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 11:48AM., April 5, 2020, at least 69 COVID-19 cases have been reported in Santa Cruz County and one death. At least 15, 201 cases and at least 350 deaths have been reported in California.

Contact the Environmental Health Division (at the number above) and close the facility immediately.

COVID-19 is Suspected

Send the person home immediately and request they be evaluated by a physician. Take note of individuals in constant contact with the worker. Screen these individuals to ensure that they are free of symptoms. Anyone reporting fever, shortness of breath or coughing must be sent home and referred to their physician. It may be pertinent to exclude those individuals in close contact with the sick person even if they have no symptoms until results from the ill individual are received and they volunteer their results.

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 for the safety of others. It would help to let them know that they are not in trouble for reporting this information.

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.

The Environmental Health Division may follow-up with you depending on the results of the investigation by the Communicable Disease Unit.

We understand that your food service is essential. Once you have excluded all sick individuals and individuals in constant contact with sick individuals, you can disinfect the facility as noted below and reopen of service. You must continuously monitor staff before and during food service. Be sure all staff are active in self-monitoring as well. Staff should be diligent about maintaining social distance and we advise food personnel wear mouth coverings while at work.

More may be required based on testing results.

We are aware that 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.

Someone is COVID-19 Positive

COVID-19 positive person(s) and all those with mild symptoms
These individuals must remain home until the following is met:

a) At least **72 hours (3 days)** have passed since recovery, as defined by resolution of both fever without use of fever-reducing medication and improvement of cough, shortness of breath, and other symptoms; AND
b) At least **7 days** have passed since symptoms first appeared, **whichever is later**

Laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 without any symptoms
These individuals may discontinue isolation when at least 7 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test and have had no subsequent illness provided they remain asymptomatic.

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<td>For 3 days following discontinuation of isolation, these persons should continue to limit contact (stay 6 feet away from others) and limit potential of dispersal of respiratory secretions by wearing a covering for their nose and mouth whenever they are in settings where other people are present. In community settings, this covering may be a barrier mask, such as a bandana, scarf, or cloth mask. The covering does not refer to a medical mask or respirator.

Close contact with the ill individuals, no confirmed COVID-19 and no symptoms
These individuals must isolate for at least 7 days. These individuals can return to work after these 7 days if they continue with no symptoms.

No close contact with the ill people and no symptoms
These individuals can continue to work after the facility has been thoroughly disinfected and they remain without symptoms.

It is highly advised that all individuals without symptoms and in a facility with a COVID-19 case wear mouth covering due to the potential someone is working and asymptomatic.</td>
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Disinfecting</td>
<td>The facility must be thoroughly sanitized and disinfected before re-opening.

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.
Visit the CDC web site for additional guidance:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html.</td>
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Sanitizing</td>
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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.</td>
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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.

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.

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