sampling and demonstration stations, except for single portions offered in response to a consumer’s request from the service counter.
- Self-service of fountain drinks is acceptable when touchpoints are disinfected hourly, and all single-service utensils are stored behind the counter and provided to the customer by a food worker.

Phase 2 & Phase 3

- Self-service at salad bars, buffets, and other communal food sources and drink stations may resume if increased safety is provided through the following:
  - Physical distancing of customers in line.
  - All sneeze guards, utensils, and other customer-service equipment are properly in place and used.
  - Any food that has been contaminated by customers or employees (i.e. touching food or sneezing and/or coughing along the service line) is discarded.
  - Staff monitor the areas to maintain proper food temperature and customer usage.
  - Serving utensil touchpoints are sanitized or replaced with clean utensils at least every hour in Phase 2 and every two hours in Phase 3.
  - Ensure non-food contact surfaces, particularly touchpoints such as counters, hand rails, etc. are properly washed and disinfected at least every hour in Phase 2 and every two hours in Phase 3.
  - Hand gel, with 60% alcohol, is available for customer use.
• Provide wrapped self-service condiments and disposable service ware, such as single-service packets or carry-out utensils.

Recommendations

• Discontinue product sampling and demonstration stations, except for single portions offered in response to a consumer’s request from the service counter.

Phase 4: Information will be posted when available.

Customer Face Coverings

• Beginning June 26, everyone in an indoor public space, or in an outside public space when unable to physically distance from others, is legally required to wear a face covering.

• Beginning July 7, businesses will not be able to serve customers or visitors who aren’t wearing face coverings. Individuals with certain health or medical conditions or disabilities are exempt from the requirement to wear a face covering. Businesses can offer to provide accommodations such as curbside pick-up, delivery, scheduling of visits during non-peak hours. No one is required to carry proof or documentation of their health condition or disability.

• Customers must wear a face covering anytime they are not seated (such as while arriving, leaving, or going to the restroom) and while they are talking at tables and not eating.

• For more information see:
  o Overview of COVID-19 Statewide Face Covering Requirements
  o Public Health Order 20-03 – Washington State Department of Health
  o Proclamation 20-25.6 – Office of the Governor
  o Cloth Face Coverings – Washington State Department of Health
  o Guidance on Cloth Face Coverings – Washington State Department of Health
  o Cloth Face Covers – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Customer Health & Hygiene

• Stock onsite restrooms/sinks with adequate soap and paper towels.
• Provide hand gel at building entrance for all staff and customers, if available.

Recommendations

• Increase circulation of outdoor air by modifying ventilation or opening screened doors/windows, when possible.
Customer Physical Distancing

Phase 1

- Use distance markers or another method to maintain 6 feet of distance between customers in lines in the lobby, waiting area, serving or ordering lines, beverage/condiment stations, and food pickup stations.
- Arrange flow of customers to eliminate bottlenecks and reduce crowding.

Recommendations

- Establish designated areas for pick-up and deliveries, limiting contact to the extent possible.
- Barriers should be a smooth, rigid surface that is easily cleanable and of sufficient height to provide adequate protection from coughs and sneezes from nearby booths or tables.

Phase 2 & Phase 3

- Standing is prohibited in any area of the establishment, except the lobby/waiting area.
- Use distance markers or another method to maintain 6 feet of distance between customers in lines in the lobby, waiting area, serving or ordering lines, beverage/condiment stations, and food pickup stations.
- Arrange flow of customers to eliminate bottlenecks and reduce crowding.
- Place tables far enough apart so each occupied chair is at least 6 feet away from guests at adjacent tables. If 6 feet is not possible, there must be a physical barrier or wall separating booths or tables.

Recommendations

- Barriers should be a smooth, rigid surface that is easily cleanable and of sufficient height to provide adequate protection from coughs and sneezes from nearby booths or tables.

Phase 4: Information posted when available.

Menu, Ordering, & Payment

- Provide a menu using one of the following options:
  o Provide single-use disposable menus.
  o Reusable menus that are disinfected after each use.
  o Display menu options on a board or sign.
  o Use an app, service or website for customers to view the menu on personal devices.
- Use call-in/mobile ordering, contactless payment systems, or automated ordering, when possible.

