



Risk Management Services

Best Practices for Automobile Dealers and Service Shops During the Coronavirus Emergency

To help slow the spread of the coronavirus, and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), local, state and federal governments have implemented aggressive social-distancing controls and mandated that businesses perform their work remotely. Recent governmental updates indicate that these measures are having an impact to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Many businesses are considered essential, and are exempt, because they provide services that are required to maintain the health, welfare and safety of citizens. Automobile-related businesses are considered essential and remain open in many states.

The key to reducing the spread is limiting customer and employee contact by physical distancing and conducting as much business as possible by remote means. The following tips can help you protect your employees and customers if you continue to operate during the coronavirus crisis.

General Operational Recommendations

- Encourage sick employees to stay home.
- Follow health department and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines about social distancing, hand washing, respiratory etiquette and cleaning/disinfection-related practices.
- Encourage employees to maintain proper social distancing (minimum of six feet) and consider the use of respiratory protection or other face (nose and mouth) coverings, such as masks, as recommended by local and state health departments.
- Whenever possible, take payments by credit card, online or by phone.
- Provide handwashing facilities and hand sanitizer in the workplace.
- Ensure there are adequate cleaning and disinfecting supplies available.
- Keep your facility clean. The coronavirus can persist on surfaces, such as keyboards, phones, desks, counters, door handles, handrails and other hard surfaces for several hours to several days. Therefore, it is vital that you implement robust cleaning protocols within your facility.
- Keep your vehicles clean. Sanitize keys, key fobs and the vehicle before and after delivery, test-drives or service. Wipe down all surfaces and controls touched by the driver or technician.

All surfaces should be sanitized according to the state health department and CDC guidelines using products approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as effective against the coronavirus.

Sales

- Showrooms should be closed for the foreseeable future. Provide customers with video walk-arounds of vehicles. If in-person interactions cannot be avoided, they should be by appointment only.
- Test drives are not recommended as there is no effective way to maintain proper social distancing between the salesperson and the customer. If a test drive cannot be avoided, the following should be implemented:
 - Verify the customer has a valid license and insurance. Obtain a copy of documents (front and back). Photographs would be acceptable as a way to reduce person-to-person contact and potential virus transmission.
 - Define the route and provide the customer with a map of the route. When defining the route, minimize left turns.
 - If your vehicles have GPS, ensure it is activated so you know the location of the test vehicle. Alternatively, have a salesperson lead the customer along the route in a separate vehicle.

Service

- Maintain recommended social distancing between employees and customers.
- Consider installing barriers in front of employees who must interact with customers, such as service writers, cashiers, receptionists and parts counter personnel.
- Close waiting rooms or limit customers in the reception area.
- Allow for customers to drop off and pick up vehicles after hours using a “night drop” box to limit personal contact.
- Eliminate the use of shared items, such as pens, touch-screen devices and debit/credit card machines. You should also remove amenities such as coffee makers, water coolers and snacks to reduce the potential for virus transmission.
- Disinfect customer keys and any area of the vehicle you will have contact with, including, but not limited to, the steering wheel, shifter, interior and exterior door handles, hood latch, etc.
- If the technician must test drive the vehicle to diagnose a problem, they should do so alone. Disinfect before and after and protect interior surfaces with seat covers, paper floor mats, etc.
- Keep the vehicle interior ventilated. Open the windows while the vehicle is in your possession.

Employee Safety

Employers must evaluate the workplace and implement controls to protect their employees from workplace hazards, including the coronavirus. Employees who are potentially exposed to contaminated items, and those involved in cleaning and disinfecting, should be equipped with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) if other controls are not feasible.

PPE may include gloves, eye and face protection, and body and foot protection. Considering the unknowns about the virus, such as asymptomatic spread, employees should maintain proper social distancing (minimum of six feet) and consider the use of respiratory protection or other face (nose and mouth) coverings, such as masks, as noted under General Operational Recommendations above.

Guidance for employers can be found on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) [COVID-19 Page](#).

Finally, the COVID-19 outbreak is a continually evolving situation. Employers should consult the CDC and their state/local health departments for the most up-to-date planning and response information.

COVID-19 Resources:

- CDC [COVID-19 Page](#)
- OSHA [COVID-19 Page](#)
- US EPA [List of Disinfectants for Use Against the Coronavirus](#)
- Automotive Service Association (ASA), [Industry Best Practices: Auto Repair Shops & COVID-19](#)

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