



PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD PROTECTION PROGRAM

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and Guidance for NJ Wholesale Food Operators: (Updated April 28, 2020)

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 is a new respiratory illness that is caused by a novel coronavirus that has been spreading worldwide. We are gaining more understanding of COVID-19's epidemiology, clinical course, immunogenicity, and other factors as time progresses, and the situation is changing daily.

On March 19, 2020, the Department of Homeland Security issued a guidance regarding workers in the Food and Agriculture sector – agricultural production, food processing, distribution, retail and food service and allied industries as essential critical infrastructure workers. Protecting and helping our workers within the food and agricultural industry to continue to work during periods of social distancing, perceived food insecurity, community restrictions and closure orders is an important goal for NJ Department and Health, for the continuity and resilience for our community.

US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has been continuously informing the public that “FDA is not aware of any reports at this time of human illness that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging. However, it is always important to follow good hygiene practices (i.e., wash hands and surfaces often, separate raw meat from other foods, cook to the right temperature, and refrigerate food promptly) when handling of preparing food.”

The main risk of transmission is from close contact with infected people through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes therefore it is important that the food workers follow good personal hygiene practices and take precautions to prevent the further spread of COVID-19.

On 4/10/20 Governor Murphy has issued an executive order No. 122 mandating businesses to follow practices listed below:

- Prohibit non-essential visitors from entering the worksite.
- Limit worksite meetings, inductions, and workgroups to groups of fewer than ten individuals
- Require individuals to maintain six feet or more wherever possible.
- Stagger work start/stop times and lunch breaks to limit the number of individuals in common areas.
- Require workers and visitors to wear cloth face coverings in accordance with CDC recommendations while on the premises except for health reasons or the individual is under two years of age.
- Provide face coverings and gloves for their employees.
- Decline visitor entry without a face covering and if one cannot be provided at the point of entry.
- Require infection control practices such as regular hand washing, coughing and sneezing etiquette, and proper tissue usage and disposal.
- Limit sharing of tools, equipment, and machinery.

- Provide sanitization materials such as hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes to workers and visitors.
- Require frequent sanitization of high-touch areas like restrooms, breakrooms, equipment and machinery.
- Separate and send home workers who appear to have symptoms of consistent with COVID-19 illness upon arrival or who become sick during the day.
- Notify workers of any known exposure to COVID-19 at the worksite maintaining confidentiality.
- Clean and disinfect the worksite in accordance with CDC guidelines when a worker at the site has been diagnosed with COVID-19 illness.
- Ensure that the facility has a sufficient number of workers to perform cleaning and disinfection effectively in a manner that ensures the safety of occupants, visitors, and workers.

If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, businesses are not required to recall any food products produced, as there is no evidence to support the transmission of COVID-19 with food or food packaging. More information can be found on FDA's website:

<https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

Employees who might have been exposed to Covid-19 but are not showing any symptoms should follow the CDC's *Interim Guidance for Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19*.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/critical-workers-implementing-safety-practices.pdf>

FDA also has also developed the following guidance document titled, *What to Do If You have COVID-19 Confirmed Positive or Exposed Workers in Your Food Production, Storage, or Distribution Operations Regulated by FDA*.

<https://www.fda.gov/media/137338/download>