Recommendations

- List allergens on the menu to reduce questions.
- Limit menu options to decrease the ordering time per customer.
- Disinfect check-out counters and payment touchpads at least every hour when in Phase 1 and Phase 2, and every 2 hours when in Phase 3.
- Provide handwashing or hand gel for employees handling payment.

**Entertainment**

**Phase 1**
- Live entertainment is prohibited.
- Vending and other game areas, including billiards, darts, and video games are prohibited.
- Indoor and outdoor card rooms are prohibited.

**Phase 2 & Phase 3**
- Live entertainment is prohibited.
- Vending and other game areas, including billiards, darts, and video games are prohibited.
- Indoor card rooms are prohibited. Outdoor card rooms must follow the Governor’s requirements [here](#).

**Phase 4**
- Live entertainment is prohibited.
- Vending and other game areas, including billiards, darts, and video games are allowed.
- Indoor and outdoor card rooms are allowed and must follow the Governor’s requirements [here](#).

**Signage**

- Post signs at entrances and throughout the store to inform customers to:
  - Stay home if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
  - Use cloth face coverings when visiting the establishment.
  - Practice proper physical distancing while in the establishment.

**Recommendations**

- Find COVID-19 specific posters and materials here:
  - [Washington State Coronavirus Response Partner Toolkit](#)
  - [King County Signs to Print and Post](#)
  - [CDC’s COVID-19 Print Resources](#)
Sanitation

- Cleaning is a necessary first step for sanitizing and disinfecting chemicals to work effectively. Use soap and water to clean food and non-food contact surfaces.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize food contact surfaces following routine procedures. Use an EPA registered product (such as chlorine, quaternary ammonia or iodine) at a concentration appropriate for sanitizing food contact surfaces.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch non-food contact surfaces frequently, such as customer restrooms, doors, handles for freezers/refrigerators, check-out counters, and payment touchpads.
  - Use an EPA registered product at a concentration that has been shown to be effective against COVID-19. Follow label directions.
  - If disinfectants are in short supply, use alternative disinfectants (for example, 1/3 cup of household bleach added to 1 gallon of water, or 70% alcohol solutions). Follow label instructions for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Bleach solutions are effective for disinfection up to 24 hours.
- Phase 2 & 3: Disinfect any condiments typically left on the table (ketchup, soy sauce, etc.) after each dining group or provide single-use condiments.

Recommendations

- Disinfect non-food contact surfaces at least every hour when in Phase 1 and Phase 2, and every 2 hours when in Phase 3.
- See the NC State Extension Factsheets on COVID-19 Preventative Measures for more information:
  - What is the Difference between Cleaning, Sanitizing, Disinfecting and Sterilizing?
  - Cleaning and Disinfection

Employees Health & Hygiene

- Develop COVID-19 specific employee illness policies and procedures:
  - Screen workers for COVID-19 symptoms prior to each shift by following the Daily COVID-19 Screening of Staff and Visitors guidance. We recommend that workers take their own temperature at home and report to the person in charge (PIC) and stay home if they are experiencing a fever (100.4°F or higher).
  - Exclude ill food workers for the required time and make sure that they are safe to return to work by following DOH Employee Health & Decision Strategies guidance.
  - Follow current guidelines when responding to reported COVID-19 positive employee including reporting and contact tracing. Close any areas where an employee with probable or confirmed COVID-19 worked, touched surfaces, etc. until the area and equipment is cleaned and disinfected. Follow the cleaning guidelines set by the CDC to deep clean and disinfect.
  - Stock handwashing sinks and retrain staff on proper handwashing times and procedures.
• Increase utensil washing frequency, handwashing, or use disposable gloves when tools are shared.
• The Governor issued Proclamation 20-46.1 that requires employers to offer high-risk employees, as defined by the CDC, alternative work assignments, including telework, alternative, or remote work locations, and if an alternative assignment is not feasible, retain the position of the high risk worker. The proclamation expires August 1, 2020, unless otherwise extended.

