



RETAIL INDUSTRY  
LEADERS ASSOCIATION

NRF<sup>®</sup> NATIONAL RETAIL FEDERATION<sup>®</sup>

## Open for Business – A Blueprint for Shopping Safe

America's retailers have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, with grocers, pharmacies, and other retailers working hard to make sure every family has what they need as America has stayed home. However, many retailers were required to shut down storefronts throughout the country, furloughing over one million workers in order to protect our communities and stop the spread of the novel coronavirus.

With a focus on the health and wellness of both our employees and our customers, now is the time to prepare for the entire retail sector to safely re-open. Retailers have been learning from each other throughout this crisis, sharing leading practices and protocols to keep stores clean and sanitized, and keeping customers and employees as safe as possible. As an industry, we stand ready to assist governors and mayors with the important task of safely re-opening our Main Streets and storefronts again, with an underlying commitment to helping all families Shop Safe.

Retailers' primary objective remains the health and safety of employees and customers, from distribution centers to stores. We envision an approach that relies on the protocols employed by those businesses which have remained open to the public since the beginning of this crisis. This approach also allows governors and state health departments to evaluate conditions, and allows businesses to open to the public with the confidence that all retailers will adopt the social distancing, hygiene, and sanitization practices necessary to keep customers, employees, and the entire community safe.

The key to this approach is adopting a blueprint that puts in place uniform statewide rules of operations. The protocols we propose were developed in accordance with CDC guidelines and benchmarking between leading retailers who have shared their operational experiences over the past six weeks. A mutually agreed upon blueprint will accomplish three key objectives: (1) Protect our communities (2) Allow for the safe reopening of retail and (3) Establish clear expectations for employees and customers. We will endeavor to update these recommendations as conditions change or if guidance from the CDC leads to the adoption of new protocols.

## **Phase 1- Allow E-commerce, Contactless Curbside Pickup & In-Home Delivery**

A fully functioning supply chain with all distribution centers operational is crucial for retailers to meet the needs of customers. In addition to directing goods to store shelves, distribution centers are vital to e-commerce and other contactless forms of shopping. All states and jurisdictions should allow the consistent and complete re-opening of the nation's distribution centers and warehouses, so long as retailers follow established social distancing, hygiene, and sanitization guidelines recommended by the CDC.

Retailers have established and implemented safety protocols to allow contactless pickup and in-home deliveries. In these operations, a limited number of employees are allowed in stores that are closed to the public to fulfill online orders and deliver purchases to customers who drive or walk up, observing appropriate social distancing. Restaurants have been permitted in most jurisdictions to maintain limited operations by utilizing contactless pickup and delivery. We believe these operations should be expanded to include retailers immediately across all states and jurisdictions, provided that retailers are following the established practices of social distancing, hygiene, and sanitization guidelines outlined below.

## **Phase 2- Re-open Stores to the Public, with Social Distancing Protocols & Reduced Occupancy**

Retailers encourage state governments to rely on the CDC, state health departments, and other health experts to determine when to move to Phase 2. During this phase, retailers open additional stores to the public with robust health and safety protocols in place to protect customers and employees and to mitigate the spread of the virus so COVID-19 does not revert.

As governors prepare new Executive Orders to allow the re-opening of all retail stores to the public, we strongly urge governors to take the lead and create clarity for all retailers, local governments, law enforcement, and consumers with consistent social distancing, hygiene, and sanitation guidelines. Uniform, statewide standards ensure the reopening of the economy is safe, efficient, and productive for customers, employees, and enforcement agencies alike. To further provide uniformity for retailers and consumers, we suggest that governors define a single state agency to lead and coordinate enforcement of public health and safety orders across each state.

We also ask governors to establish personal responsibility expectations for Americans as they move about in public spaces, such as requiring face coverings where appropriate, washing hands frequently, and staying home when ill. Retailers are committed to posting signage and providing frequent reminders to customers about health and safety responsibilities; however, it must be the role of trained law enforcement professionals to enforce state laws and orders.

### **Recommended Protocols for Retail Employees and Customers (Phase 1 & 2)**

#### *Social Distancing – Employees*

- Ensure employees stay 6 feet apart whenever practical.
- Adjust seating in break rooms, cafeterias, and other common areas to reflect social distancing practices.
- Prohibit gatherings or meetings of employees of 10 or more during working hours, permit employees to take breaks and lunch outside, in their office or personal workspace, or in such other areas where proper social distancing is attainable.
- Restrict interaction between employees and outside visitors or truck drivers; implement touchless receiving practices if possible.
- Adjust training/onboarding practices to limit number of people involved and allow for 6 foot spacing; use virtual/video/audio training when possible.
- Discourage employees from using colleagues' phones, desks, workstations, radios, handhelds/wearables, or other work tools and equipment.
- Prohibit handshaking and other unnecessary person to person contact in the workplace.

