

## COVID-19 Food Facility Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

These FAQs are based on the State Guidelines and the Sacramento County Public Health Order. Restaurants in Sacramento County are required to temporarily eliminate indoor seating, but may continue to utilize outdoor seating. The [Guidelines for the safe operation of restaurants, bars, & wineries](#) that have been published by the State of California must be followed to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Requirements may change. Please check the [EMD website](#) for the most current information.

### **RESTAURANTS**

**1. Q: Are buffets, salad bars and salsa bars allowed to operate?**

A: No. The Public Health Order has not changed from previous versions regarding customer self-service for buffets, salad bars, salsa bars, or Mongolian BBQ ingredient bars, etc. These types of self-service operations are to remain closed for customer self-service; however, your employee may work at these stations and serve the customers.

**2. Q: Are soda fountains, water dispensing machines, ice dispensers, and frozen yogurt machines open for customer self-service?**

A: Yes. Soda fountains, water dispensing machines, ice dispensers and frozen yogurt machines are open for customer self-service. All touch points on the equipment should be cleaned and sanitized with increased frequency. Cups at beverage stations can be accessible by customers, but lids must still be provided by employees or a touchless lid dispenser can be used.

**3. Q: Can customers use gravity feed bulk food dispensers and self-service coffee grinders?**

A: Yes. Gravity feed bulk dispensers and self-service coffee grinders can be used if the facility provides disposable gloves for customer use or sanitizes the touch points of the equipment after each use.

**4. Q: Are shared condiment canisters (e.g. sugar, coffee creamer, etc.) allowed for customer self-service?**

A: No. Self-service of shared condiment containers (e.g. sugar, creamer, half and half, milk, pickles, jalapenos, onions, etc.) is not permitted.

**5. Q: Are condiments in pump style dispensers allowed for customer self-service?**

A: Yes. Syrup pumps, ketchup and mustard pumps and other similar enclosed equipment is permitted. All touch points on the equipment should be cleaned and sanitized with increased frequency.

**6. Q: Should grab and go food items be prewrapped?**

A: Yes. Grab and go items (e. g. tamales, hot dogs, sandwiches, etc.) should be prewrapped. Napkins or disposable gloves can be provided for handling items that cannot be prewrapped.

**7. Q: Are multi-use utensils allowed for customer self-service when handling pre-packaged grab and go food items?**

A: Yes. Multi-use utensils, such as tongs, are permitted for handling pre-packaged grab and go food items if the utensil is exchanged or cleaned and sanitized after each customer use.

**8. Q: Is customer self-service of toppings for frozen yogurt allowed?**

A: Yes. Customers can self-serve toppings at frozen yogurt shops if the employee cleans and sanitizes the scoops after each use or the employee provides the customer with a disposable spoon to scoop their toppings. Social distancing guidelines should be maintained.

**9. Q: Is customer self-service of baked goods allowed when the items are in a fully enclosed bakery case?**

A: Yes. Customers must use bakery tissue, disposable gloves, napkins, or one set of tongs per customer that need to be cleaned and sanitized after each customer use. Social distancing guidelines should be maintained.

**10. Q: Is customer self-service of whole fish on ice allowed?**

A: Yes. Customers must use gloves or one set of tongs per customer that need to be cleaned and sanitized after each customer use. Social distancing guidelines should be maintained.

## **SOCIAL DISTANCING**

**11. Q: Is it required to place markings on the floor to maintain social distancing?**

A: Yes. Markings are helpful to maintain adequate social distancing of a minimum of 6 ft. Tape is considered an acceptable form of marking.

**12. Q: What are the approved materials for physical barriers to maintain social distancing guidelines in outdoor seating/dining areas? What is the approved height for installation?**

A: All retail food facilities are required to temporarily eliminate the use of their indoor seating until further notice. In outdoor seating areas plexiglass or any other impermeable physical barrier is acceptable. If physical barriers will be used, partitions between tables should begin at the finished floor or seat height and extend to protect at least up to 5 ft. Physical barriers at booths should begin at back rest and extend to up to 5 ft. Physical barriers are not required if social distancing of at least 6 ft. is maintained between parties.

