



# GUIDELINES FOR YOUR FOOD ESTABLISHMENT IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19



## For Employees:

- Properly wash your hands after coughing, touching your face or handling highly contaminated items such as your cell phones or keys
- Do not place 'high touch' items such as your cell phones or keys on preparation surfaces, food or utensil areas
- Cover your cough or sneeze
- Properly wash your hands after using the restroom and again when entering the kitchen
- Ensure your dish machine or three part warewash sink is properly sanitizing utensils
- Ensure your sanitizer buckets or sanitizer bottles are at proper concentrations
- Let sanitizers and disinfectants air dry when used on a surface

Employees are to be sent home if they are sick and not allowed to return to work until they are asymptomatic for 72 hours. TFER Sec. 228.37(a)(1)(A)

## For Customers:

- Ensure restroom hand sinks are stocked with soap and paper towels and hot 100F running water
- Restrooms, except where the door does not have a handle to open, must supply dispensed paper towels to encourage customers to use a paper towel to open the restroom door
- Frequently sanitize 'high touch' items such as trays, menus, tables, tablets, payment machines

## Sanitizers and Disinfectants

- Do not use sanitizers or disinfectants that are not allowed for use in food establishments
- Do not sanitize or disinfect food contact surfaces with chemicals intended for nonfood contact surfaces
- Do not mix two different kinds of chemicals together
- Do not make your own sanitizers or disinfectants
- You are required by law to follow the instructions on the labels of chemical containers. The label will tell you what surface the chemical can and cannot be used on as well as dilution rates for sanitizing and disinfecting. The label is the law.

Please visit the following website for a list of EPA registered chemicals that will kill COVID19:

[epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list\\_03-03-2020.pdf](https://epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf)



## COVID-19 Information for Retail Food Establishments

On Tuesday, March 17, 2020, the Smith County Commissioners Court ratified the Declaration of Local Disaster Due to Public Health Emergency from the Coronavirus, signed by County Judge Nathaniel Moran on Monday. The Commissioners Court's action continues the disaster declaration indefinitely until it is terminated in the future by the County Judge or Commissioners Court.

The existence of the Declaration of Local Disaster allows governmental entities within Smith County to access additional state and federal resources needed to respond to the coronavirus and allows those entities to seek potential reimbursement for the costs of activities associated with responding to the coronavirus pandemic.

The declaration also creates opportunities for certain qualifying small businesses located in Smith County that are impacted by the health emergency to access assistance from the Small Business Administration (SBA), under its guidelines and rules.

Emergency disaster declarations for public health matters also grant broader powers to the County Judge to issue further orders or restrictions, such as to limit movement and travel within the affected area, limit the occupancy of an affected area, or prevent the gathering of restrictions have been put in place by the county judge.

As of Tuesday 03-17-2020 the Smith County Judge is currently stating that he is not wanting to close restaurants, bars and other public gathering places like Dallas, Houston and Austin have. However, the issuance of the declaration creates the possibility that future restrictions may be forthcoming.

Currently, NET Health is handling calls from the public and advising food establishments about coronavirus, how it spreads and prevention measures that need to be taken to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Also, on Monday, 03-16-2020, the President issued some guidance that reduced the public gathering from 50 to 10 people in public places. [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20\\_coronavirus-guidance\\_8.5x11\\_315PM.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf) It is important during this time to keep watch least twice daily on the CDC Website, NET Health's Website, and Smith County's Website to the changes that are happening very rapidly as research and precautions are published.

As COVID – 19 cases rise or remain present for the next few months it is of utmost importance that each and every person do their part to help limit the spread and improve the health of our community. It appears that this virus is quickly spread but easily denatured.

A webinar to local food regulators was held Monday to address concerns of transmission and operations of local foods. <https://youtu.be/UjC4Cx3ozCM> This is a good resource for questions and answers and current information. The CDC advice is to follow normal restaurant cleaning and sanitizing protocols. The current cleaning methods show to be affective against this virus. However, it is abundantly necessary to increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing of the surfaces touched by customers to prevent the transfer of viruses.

Currently there is no evidence that COVID – 19 is transmittable through food products, the virus is transmitted from an infected person to another person by breathing in exhaled virus; and by touching contaminated surfaces.

Share your comments and concerns with us at the Environmental Health Department at (903) 535-0037.

The CDC is the lead agency for the federal government to focus on for the planning and response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). You can find valuable information on how to handle situations, sanitation, and actions on their webpage [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

**How long does it survive on surfaces?** Initial research has shown:

- The virus can last in the air for up to 3 hours
- It lasted on copper for up to 4 hours
- It lasted on plastic and stainless steel for up to 2-3 days
- It lasted on 24 hours on cardboard

Reference: <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.03.09.20033217v2.full.pdf>

**Servsafe has published a COVID- 19 Tip Flyer for good operational practices in food establishments.**

[https://www.servsafe.com/ServSafe/media/ServSafe/Documents/Coronavirus\\_COVID-19\\_Info\\_TipsforRestaurants.pdf](https://www.servsafe.com/ServSafe/media/ServSafe/Documents/Coronavirus_COVID-19_Info_TipsforRestaurants.pdf)

**NET Health's Advice:** Precautions should be taken to limit the number of people in a small spaces and take extra precautions to limit contamination of shared surfaces within the food service operation.

**Examples of precautionary measures reduce congestion of people to less than 10 include:**

1. Closing the dining room and operating from the drive through only
2. Only offering to go meals.
3. Removing or not seating customers within a 6 foot radius of each other.
4. Closing buffets and salad bars.
5. Not allowing returnable containers
6. Not accepting cash transaction.
7. Send orders out through commercial delivery services

**Examples of increasing cleaning during this time at frequent intervals such as between every 10 people.**

1. Provide sanitizer wipes to customers to disinfect baskets, tables, tablets, etc.
2. Remove table condiments and provide single service portions
3. Clean and sanitize customer surfaces, door handles, order counters, etc. frequently
4. If any symptomatic person enters the building, it is wise to close, disinfect all surfaces, before reopening.

**Examples of handling the health of the employee**

1. COVID – 19 should be treated like the TOP 6 Foodborne Illnesses that require exclusions and notification to the health department of employee diagnosis. Returning employees must be symptom free for 72 hours and cleared by their physician and NET Health.
2. Employees that are symptomatic need to go home. It is a good idea to have masks for anyone that begins to show symptoms to put on.
3. Glove Use: If gloves are selected as a measure to protect the employee. Please remember responsible glove use by changing gloves and washing hands between tasks.
4. Wash hands for 20 seconds between tasks.