Recommendations

- Provide hand gel with at least 60% alcohol, when available.
- Reconfigure employee break times and locations to reduce close contact exposure.

Employee Training

• Train the PIC in the language they understand best to:
  - Monitor employee status for COVID-19 symptoms prior to each shift, in addition to the employee health requirements in the Food Code.
  - Enforce the food establishment’s COVID-19 specific written procedures.
• Train workers in the language they understand best on:
  - Identifying symptoms of COVID illness, how to prevent transmission, required hand hygiene, and illness reporting requirements. Reinforce general employee health and safety. For additional information see Basic Employee Training on COVID-19 Infection Prevention from Washington State Department of Labor & Industries.
  - Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting properly.
  - Implementing the COVID-19 specific written procedures including physical distancing and other needed changes.

Employee Physical Distancing

• Ensure 6 foot separation is maintained between customers and staff except for unavoidable, short-term exposures such as when taking orders, collecting payments and/or exchanging goods.
• Minimize staff or customer interactions in narrow or enclosed areas, use barriers, stagger breaks and work shift starts when strict physical distancing is not feasible for a specific task.
• Phase 2 & 3: Minimize the number of staff serving a given table. Have one staff person take a table’s order, bring all of their beverages/food/utensils, take their payment, etc.

Recommendations

- Barriers should be a smooth, rigid surface that is easily cleanable and of sufficient height to provide adequate protection from coughs and sneezes.
**Employee Safety & PPE**

- Limit the sharing of objects and discourage touching of shared surfaces; or when in contact with shared objects or frequently touched areas, wear gloves; use alcohol-based hand gel or wash hands before and after contact.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, goggles, face shields, and face masks as appropriate or required to employees for the activity being performed.
- Employers must provide cloth facial coverings to employees, unless their exposure dictates a higher level of protection under the Department of Labor and Industries’ safety and health rules. This is not a substitute for 6 foot physical distancing.
  - Reusable cloth face coverings may be used when risk for transmission is low, such as for waiters at restaurants or cafes with curbside pick-up services only.
  - Disposable masks are required when risk for transmission is medium, such as for grocery-store produce stockers who work during store hours around customers or kitchen workers in restaurants.
- Face coverings must be cleaned or replaced after use or when damaged or soiled, may not be shared, and must be properly stored or discarded.
- Employees with medical or disability issues preventing mask use may provide their medical professional’s accommodation statement specifying that facial covering or masks should not be worn due to their condition to their employer for consideration of an accommodation.
- For additional information see:
  - [Which Mask for Which Task?](#) – Washington State Department of Labor & Industries
  - [Coronavirus Facial Covering and Mask Requirements](#) – Washington State Department of Labor & Industries
  - [Coronavirus Common Questions Regarding Worker Face Covering and Mask Requirements](#) – Washington State Department of Labor & Industries

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**How should hotels and bed & breakfasts modify their eating areas when operating in Phase 1?**

Hotels should close seating areas within dining and common areas and provide room service or only allow guests to pick-up food items to-go.

**How should caterers modify their services when operating in Phase 1?**

By definition, caterers prepare food in response to a contract with a client for service at a different location. Gatherings are restricted in Phase 1. We recommend caterers modify menus to support delivery only and not allow for buffet or plated service.
**How should farmers markets modify their service when operating in Phase 1?**

Farmers markets provide an essential source of food, similar to a grocery store, and are allowed to remain open as long as they adhere to physical distancing recommendations and ensure food vendors provide grab and go food items. Farmers markets should follow the guidance above and recommendations in the [COVID-19 Guidelines for Farmers Markets](#).

**More COVID-19 Information and Resources**

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), Governor Inslee’s [proclamations](#), symptoms, how it spreads, and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

A person’s race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 - this is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share accurate information with others to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak (COVID-19)
- WA State Coronavirus Response (COVID-19)
- Find Your Local Health Department or District
- CDC Coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Stigma Reduction Resources

**Have more questions about COVID-19?** Call our hotline: 1-800-525-0127. For interpretative services, press # when they answer and say your language. (Open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.) For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact your health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.