



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., November 19, 2020, at least 3,819 COVID-19 cases have been reported in Santa Cruz County and 27 deaths. At least 1.1 million cases and at least 18,676 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
- 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.

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.

Below are links to the Health Officer’s Orders for Isolation and Quarantine in Santa Cruz County:

Isolation

<http://santacruzhealth.org/Portals/7/Pdfs/Coronavirus/PHO%20Order%20re%20Isolation%20FINAL.pdf>

Quarantine

<http://santacruzhealth.org/Portals/7/Pdfs/Coronavirus/PHO%20Order%20for%20Quarantine%20FINAL.pdf>



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.

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.

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.

The Environmental Health Division for follow-up at (831) 454-2022 or at env.hlth@santacruzcounty.us respectively.



Individuals with Confirmed COVID-19 and Symptomatic

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

1. Clearance is issued by their primary care physician to return

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

Any individuals in close contact with this person or persons must be quarantined for at least 14 days and not allowed to return unless they remain asymptomatic after 14 days. Close contacts are those that have been within 6 feet of the COVID-19 positive person (with or without a mask) for 15 minutes or more in one day during or 2 days prior to the COVID-19 positive person showing symptoms. Close contact individuals are also those that have been exposed to the person's sneeze, cough, or mouth droplets. Refer close contact individuals to their physician for an evaluation.

It is important to make a list of any sick individual and their close contacts as this will help Public Health Staff with their tracing efforts.

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.

Individuals with Confirmed COVID-19, but No Symptoms

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

1. Clearance is issued by their primary care physician to return

Any individuals in close contact with this person or persons must be quarantined for at least 14 days and not allowed to return unless they remain asymptomatic after 14 days. Close contacts are those that have been within 6 feet of the COVID-19 positive person (with or without a mask) for 15 minutes or more in one day during or 2 days prior to the COVID-19 positive person showing symptoms. Close contact individuals are also those that have been exposed to the person's sneeze, cough, or mouth droplets. Refer close contact individuals to their physician for an evaluation.

It is important to make a list of any sick individual and their close contacts as this will help Public Health Staff with their tracing efforts.

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.

Sick Individuals with Symptoms, but No Testing

These individuals must remain in isolation until following is met:

1. The person has been evaluated by their primary care physician.
2. The person has been cleared by their physician and does not pose a risk to food safety because of persistent coughing, sneezing or gastrointestinal symptoms

Close contact individuals should be quarantined if COVID-19 is strongly suspected until the sick individual is evaluated by their physician.

Individuals in Close Contact with a COVID-19 Case

Refer these individuals to their primary care physician for an evaluation. These individuals must quarantine for at least 14 days and remain asymptomatic to return.

Individuals Without Close Contact with the COVID-19 Positive Individual

These individuals can continue to work once the facility has been disinfected and if they are not expressing symptoms consistent with COVID-19. The facility operator must ensure all workers wear a face mask, are screened daily, continue to have no symptoms, practice proper handwashing, practice proper sneeze/ sporadic cough etiquette, respect social distancing protocols and that all surfaces are disinfected frequently.

All essential food workers and patrons visiting food service facilities must wear mouth coverings to prevent exposure unless eating or drinking.





Re-Opening After a COVID-19 Case

Contact the Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Division (EHD) for instruction on re-opening. EHD Staff will need to re-evaluate your operation, staffing and control measures if a significant number of staff become ill.

The facility must be aired out and thoroughly disinfected anytime there is a positive COVID-19 case in the facility. Any returning staff must be screened and free of symptoms prior to entry into the facility.



Disinfecting

Disinfection

Open doors and windows to air out the facility prior to starting disinfection. 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:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.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

It is critical that food service workers or volunteers be screened for symptoms of illness **prior** to being allowed to commence food service work daily and throughout the day. Active steps to minimize close contact between individuals and patrons will minimize the impact on your business if someone becomes sick. 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.

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.



Health and Training

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 by:

- Washing hands between changes in activity including handling money
- 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
- Sneezing away from food and into an area that will prevent spreading of aerosol droplets like an elbow

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: www.scceh.org