COVID-19: Protecting Grocery Store Workers

In order to implement Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak's Declaration of Emergency, employers should ensure social distancing for employees and customers; frequent and adequate handwashing; and require sick employees stay home. Employers should also provide basic workplace hazard education about coronavirus and how to prevent transmission in languages best understood by employees.

Workplace Discrimination

It is against the law for any employer to take any adverse action such as firing or threats against a worker for exercising safety and health rights such as raising safety and health concerns to their employer, filing a safety and health complaint or participating in a Nevada Occupational Safety & Health Administration (NVOSHA) investigation. Workers have 30 days to file their complaint with NVOSHA.

Ideas for an Effective Social Distancing Plan

- Limit the number of customers entering the store to approximately 20-30% of a store's capacity to facilitate social distancing at store entrances, throughout the store and at check-out lines. Staff can count the number of customers entering and exiting the store to ensure limits.
- Require all workers to stay at least six feet away from customers and co-workers.
- Temporarily mark six-foot increments (using adhesive colored tape, chalk, etc.) on the ground or floor to ensure social distancing.
- Post large print attention-grabbing signs readable from a far distance (or use portable, electronic reader boards) that inform customers of social distancing practices.
- Designate workers to monitor and facilitate distancing at check-out lines.
- Discontinue self-serve foods, free sample stands and product demonstrations.
- Make sure safeguards are in place for deli, meat counter, and bakery to limit customer contact with foods and surfaces and maintain 6-foot distance between workers and customers.
- Clearly post signs outside of the store and in the store to remind people to:
    - Have one family member shop at a time.
    - Adhere to social distancing throughout the store - not just at check out.
    - Properly discard their own personal protective equipment (PPE). Do not leave it in the stores or shopping carts.
    - Adhere to limits of people in stores.
    - Adhere to special shopping times for seniors.
    - Wear a face covering when shopping.

Ideas for an Effective Handwashing Plan

- Install hand-sanitizing dispensers at store entrances and at key locations inside for customers.
- Ensure all workers know why and how to effectively wash hands for at least 20 seconds.

- Require workers to wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, such as when they arrive at work, leave their workstations for breaks, eat, use tobacco, and after handling money.
- Provide access to handwashing facilities, including public restrooms, and allowing employees adequate break time to wash their hands, as necessary and at a minimum every 30 minutes.
- Ensure gloves are used for cart retrievers, handling money, common use of the same cash register or keypad by different cashiers, food safety and cleaning, and are changed and discarded when changing tasks (such as switching from handling money to handling a customer's groceries).
- Set up a schedule to keep these supplies well stocked and trash emptied.
- Posters and other resources are available from the CDC's Clean Hands Count campaign.

Ensure Sick Workers Are Not at Work

- Monitor employees for signs of illness and require sick workers to stay home.
- Ensure employees know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 caused by coronavirus exposure.

Ideas for Providing Basic Workplace Hazard Education about Preventing Coronavirus Transmission

- Instruct all workers on social distancing, handwashing, and other store-wide safety procedures related to coronavirus.
- Teach workers the importance of handwashing before eating, drinking, or using tobacco.
- Advise on respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes and not touching eyes, noses, and mouths with unwashed hands or gloves.
- Prohibit sharing utensils, phones, work tools, and other workplace items that are not sanitized.
- Communicate important safety messages/ updates daily with methods such as posters, reader boards, etc.

Checkout Stands and Counters Considerations

- Consider closing self-check stands if not all surfaces can be sanitized between customers and if it is not possible to ensure at least six feet between users.
- Consider installing "sneeze shields" at check stands, and ask customers to stand behind them, or relocate pay station keypads further away from worker.
- When supplies are available, provide disposable wipes/hand sanitizer at check-out stands for employees and customers (e.g. at keypads, registers, bagging area).
- Prohibit reusable shopping bags and provide single use bags for groceries.

Stocking and Surface Cleaning

- Schedule as much stocking and deep cleaning as possible during closing hours. If a 24-hour store, stock during the slowest period of the night.
- Have procedures to sanitize frequent touchpoints throughout the day, including point of sale terminals at registers.
- Always appoint a designated sanitation worker(s) to continuously clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces on a significantly increased schedule. Use the environmental cleaning guidelines set by the CDC.
- When disinfecting for coronavirus, the EPA recommends using the longest recommended contact time and/or most concentrated solution per the label.
- Be sure to follow the label directions for FOOD CONTACT SURFACES when using the chemical near or on utensils and food contact surfaces.

- Use protective gloves and eye/face protection (e.g. face shields and/or goggles) when mixing, spraying, and wiping with liquid cleaning products, like diluted bleach.
- Close for a sufficient amount of time overnight to allow for stores to be properly sanitized and re-stocked.

Other Protective Measures

- Use cloth face coverings to help slow spread (guidance from CDC linked here)
- Provide ways for workers to express any concerns and ideas to improve safety.
- Alert store managers or shift supervisors of strategies on handling customers or workers who are not following social distancing practices or demonstrate signs of illness during the visit. For example, it might be helpful to move a coughing customer out of line to a separate checkout station distant from others.
- Update store standard operating procedures to include awareness and prevention measures for diseases and viruses.
- Consider creating one-way aisles to help promote social distancing within the aisles.
- Accommodate workers who fall within the high-risk guidelines, as determined by the CDC, with lower exposure work assignments or allowing them to stay home.
- Ensure all workers wear personal protective equipment (PPE).

Resources

Nevada Health Response webpage: https://nvhealthresponse.nv.gov/

- Frequently Asked Questions
- Prevention
- Response in Nevada
- News and Resources
- Novel Coronavirus Prevention Tips Poster

U.S. Food & Drug Administration Best Practices for Retail Food Stores, Restaurants, and Food Pick-up/Delivery Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Help from State of Nevada

For free safety and consultation information from the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health's Environmental Health Section, email ehscustomerservice@health.nv.gov or call (775) 687-7533.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

- Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19
- Contact information for worker safety complaints
  - (702) 486-9020 (Southern Nevada)
  - (775) 688-3700 (Northern Nevada)
  - OSHA Online Complaint Form