Tips for Retail Businesses Offering In-Store Shopping or Services During COVID-19
Updated November 19, 2020

AUDIENCE: Businesses that offer in-store retail, services, and outdoor equipment rental during the COVID-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND: This document was revised November 19, 2020, to include changes made to Health Order No.C19-07l, in areas such as additional mandatory signage requirements, ventilation guideline, flu vaccines and how to keep personnel and customers safer.

Changes to this tip sheet since the previous Version:
- New ventilation requirements and recommendations are included.
- New recommendations are included on how to keep personnel and customers safer during the holiday season.
- New signs are available.

How does COVID-19 Spread? (Updated)

Our current understanding is that COVID-19 is mostly spread from person-to-person in the air through virus-containing droplets in the breath of someone with COVID-19. These respiratory droplets enter the air when a person breathes. Even more droplets can get in the air when infected people talk, sing, cough, or sneeze. People with COVID-19 may have no symptoms and can still be breathing out virus-containing droplets that can infect others. Transmission can occur through:

- Larger droplets. These larger droplets are sometimes called “ballistic droplets” because they travel in straight lines and are pulled down by gravity. People nearby, usually within six feet, are infected when they breathe in these droplets or if the droplets land in their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Smaller droplets or infectious particles. These can float in the air for a period of time and/or travel beyond six feet on indoor air currents, especially in enclosed spaces with poor ventilation. People sharing the same space are infected when they breathe in these smaller droplets and particles or the droplets or particles land on their eyes, nose, or mouth – even if they are further than six feet away. These droplets are sometimes referred to as “aerosols” or “bioaerosols”.

COVID-19 can also spread if a person touches their eyes, nose or mouth after touching a contaminated surface (also known as a fomite); however, this is less common.

Prevention (Updated)

- Avoid Close Contact. To the greatest extent, maintain at least six feet of social distancing between yourself and the people who don’t live in your Household. Remember that outdoors is MUCH safer than indoors.
- Wear a Face Covering. Cover your mouth and nose with a Face Covering in public settings and when around people who don’t live in your Household.
• Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces. Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol.

• Monitor Your Health Daily. Be alert of symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, stay home.

Prepare: Before Your Business Re-Opens

Create a Health and Safety Plan and a Social Distancing Protocol

• A Health and Safety Plan template can be found at Exhibit B of Directive 2020-17, posted at www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus-healthorders.asp. If other Directives apply to your business, you may need to complete more than one Health and Safety Plan.

• A Social Distancing Protocol template can be found at Appendix A of the Shelter in Place Health Order, posted at www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus-healthorders.asp.

These documents must be available for all personnel and posted at the entrance to the business site. They serve as reminders of all the best practices that your business needs to follow including universal requirements such as requiring face coverings, signage, enforcing six-foot distances between people, and more specific things such as establishing policies for safe handling of merchandise.

Post Signage about the Increased Risk of COVID-19 Indoors (Updated)

Businesses that are permitted to operate indoors must post signs about increased risk of COVID-19 indoors. Post SFPDH-Approved Signage, stating:

• That COVID-19 is transmitted through the air, and the risk is generally higher indoors.

• That seniors and those with health risks should avoid indoor settings with crowds.

Signage on reporting violations of COVID-19 Health Orders. Beginning on Nov. 10, businesses are also required to post signs in employee break rooms. The signs must inform employees of the right to report violations of COVID-19 health orders and directives by calling 311 or visiting sf311.org. Signage needs to state that employee’s identity will remain anonymous. Sample signage is available online at https://sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19.

Ensure that Indoor Spaces are Well-Ventilated (Updated)

Good ventilation controls droplets and infectious particles to prevent COVID-19 transmission by:

• removing air containing droplets and particles from the room;

• diluting the concentration of droplets and particles by adding fresh, uncontaminated air

• filtering room air, removing droplets and particles from the air.

Doors and Windows required to be kept closed for fire/life safety purposes are exempt. For example, fire doors must remain closed. Make sure open windows do not create falling hazards especially for children. Sign templates can be found at: https://sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19.

For more information and additional resources, please see the following: San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH): www.sfdcp.org/COVID-ventilation.
Make Necessary Ventilation Improvements, if Feasible, Including

- HVAC systems (if one is present)
  - Ensure HVAC systems are serviced and functioning properly.
  - Evaluate possibilities for upgrading air filters to the highest efficiency possible.
  - Increase the percentage of outdoor air through the HVAC system, readjusting or overriding recirculation (“economizer”) dampers.
  - Disable demand-control ventilation controls that reduce air supply based on temperature or occupancy.
  - Evaluate running the building ventilation system even when the building is unoccupied to maximize ventilation. At the minimum, reset timer-operated ventilation systems so that they start operating 1-2 hours before the building opens and 2-3 hours after the building is closed.
- Increase natural ventilation by opening windows and doors when environmental conditions allow and if permitted by fire and building safety requirements. Fire doors should not be wedged or propped open.
- Consider installing portable air cleaners (“HEPA filters”).
- If the establishment uses pedestal fans or hard mounted fans, adjust the direction of fans to minimize air blowing from one individual’s space to another’s space.

Create a Safer Space for Personnel and Customers (with Updates for the Holiday Season)

You may need to change the physical layout of your business to help social distancing for customers and personnel. Modifications to consider include designating separate entrances and exits, making aisles one-way, improving queue management system, increasing spacing between racks or shelves, marking spaces with tape or other decals to indicate six-foot distances, and establishing transparent shields around high patron contact areas such as checkout counters.

During the holiday season when potential crowding might occur, you may need to consider implementing additional safety measures, such as assigning staff to monitor store capacity, posting signs on explaining capacity restrictions, providing signage to promote flu vaccines, and setting up virtual shopping appointments for curbside pick-up when feasible.

