Interim Guidance for Food Delivery Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic
Updated April 16, 2020

Note: This document was updated to provide further explanations of social distancing.

AUDIENCE: Food Delivery Workers

BACKGROUND: Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food, food containers, or food packaging. Before preparing or eating food, it is important to always wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds for general food safety.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Given evolving information on how the virus spreads, consumers should still follow the key steps of food safety: clean, separate, cook, and chill.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), in general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from food products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient, refrigerated, or frozen temperatures.

Consumers who are concerned about contamination of food or food packaging should transfer food products to their own containers, while washing their hands after handling food packaging, after removing food from the packaging, before they prepare food for eating, and before they eat.

FOOD SAFETY GUIDANCE:

- All food must be obtained from an approved source. Meals must be prepared at a licensed, inspected food facility.

- Only provide perishable foods under the following conditions:
  - COLD FOODS that were maintained at 41°F or below
  - FROZEN FOODS that were maintained in a solid state
  - HOT FOODS that were maintained at 135°F or above

- Maintain warm water, liquid soap and paper towels at food pick-up/loading sites.

- Thoroughly wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before starting deliveries, after using the restroom, at completion of deliveries, and whenever possible.

- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces (such as doors, carts, transportation equipment, faucet handles) using an approved disinfectant, according to manufacturer’s instructions. If using bleach, prepare a solution using 5 tablespoons of bleach per gallon of water.

- Food must be protected from potential contamination at all times before, during, and after transport. Use sanitary, food-grade containers, and ensure that transport vehicles are clean and free of vermin.
DELIVERY SAFETY GUIDANCE:

• Packaging food prior to delivery
  o Food facility workers should practice usual hand washing and glove policies to protect food while packing for pickup.
  o Delivery personnel should refrain from collecting utensils and food condiments for orders. All food condiments, paper goods, and utensil for the food delivery order should be packed and contained within the delivery packaging.

• General delivery safety guidance
  o Delivery vehicle should be kept clean and free of clutter.
  o Conduct frequent hand washing and sanitation practices – hands should be washed at minimum just prior to order pick up. A hand sanitizer can be used when hand washing facilities are not available while conducting the delivery.
  o Maintain social distancing including, but not limited to, maintaining a minimum distance of 6 feet from others, adhering to food facility capacity restrictions, and not using reusable bags.
  o Cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue, then throw away in the trash, or if a tissue is not available sneeze into the crook of elbow.

• During delivery
  o Maintain safe handling practices while delivering food/meal orders.
  o Use hand sanitizer before grabbing meal bags from delivery vehicle.
  o **Wear a face covering.** Face coverings should cover the nose and mouth and may be made from a variety of materials, such as bandanas, scarves, t-shirts, sweatshirts or towels. Always wash your hands, or use hand sanitizer, before and after touching your face or face coverings. Cloth face coverings should be washed frequency with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle.
  o Avoid knocking on doors and pushing elevator buttons with your hands. If possible, knock using your elbow or shoe. Push elevator buttons with your elbow.
  o Always stand 6 feet away from others, especially the clients you are delivering to. When possible, leave food on a clean surface or other location designated by the customer.
  o Maintain social distancing by notifying client food is being delivered on door step if possible.
    o Try calling the client to let them know that their meals are being delivered. If they don’t answer their phone, ring the bell with your elbow or knock on the door with your elbow or shoe, then walk 6 feet away from the door again.
    o Wait until client or caregiver answers the door and takes the meals.
    o Do not go inside a client’s home, even if they invite you in or ask you to put the meals away for them
  o Utilize pre/non-contact payment methods through available apps if possible. Avoid personal contact through the transfer of cash/money if possible.
QUESTIONS:

Do food handlers need to wear gloves when handling shipping materials and packaged foods?

- No. Currently there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19. Because of poor survivability of coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from food products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient, refrigerated, or frozen temperatures. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. The more likely exposure is by person-to-person transmission involving close contact with someone who is ill or shedding the virus. Please follow Food Safety Guidance noted above.

If a food delivery worker feels ill with cold or flu-like symptoms (such as cough, sore throat, fever, new shortness of breath, etc), how long do they need to be out of work?

- Please see the SFDPH guidance Ending Home Isolation and Returning to Work after Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 (at www.sfcdcp.org/covid19 under Home Isolation and Returning to Work).

If a food delivery worker tests positive for COVID-19, does any follow up need to be done for the clients who received meals from that person that day?

- There is no known transmission from food or food packaging. Thus, if Food Safety Guidance is followed, SFDPH does not currently consider clients to be close contacts or require food to be recalled.

- In the event that an employee tests positive for COVID-19, please review guidance for:
  - Staff (at www.sfcdcp.org/covid19 under Food Facilities)
  - Cleaning (at www.sfcdcp.org/covid19 under Cleaning Recommendations)
  - Returning to work (at www.sfcdcp.org/covid19 under Home Isolation and Return to Work)

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

This and other clinical guidance specific to San Francisco are posted online at www.sfcdcp.org

FDA Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019

AFDO Coronavirus Resource Page

CDC Coronavirus and Food Safety Newsletter