

FAQ: Bars, Restaurants, and Other Place of Public Accommodation

Employee illness

Should businesses screen employees for COVID-19 symptoms?

You must screen all employees before they enter your business. Use the Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf) to screen for COVID-19. You must keep information on employee health (including symptoms of COVID-19) confidential in accord with state and federal law.

If staff had close contact with someone with diagnosed or suspected COVID-19, has COVID-19 symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19, follow MDH's guidelines for COVID-19: When to Return to Work (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/returntowork.pdf).

What should businesses do if an employee tests positive for COVID-19?

Employers should be aware that employees with a confirmed COVID-19 test or employees with symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell must STAY HOME and NOT REPORT TO WORK. Employers should know that employees must follow MDH's guidelines for COVID-19: When to Return to Work (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/returntowork.pdf). To prevent the spread of COVID-19, employee's close contacts need to follow precautions at home and in the community.

Retail Food and beverage establishments

What types of businesses need to develop a COVID-19 plan?

All businesses are required to have a written COVID-19 Preparedness Plan beginning on June 29, 2020

Do food workers need to wear masks? What if they are not customer facing?

Yes. As of July 25, 2020, people in Minnesota are required to wear a face covering in all indoor businesses and public indoor spaces, per Executive Order 20-81. The Executive Order includes exemptions for people who are unable to wear or tolerate a face covering due to medical or mental health conditions or other reasons. If a worker has a medical condition that prevents them from using a face covering, a face shield that wraps around their face and extends below the chin may be worn instead.

Is a face shield required for food workers when they claim the face covering exemption for health reasons?

If a food worker claims to be exempt from face covering requirements, businesses must follow the requirements of applicable laws (including civil rights laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Minnesota Human Rights Act) that relate to verification of a worker's condition or disability. The business should also provide any exempt worker an accommodation to the extent possible. For example, if the worker will interact with customers, visitors, or other workers, the employer could offer the worker the option of wearing a face shield as an alternative. As an employer has an obligation to maintain a safe workplace, the business must take steps to prevent the worker from posing a hazard to other workers. If the business is customer-facing, the business should also take steps to prevent an exempt worker from posing a hazard to customers, as well.

Are self-service beverage dispensers allowed in take-out restaurants and convenience stores?

Yes, they are allowed. Encourage operators to minimize this practice if possible, and provide guidance on cleaning and disinfecting the high-touch surfaces frequently according to Stay Safe Guidance for Restaurants and Bars (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/restaurants-bars.jsp).

Can buffets and salad bars open?

Buffets, salad bars, and other self-service food and beverage are allowed, as long as a business's COVID-19 plan addresses the necessary customer and staff protections. For example, oversight of the self-service area is necessary to ensure social distancing is maintained, hands are being sanitized, and customers wear facemasks in the self-service area. Queuing areas must be marked to provide for physical distancing of 6 feet (for example, by using floor markings, lane lines, and/or marking of adjacent areas where customers may be waiting for service). A best practice would be to prepackage food ahead of time as much as possible.

Can self-service operations in grocery stores and convenience stores stay open?

Yes. Customer self-service of salad bars and similar food areas in grocery and convenience stores is allowed. Queuing areas must be marked to provide for physical distancing of 6 feet (for example, by using floor markings, lane lines, and/or marking of adjacent areas where customers may be waiting for service).

Can mobile food units operate?

Yes. Mobile food units and seasonal temporary food stands ("food trucks") can operate.

- Staff must follow social distancing recommendations to keep at least 6 feet apart, so trucks may have to operate with a limited number of staff.
- Encourage online and electronic payment transactions.
- Local zoning and ordinances may apply.
- Food trucks must comply with the Stay Safe Guidance for Restaurants and Bars (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/restaurants-bars.jsp).

Are any customers allowed inside of restaurants and coffee shops if they are picking up an order to-go?

Yes. Customers or guests may be in the establishment to pick up to-go food or beverages, as long as those individuals are at least 6 feet apart from one another while on the premises.

Drive-through and curbside delivery service are encouraged.

Are people allowed to order a drink to consume onsite while they wait for their take-out order?

Individuals must make a reservation to consume food or beverage on site and must be seated in an indoor or outdoor seating area that meets requirements.

Can restaurants sell meal kits that include raw animal foods?

This is allowed, but the retail food establishment should consult with their licensing authority to ensure that proper precautions are taken to protect food safety. The licensing authority should also consult with both MDH and MDA to ensure that requirements are being met (including labeling, as needed).

Can food service in long-term care facilities be open? Yes. Long-term care facilities must follow specific federal and state long-term care guidance.

Lodging Establishments

Can hotels have self-service coffee/water in their lobby?

Yes, this is allowed. Encourage operators to minimize this practice if possible, and provide guidance on frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces according to Stay Safe Guidance for Restaurants and Bars (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/restaurants-bars.jsp).