

April 6, 2020

NOTICE OF MARCH 31, 2020 SUPERSEDING COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER SHELTER IN PLACE ORDER AND ITS EFFECT ON FOOD FACILITIES

Dear Permit Holder:

On March 31, 2020, the Sonoma County Health Officer issued a new mandatory legal order (“Order”), which replaces the prior shelter-in-place order issued on March 17, 2020. As of 11:59 pm on April 1, 2020, all individuals and businesses in the County must comply with the new Order.

The County Health Officer issued the new Order after determining that more and stricter social distancing is needed to slow the rate of spread of COVID-19, prevent deaths, and stop the healthcare system from becoming overwhelmed. The new Order directs all individuals in the County to continue sheltering at their place of residence, and it limits travel, activity, and business functions to the most essential needs. It tightens many restrictions on businesses and other activities, and it makes social distancing requirements mandatory. This new Order is in effect until May 3, 2020 and could be extended.

The Order is available at <https://socoemergency.org/order-of-the-health-officer-shelter-in-place-extended/>, along with the Social Distancing Protocol template you are required to complete, post, and begin implementing by 11:59 pm on April 2, 2020 (see below for details).

What Stays the Same for Food Facilities?

Like the Order it replaced, the intent of the new Order is to minimize physical interactions between people in the County to reduce the spread of COVID-19 while ensuring that everyone can continue to access the essential goods and services they need and engage in essential activities. Food is an essential good and buying food is an essential activity. The Order therefore continues to classify the following categories of establishments as Essential Businesses:

- Grocery stores, certified farmers’ markets, farm and produce stands, supermarkets, food banks, convenience stores, and other establishments engaged in the retail sale of the following essential goods: unprepared food, canned food, dry goods, non-alcoholic beverages, fresh fruits and vegetables, pet supply, fresh meats, and fish and poultry, as well as hygienic and household consumer products necessary for personal hygiene or the sanitation, habitability, or operation of residences (like cleaning supplies). This category includes establishments that sell a significant amount of these essential products along with other types of products, such as liquor stores that also sell a significant amount of food. Farmer’s markets shall comply with CDPH guidance regarding RETAIL FOOD, BEVERAGE and Other Retail Service Venues, issued March 16, 2020.
- Restaurants, bars, cafes, mobile food facilities, and other establishments that prepare and serve food to the public. Facilities in this category may provide meals to customers only by delivery or carryout. Dining in or around the food facility is prohibited.

- Schools, soup kitchens, food banks, and other charitable feeding entities that provide free or reduced priced food goods or meals to students or other members of the public. Facilities in this category may provide food to the public only by delivery or carryout. Dining in or around the facility is prohibited.
- Businesses engaged in the production, cultivation, processing, testing, or distribution of food, beverage, or other agricultural products. These businesses shall be closed to the public, except that retail sales to the public may occur via curbside pick-up, delivery, shipping, farm and produce stands, and farmer's markets. Such businesses include agriculture, farming, ranching, fishing, dairies, creameries, wineries, breweries, and licensed cannabis businesses

What Changes for Food Facilities and Their Workers?

Social Distancing Protocol

By 11:59 pm on April 2, 2020, you must complete, post, and begin implementing a Social Distancing Protocol using Appendix A in order to continue operating your facility. The protocol is available in English and Spanish on the County's website. If you have a substantial number of employees or customers who do not speak English and instead speak another language, you are urged to post and provide the Protocol in English and the language spoken in the facility. The protocol describes the specific measures the facility will take to protect the health of employees and the public. This requirement applies to all essential businesses operating in the County, including food facilities. Specifically:

- You must complete a Social Distancing Protocol for each of your facilities in the County frequented by the public or employees. For instance, a grocery store or restaurant chain must complete a separate Social Distancing Protocol for each of its locations in the County.
- You must post a copy of this protocol at or near each entrance of the facility and make it easily viewable to the public and employees.
- You must provide a copy of the protocol to each employee working at the facility.
- You must immediately implement the measures identified in the protocol.
- If law enforcement, County, or other authority asks for it, you must provide it and show how you are implementing the protocol.

The Social Distancing Protocol must show how your facility is achieving the following:

- Limit the number of people who can enter your facility at any one time to make sure that everyone can easily maintain at least six feet of distance from each other at all times (except where that distance is infeasible, like when a customer hands money to a cashier);
- Mark increments of six feet or more where lines form to show people where they should stand while waiting in line to maintain adequate social distance;
- Provide adequate soap and water, hand sanitizer, and/or disinfectant at or near the facility entrance and at other appropriate locations for use by the public and employees, as well as

at locations where there is frequent interaction between employees and the public (like at the cash register);

- Provide contactless payment systems, or if that's not possible, disinfect all payment portals, pens, and styluses *after each use*;
- Regularly disinfect other high-touch surfaces; and
- Post a sign at the facility entrance informing employees and customers that they should: avoid entering if they have a cough or fever, maintain at least six feet of social distance, sneeze or cough into a tissue or one's elbow, and not shake hands or engage in unnecessary physical contact.
- Eliminate bulk bin dispensing and the use of reusable bags

You may also choose to identify and implement other optional measures, like providing senior-only shopping hours (to reduce the crowding and risk of exposure for these more vulnerable populations).

Social Distancing Requirements

The new Order makes four social distancing requirements mandatory for almost everyone, including essential workers. The only exceptions are when social distancing is impossible or inadvisable (such as when a customer needs to hand cash to a cashier or a caretaker needs to help someone in their care). The four mandatory social distancing requirements are:

- Maintain at least six feet of social distance from individuals who are not part of your household;
- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer recognized by the CDC to be effective in combatting COVID-19;
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or fabric or, if that's not possible, cough or sneeze into your sleeve or elbow (not into your hands); and
- Avoid all social interaction outside your home when you're sick with a fever or cough.

Face coverings recommended. Based on updated information from the CDC, the Sonoma County Health Officer now recommends that everyone who leaves home for an essential activity wear a face covering to the extent possible, such as a mask, scarf, bandana, or similar garment while outside their home.

Food Facility Guidance

The new Order requires all essential businesses to comply with industry-specific guidance issued by the County Health Officer related to COVID-19.

Stay Up To Date

This Order may be modified or extended and others may be issued. For up-to-date COVID-19 information and mandates, visit the SoCo Emergency website at <https://socoemergency.org>. Send specific questions related to food service operations to your health inspector by email or to EH@sonoma-county.org.