03/30/2020

Updated Food Safety Guidance for COVID 19 Coronavirus Emergency

Suspension of Self-Service Salad Bars and Buffet Style Food Selection

Dear Owners and Managers,

As you know, The Borough of State College Health Department is closely monitoring a rapidly emerging national outbreak of novel coronavirus COVID-19. **To clarify the new Governor’s order for Stay at Home, this does not change how you can operate your life sustaining business. You do not have to close at 8:00pm.** We understand that our residents may have concerns about how the virus may impact the State College community. This includes the potential for exposure while patronizing your retail food establishments.

In response to the outbreak in Pennsylvania, SCBDOH is encouraging all retail food service establishments to be vigilant by emphasizing employee health and good hygiene and sanitation practices for your employees. While COVID-19 is not spread by food, actions should be taken to prevent the person to person spread of COVID-19 from an infected food worker to co-workers and/or restaurant patrons. **Food workers should not work when sick or touch ready-to-eat foods with bare hands. They should carefully wash their hands with warm water and soap often and after using the restroom.**

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Food Safety Division has provided the following updates to the procedures you should all be employing to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus specifically self-service operations and take out/pick up procedures.

Please take the time to read through these changes and recommendations and share them with your employees. Attached you will find the latest updates for maintaining food safety during the COVID-19 emergency in retail establishments. Also note the link to the Borough of State College COVID 19 website for additional information on Food Safety. If you have any questions, call the Division of Health and Food Safety at (814) 234-7191

Sincerely,

Brian A. O'Donnell
Health Officer
Borough of State College
243 South Allen Street
State College PA, 16801
Health Office (814) 234-7191
Changes to Regular Operations:

- **Buffets and/or salad bars are not allowed** in facilities including grocery stores. The risk of operating buffets at this time outweighs the benefits in relation to keeping the public safe due to the sharing of utensils, equipment, surfaces, etc.

- Facilities should **consider stopping self-service operations of unpackaged foods or beverages** (such as bakery items, drink fountains and coffee dispensers).

- If self-service beverages are allowed, **refilling of consumer containers/cups is not allowed**.

- **Restaurant/Bars and Breweries** should be filling only new growlers or growlers that have been properly cleaned and sanitized before refilling.

- Same precautions should be taken if it is a consumer self-service refill station, facilities should be advised to **cease** these operations at this time.

- **Ready-to-eat items must be protected with sneeze guards** that are prepared and served behind a counter by a food employee for take-out only (e.g., deli case serving meat, sandwiches).

- **Frequently clean and sanitize utensils and commonly touched surfaces** using an appropriate sanitizing solution. Chlorine-based sanitizing solution should be changed at least once every **4 hours**.

- **No bare-hand contact should occur with ready-to-eat food.** Ensure gloves are worn at all times, following proper glove usage protocols.

- **Make sure employees wash their hands thoroughly with soap and warm water** for 20 seconds upon first arriving to work, after using the restroom, before and after eating, and frequently throughout the day. Employees should avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth.

Safety for customers and community:

- **Offer curbside pickup.** This allows you to protect your employees by not allowing the public inside your establishment and preventing possible exposure to the virus.
- **Offer contact-free pickup.** Place ready-to-go orders on a table by your front door with the name of the customer who ordered it. With signage asking guests to maintain six feet of distance with the party in front of them in case of a line.

- **Remove all physical menus and payment points.** Printed menus can be a source of surface transmission of viral particles. Try and transition to an online-only ordering system. If you must continue to use printed menus, either sanitize plastic-coated menus with an EPA-approved sanitizing product, or use single-use paper menus that customer can discard on their own.

- **Switch to no-contact payment methods.** Ask that take-out orders be ordered online. Try to promote cashless payments to minimize handling of money. If you can’t go online-only, encourage the use of contact-free credit card devices and have the POS operator step back from the device before allowing a customer to come up to tap their phone or insert their credit card. Avoid cash as much as possible.

- **Prop open any doors that are regularly accessed,** including the entrance to the main kitchen, dish room, prep kitchen, offices, and bathrooms.

**Employee Hygiene:**

- Sending employees that exhibit signs of respiratory illness home
- Schedule staffing density to levels that allow a minimum of six feet of distance between all employees at all times.
- social distancing (maintaining a six feet barrier between persons when interacting)
- frequent hand washing
- diligent cleaning and sanitizing of frequently touched surfaces
- coughing and sneezing into a tissue or your elbow
- disposing of soiled tissues promptly and washing hands immediately afterwards

Food Safety and Coronavirus: A Comprehensive Guide | Serious Eats

Editor’s Note: To proactively mitigate the spread of COVID-19, the Serious Eats staff is operating remotely for the foreseeable future. Here’s how we’re handling the resulting limitations. As the father of a young toddler, the son of two senior parents in the at-risk age group, and the chef/partner of a restaurant that up until recently employed a few dozen people and fed hundreds on any...

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