**13.Q: Can guests sit at the *indoor* bar if they order food?**

A: No. All retail food facilities are required to temporarily eliminate the use of their indoor seating/dining areas until further notice. All bars, brewpubs, breweries and pubs have been ordered closed, unless they operate a food facility on the premises. Alcohol can only be served in the same transaction as a meal. Guests may sit at an outdoor bar if the facility is serving alcohol in the same transaction as a meal and guests are at least 6 ft. away from other guests and employees. See #28 for additional information.

**14.Q: Is the operator required to approach customers if they are not adhering to the proper social distancing guidelines?**

A: Yes. Operators should approach customers to remind them to maintain social distancing guidelines.

**15.Q: Can facilities expand their dining area by temporarily placing tables and chairs outside of their facility on the sidewalk?**

A: Yes. The facility should contact their local planning/zoning department and California Department of Alcohol and Beverage Control (ABC) for approval. [See COVID-19 Temporary Outdoor Dining Permit.](#)

**16.Q: What are the criteria for determining outdoor dining areas?**

A: Outdoor dining areas must have the following components:

- 3 open sides (large windows will be considered open)
- No screens, curtains, drapes, sunshades on openings
- Separate area from indoor dining, not a continuation of indoor dining
- Outdoor area is not connected to HVAC
- Operator can provide fans in the area to help with cooling
- Ceiling fans recommended to aid in ventilation

**17.Q: Can a banquet hall hold a private event or party that brings together people from different households?**

A: No. All events or gatherings that would bring together persons from different households, such as private parties, must be cancelled or postponed until further notice.

**18.Q: Is there a limit to the amount of people that can sit together in a dining establishment?**

A: No. There is no limit so long as the individuals are in the same household or have requested to be seated together. All events or gatherings that would bring together persons from different households, such as private parties, must be cancelled or postponed until further notice.

## **SAFETY EQUIPMENT**

**19.Q: Is it a requirement that servers and bussers wear gloves?**

A: Yes. Servers, bussers and any other employee that remove items used by customers (dirty cups, plates, napkins, etc.) or handle trash, should use disposable gloves (and wash hands before putting them on and after removing them).

**20. Q: Can bartenders serve garnish in the cocktails without wearing gloves?**

A: Yes. Gloves are not required for this activity. However, handwashing is required before handling the garnish.

**21. Q: Are face coverings required?**

A: Yes. Face coverings are required while indoors or outdoors in a public space regardless of physical distance from one another. Full face covering mandate information and exemptions available on the [CDPH website](#).

**22. Q: Who is exempt from wearing a face covering?**

A: The following individuals are exempt from wearing a face covering:

- Persons age two years or under. These very young children must not wear a face covering because of the risk of suffocation.
- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.
- Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
- Persons for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
- Persons who are seated at a restaurant or other establishment that offers food or beverage service, while they are eating or drinking, provided that they are able to maintain a distance of at least six feet away from persons who are not members of the same household or residence.

**Note:** Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition who are employed in a job involving regular contact with others should wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.

**23. Q: Do operators request a medical note or certification of a medical condition preventing *customers* from wearing a face covering?**

A: No. A medical note or certification of a medical condition is not required to prove that one is exempt from wearing a face covering.

**24. Q: Can an employee wear a face shield instead of a face covering?**

A: No. A face shield does not meet the PHO definition of a face covering. A face shield provides splash protection, not respiratory protection. Per CDC guidance, face shields are not meant to function as primary respiratory protection and should be used concurrently with a face covering. Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition who are employed in a job involving regular contact with others should wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.

**25.Q: Can a dishwashing employee wear a face shield instead of a face covering and goggles?**

A: No. A face shield does not meet the PHO definition of a face covering. Face coverings are required while indoors or outdoors in a public space unless [exempt](#) from wearing one. The dishwashing employee needs to be protected from splashing of dirty dishes and utensils and is required to wear a face covering **and** a face shield or goggles.

**26.Q: Can a plastic barrier at a register be used instead of a face covering?**

A: No. Physical barriers or partitions cannot be used in lieu face coverings. Face coverings are required while indoors or outdoors in a public space regardless of use of physical barriers. Full face covering mandate and exemptions available on the [CDPH website](#).

