



# Utica National Risk Management Alert

## Reopening Restaurants During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Reopening restaurants during the coronavirus pandemic will require operators to modify the way they do business to protect employees, customers and the community and reduce the spread of COVID-19. Restaurant operators should keep the following in mind as they reopen.

### REDUCE THE SPREAD

- Encourage employees to stay home when sick, if they recently had contact with a person with COVID-19 or if they tested positive for COVID-19.
- Require frequent hand washing before, during and after food preparation, after touching garbage, after clearing tables, after using the restroom and whenever they are soiled. Remember, hand washing is most effective when done using soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Ensure employees cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or arm/sleeve. Hands should be washed immediately after.
- Whenever feasible, or required by local jurisdictions, require the use of face coverings. This is especially important where physical distancing (6 feet minimum) cannot be maintained.
- Maintain adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene. This includes soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes and face coverings.
- Post signage in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances, in restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs.

### MAINTAIN A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

- Establish a cleaning and disinfection program for public and food preparation areas. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g., door handles, cash registers, workstations, sink handles, bathroom stalls) at least daily, or as much as possible and as required by food safety requirements. Use products that meet [EPA disinfection criteria](#) and that are appropriate for the surface. Allow the disinfectant to remain on the surface for the contact time recommended by the manufacturer.
- Minimize shared objects, such as menus, food service items (utensils, containers), food containers, payment trays and touchpads. If feasible, replace reusable items with disposable or single-use items, such as digital or paper menus, single-serving condiments, touchless payment options, and no-touch trash cans, doors, sinks and hand dryers.
- Increase ventilation, and ensure ventilation and water systems are properly maintained.
- Modify restaurant and bar layouts to ensure adequate physical distancing (minimum of 6 feet) between parties and staff.
- Reduce capacity/limit seating, encourage reservations and staggered dining times, and ask customers to wait in their vehicle or outside until their table is ready.
- Avoid offering any self-serve food and drink options such as salad bars, buffets and drink stations.
- Close or reconfigure shared spaces, such as break rooms.

### PROMOTE HEALTHY OPERATIONS

- Be aware of local, state and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines.
- Offer high-risk employees alternate work that limits their exposure.
- Stagger or rotate shifts, and dining times to minimize the number of employees in the restaurant.
- Avoid large gatherings, such as meetings, weddings and similar events, where physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Implement flexible leave policies that allow employees to stay home when they are sick or have been exposed.
- Train staff on new safety, health and COVID-19 practices.
- Have a plan in place to prepare for sick employees or customers.

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## TEMPORARY DINING

- If offering outdoor seating on public sidewalks, parking lots or elsewhere, consult with local code enforcement and obtain any requisite approvals to occupy public spaces.
- Consult with the local health department to ensure you have required permits to serve food and beverages outside and/or in public places.
- Work with local authorities to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements regarding dining access and parking.
- Outdoor seating should be protected and contained, and measures taken to direct vehicle traffic away from seating areas or protect them from vehicular traffic (e.g., barriers, bollards).
- If there is exposure to vehicular traffic, employees working in these temporary dining areas should wear bright or reflective clothing to make them more visible.
- Ensure that surfaces are in good condition, that there are no tripping hazards, that repairs are made and/or warnings are placed as needed.
- Areas should be well lit for establishments that are open in the evening hours.
- Plans should be developed to secure the area and prevent unauthorized access when the restaurant is closed.

## DINING TENTS

- Hire a professional to install and maintain dining tents.
- Require the installation/rental company to carry liability insurance and obtain a copy naming your business as an additional insured.
- Ensure you have the appropriate risk transfer in place, including contracts and hold-harmless agreements.
- Only patio heaters recognized by a nationally recognized testing laboratory should be used. Heaters should be located a safe distance away from combustible materials. They should be equipped with safety mechanisms (i.e., auto gas shut-offs and shut-down buttons for propane heaters). Follow the manufacturer's instructions for safe use at all times.

## ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

- Consult with the liquor authority to ensure compliance with applicable liquor laws.
- Obtain approval from local authorities to ensure you remain in compliance with local laws related to open containers and outdoor consumption of alcoholic beverages.
- Designate areas where liquor consumption is allowed.
- Train your employees on liquor consumption controls.

Finally, it is critical that you follow all local, state and federal rules and regulations at all times.

## RESOURCES

- [CDC – Considerations for Restaurants and Bars »](#)
- [CDC – Reopening Decision Tool for Restaurants and Bars »](#)
- [OSHA – Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19 »](#)

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