#### *Special Protocols for Home Delivery/Installation Employees*

- Wear protective face coverings and gloves during in-home delivery and/or installation services.
- Ensure proper social distancing between employee and customer.
- Clean and disinfect any surfaces which will be regularly contacted throughout the duration of any installation.
- When delivery/installation is complete, clean and disinfect all surfaces which were contacted throughout installation.
- Clean and disinfect any tools or supplies used throughout delivery/installation upon leaving the home.

#### *Social Distancing – Customers (Phase 2)*

- Retail store occupancy limits will be informed by each state's demographics public health experience, and social distancing policy. To support smaller retail businesses, who may lack staff necessary to closely monitor customer flow, we

recommend reducing store occupancy to no more than 50%, and no less than 20%, of the stated maximum store capacity according to the National Fire Code.

Alternatively, thresholds of no more than 5 customers per 1,000 square feet of total store square footage excluding employees, may also be appropriate. States that have already established similar occupancy limits should continue with standards already in place.

- Place conspicuous signage at entrances and throughout the store alerting staff and customers to the required occupancy limits, six feet of physical distance, and policy on face covering.
- Establish hours of operation, wherever possible, that permit access solely to high-risk individuals, as defined by the CDC.
- Demarcate six feet of spacing in check-out lines to demonstrate appropriate spacing for social distancing.
- Ensure six feet of distance between customers and cashiers and baggers, except at the moment of payment and/or exchange of goods.
- Arrange for contactless pay options, pickup, and/or delivery of goods wherever practical.

### *Hygiene*

- Require infection control practices, such as regular hand washing, coughing and sneezing etiquette, and proper tissue usage and disposal.
- Encourage employees to engage in repeated handwashing/sanitization throughout the workday.
- Provide sanitization materials, such as hand soap, hand sanitizer, and sanitizing wipes to employees.
- Require the use of gloves and regularly sanitize community technology and equipment such as POS, cash registers, copy machines, etc.

### *Sanitization*

- Require frequent sanitization of high-touch areas like restrooms, fitting rooms, doors, PIN pads, and common areas.
- Ensure operating hours allow downtime between shifts for thorough cleaning.
- Provide sanitization materials, such as sanitizing wipes, to employees to clean handhelds/wearables, scanners, radios, or other work tools and equipment before/after use.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch areas routinely, particularly in spaces that are accessible to staff, customers, and suppliers.
- Ensure cleaning procedures following a known or potential exposure in a facility comply with CDC recommendations.

- Have deep cleaning response plan in place, in the event of an associate(s) testing positive.
- Follow CDC guidance related to returned merchandise before returning items to the sales floor.
- Allow retailers to suspend or extend the time period for customers to return items.

#### *Protective Face Coverings*

- Require workers, contractors, and drivers to wear face coverings while on the premises.
- Strongly encourage customers to wear face coverings while on the premises.
- Post signage for customers to understand the importance of wearing face coverings.
- PSAs from law enforcement urging consumers to act responsibly and utilize face coverings—it should not be the responsibility of retailers to enforce.

#### *Health Screening*

- Encourage employees to self-evaluate (before they arrive for shifts) for signs of illness (such as a fever over 100.4, cough, or shortness of breath).
- Require associates who exhibit signs of illness not to report to work and encourage them to seek medical attention prior to returning.

### **Phase 3 – Establish Protection, Then Lift All Restrictions**

Retailers encourage state governments to rely on the CDC, state health departments, and other health experts to determine when to move to phase 3. During this final phase, retailers will have discretion to remove COVID-related operational protocols except for those related to enhanced sanitization and screening practices.

The proposed retail health and safety protocols are designed to maintain sanitization while returning operations to the new normal. Consistent with health expert guidance, we urge governors to suspend or relax all social distancing requirements at this time.

#### **Recommended Protocols for Retailers for Phase 3**

##### *Sanitization*

- Provide sanitization materials, such as hand soap, hand sanitizer, and sanitizing wipes to staff.
- Frequent sanitization of high-touch areas like restrooms, breakrooms, credit card machines, keypads, counters, and shopping carts.

- Clean and disinfect high-touch areas routinely, particularly in spaces that are accessible to staff, customers, and suppliers, and ensure cleaning procedures following a known or potential exposure in a facility are in compliance with CDC recommendations.

#### *Employee Guidelines*

- Require infection control practices, such as regular hand washing, coughing and sneezing etiquette, and proper tissue usage and disposal.
- Encourage employees to frequently handwash/sanitize throughout the workday.
- Separate employees who become sick during the day and send home.
- Encourage employees to not come to work if not feeling well.

There is no doubt that even under the most optimistic of scenarios, American families will be adjusting to a "new normal" for some time to come. The entire retail sector is prepared to meet this challenge and give consumers confidence in our ability to safely and warmly welcome them back into our stores. We appreciate the tireless efforts of America's governors to safeguard our communities throughout this crisis, and we are ready to work together to safely re-open our economy.