**27.Q: Are face coverings with cylindrical openings on the front or side an approved face covering? (See example)**

A: Yes, but only if the face covering incorporates a cloth fabric insert between the user and the opening on the face covering.



Traditional light breathing face coverings incorporate a one-way valve (typically a raised plastic cylinder about the size of a quarter on the front or side of the facemask) that is designed to facilitate easy exhaling. These valves permit droplet release from the facemask, putting others nearby at risk. The light breathing face coverings **without the cloth fabric insert** are not considered a face covering under the most recent Public Health Order and are not to be used.



**28.Q: What if an employee refuses to wear a face covering?**

A: An individual can refuse to wear a face covering if they are exempt. The following individuals are exempt from wearing a face covering:

- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.
- Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.

- Persons for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
- Persons who are seated at a restaurant or other establishment that offers food or beverage service, while they are eating or drinking, provided that they are able to maintain a distance of at least six feet away from persons who are not members of the same household or residence.

**NOTE:** Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition who are employed in a job involving regular contact with others should wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it. A medical note or certification of a medical condition is not required to prove that one is exempt from wearing a face covering.

**29.Q: If customers are not wearing a face covering in my facility or drive thru, are my employees required to enforce the state’s face covering mandate?**

**A:** No, however, private businesses can refuse service to customers if they choose and facilities should inform their customers of the Public Health Order requirement to wear face coverings. Some individuals may be exempt from wearing a face covering (see #19). If COVID-19 guidelines are not followed and COVID-19 cases continue to rise, the county and cities may be forced to order another stay at home order which will create additional economic hardship.

**30.Q: Do kitchen employees have to wear a face covering when they become overheated and can’t breathe?**

**A:** No. Employees suffering from excessive heat and breathing difficulty should remove the face covering, remain at least 6 ft. away from others, and recover until they can safely resume wearing the face covering. Employees that work within 6 ft. of others for an extended period of time are required to wear face coverings. Employees interacting with the public are required to wear face coverings unless a physical barrier or 6 ft. social distance is in place.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

**31. Due to current California Department of Alcohol and Beverage Control (ABC) regulations, can a bar that doesn’t sell meals partner with a restaurant or food truck in order to be allowed to operate? If so, does every transaction at the bar require a food purchase?**

**A:** Yes, the facilities may partner. Alcohol can only be sold in the same transaction as a meal. A menu should be created to show the available options agreed upon from both facilities. Visit the links below for additional information.

[ABC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Updates](#)

[ABC Guidance by License Type](#)

[Industry Guidance for Restaurants, Bars, & Wineries \(State Guidelines\)](#)

**32. Can wineries and tasting rooms remain open?**

A: Yes, but they can operate outside only. No indoor operation is allowed. They can serve alcohol without the purchase of food or meal.

**33. Q: Where can I report an employee with a positive COVID-19 test result?**

A: Call Environmental Management Department at 916-875-8440.

**34. Q: Is there a requirement that the hand sanitizer for customer use be manufactured?**

A: No, if certain conditions are met. Follow the [FDA's Temporary Policy for Preparation of Certain Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizer Products](#)

**35. Q: Are customers allowed to bring their own reusable bags, mugs or other reusable personal items from home into retail markets or other food facilities?**

A: Customers are allowed to bring in their reusable carry-out bags into food facilities; however, other reusable personal items from home such as mugs cannot be brought in. Facilities should no longer be distributing single-use carryout bags and should be charging customers when providing reusable grocery bags.

**36. Q: Are vehicle based drive-in events allowed in Sacramento County?**

A: Yes, vehicle based drive-in events can be allowed under specific circumstances and only after approved by EMD and Sacramento County Public Health. Refer to [Vehicle Based Drive-in Event Guidelines](#), propose a gathering plan, and submit to EMD to begin the review and approval process.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Thank you for your efforts in keeping Sacramento residents and visitors safe!

- If you have questions, please call EMD at (916) 875-8440.
- For additional information, refer to the [Sacramento Business Environmental Resource Center \(BERC\)](#) and [Industry Guidance for Restaurants, Bars, & Wineries \(State Guidelines\)](#)
- To ensure you receive the latest information, call EMD at (916) 875-8440 to update your email and contact information.

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