- Require all customers and Personnel wear masks as specified in the Face Covering Order.
- Ensure sanitizing measures be implemented.
  - Provide customers with easy access to hand sanitizer.
  - Regularly disinfect high touch areas, including countertops, payment systems, pens, doorknobs, carts/baskets, point of sales area, exit/entrance, and so forth.
- Ensure social distancing protocols and safety measures be maintained.
  - Create designated circles or lines with marking on the ground to indicate six-foot distancing for customers.
  - Create directional paths of travels if applicable, such as one-way entrance and exit for customers, signs for bathrooms.
Tips

- Assign designated Personnel to monitor store capacity, if feasible. Consider increasing the number of on-prem staff to manage potential crowding situations during holiday season.
- Consider using single line queue, instead of multiple line queues, to reduce customers’ wait time and enable easy management of queues.
- Consider setting up a queue management system to only allow limited number of shoppers at a time so that a six-foot distancing can be maintained among patrons and Personnel at all times, for small square footage or mom-and-pop stores where hiring a designated staff is not necessary or feasible.
- Maintain Plexiglas or other barriers between customers and cashier. If not possible, please ensure at least six feet of distance.

- Increase off-site access and sales.
  - Consider outdoor or online sales, such as curbside pick-up for customers. (Please refer to the Curbside Retail Guideline for details.)
  - Consider using the sidewalk or parking lane for retail operations. Please refer to https://sf.gov/use-sidewalk-or-parking-lane-yourbusiness for application of free temporary permit.
  - Take appropriate measures against over-crowding and blocking passage by pedestrians including people with disabilities if a store operates outdoors.

- Promote flu vaccination.
  - Post signage to encourage flu vaccine among personnel and participants. Find out more information at http://sfcdc.org.flu.
  - Flu vaccines are critical in the fight against COVID-19 by (1) keeping workers and communities healthy and (2) reducing strain on our healthcare and testing systems that are responding to COVID-19.

Educate and Train Personnel

Personnel must be trained to implement the Social Distancing and Health Protocol and may need training on cleaning and disinfection, screening customers for symptoms, and how to monitor the number of customers in the store or in line. Consider training personnel on de-escalation with customers who do not comply with policies and provide resources to employees to address anxiety, stress, and mental health. Recognize the fear in returning to work, communicate transparently, listen, and survey regularly.

Provide information on employer or government-sponsored sick leave and other benefits the employee may be entitled to receive that would make it financially easier to stay at home (see Paid sick leave in San Francisco). Remember that employees cannot be fired due to COVID-19 results or needed time off for recovery.

Check Your Space after the Long Period of Low Usage

Check for pest infestation or harborage, and make sure all pest control measures are functioning. Perform routine maintenance on ventilation systems including air ducts and vents. If your business was closed for a long period of time, flush out the stagnant water from the plumbing lines by running water through fixtures. Detailed guidance may be found at: https://www.sfwater.org/flushingguidance.
Getting Back to Business

Follow all of the Best Practices in Exhibit A of Directive 2020-17, posted at www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus-healthorders.asp. To help compliance, you may need to ask customers to change the way they interact with your business and your products. Changes may include:

- Strongly encourage customers to refrain from touching merchandise unnecessarily and to use hand sanitizer before touching merchandise or upon entry to your business.
- Establish procedures for safe handling and cleaning of returned merchandise.
- Prohibit self-sampling of items such as cosmetics and perfume.
- Consider closing fitting rooms to customers if you can’t implement best practices such as cleaning clothing before returning to sale and frequent cleaning of fitting rooms.
- If customers bring their own bags from home:
  - Ensure that bags are not placed directly on conveyor belts, outside of shopping carts, or any other surface where customers are served.
  - Ensure that reusable bags make no contact with employees.
  - Ensure that customers bag their own merchandise.
  - Ensure that customers do not bag merchandise in the checkout area if they cannot maintain physical distancing.
  - Increase the frequency of disinfection in bagging areas and customer service areas frequented by customers.

Restrooms for Customers

Consider closing the restroom if you are not able to comply with the sanitation requirements of the Social Distancing and Health Protocol. Businesses are encouraged to monitor use of restrooms by either requiring a key to access or stationing a restroom attendant nearby.

Retail Stores in an Enclosed Indoor Shopping Center

Retail stores in an enclosed Indoor Shopping Center that do not have direct access to adjacent sidewalk, street, parking lot, or alley area, are open to the public for in-store retail at this time, at 25% capacity, with approval of a plan submitted to the Health Officer.

Gloves

Routine glove use is not recommended. The CDC explains, in general, gloves are appropriate when cleaning or caring for someone who is sick (see link: When to wear gloves). In most other situations, wearing gloves is unnecessary and may still lead to the spread of germs. The best way to protect yourself is to regularly wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

To access the links in this document, view it at www.sfdph.org/directives
Monitor and Adjust

At least on a weekly basis, think about how your business and personnel are doing, how well you are complying with your Social Distancing and Health Plan, and what changes are needed to improve your response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Look for new guidance from the SFDPH Communicable Disease Control and Prevention or the frequently updated page on sf.gov with comprehensive resources for businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Resources

- Local:
  - Downloadable signage to print yourself, or to request printed posters
  - How to get tested for COVID-19 in San Francisco https://sf.gov/citytestsf
  - Information from the San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development about COVID-19, such as employer requirements, employee benefits, and resources; Avoiding discrimination and retaliation during COVID-19.
  - Paid sick leave in San Francisco

- California:
  - State of California Resilience Roadmap
  - Guidance for Retailers from the State of California
  - CAL OSHA information on protecting workers from COVID-19

- National:
  - CDC: Resuming Business Toolkit: CDC Resuming Business Toolkit
  - CDC Return to Work Guidance

- International: