



# **Guidance for the Food Industry: Coronavirus Outbreak**

## *II. Short-Term Best Practices*

**March 26, 2020**

## Table of Contents

- **Managing and Helping your Associates** *Page 4*
- **Assisting your Customers** *Page 5*
- **Addressing the Supply Chain** *Page 6*
- **Additional Resources** *Page 6*

-----

As the food industry association, FMI works with and on behalf of the entire industry to advance a safer, healthier and more efficient consumer food supply chain. FMI brings together a wide range of members across the value chain — from retailers that sell to consumers, to producers that supply food and other products, as well as the wide variety of companies providing critical services — to amplify the collective work of the industry. [www.FMI.org](http://www.FMI.org)

The coronavirus outbreak continues to have a significant impact on both the U.S. and global economies as the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 grows by the day. The White House [recommends](#) avoiding social gatherings of more than 10 people, and many states across the country are issuing similar statements. There are several states and localities now issuing “shelter-in-place” orders and that number is expected to increase over the next few days and weeks. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security [deems](#) the food supply as part of the country’s critical infrastructure that has a “special responsibility to maintain [its] normal work schedule.” The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is [asking for Americans](#) to “to only purchase enough food and essentials for the week ahead,” as a means of allowing the food industry the opportunity to maintain a consistent supply in its stores.

#### Recent FMI Efforts

FMI and our food industry trade partners worked with FDA to compile [recommended protocols](#) to use in circumstances in which employees test positive for COVID-19. This guidance covers recommendations for addressing the infected employee as well as other employees with whom he/she were in close contact. FMI also recently [announced](#) a partnership with the International Foodservice Distributors Association (IFDA) to match foodservice distributors that have excess capacity with those food retailers and wholesalers that are experiencing a significant increase in demand. FMI also worked with our association partners to launch an [advertising campaign](#) to thank the thousands of workers throughout the food industry working on the front lines.

FMI continues to recommend that companies follow [CDC guidance](#) for retail sanitation and other in-store safety measures, and the recommendations in this document should serve as a supplement to their guidance. This document provides short-term best practices and operational guidance for the food industry on the scenarios and issues that companies are experiencing now and expected to see over the next couple of weeks. As the initial supply chain shocks begin to ease, more focus will likely be on in-store management to protect your employees’ wellbeing, to ensure your customers feel safe and to verify that appropriate safety measures are being followed. For additional best practices, please review FMI’s [Best Practices and Planning for the Immediate Situation](#) and [Coronavirus and Pandemic Preparedness for the Food Industry](#).

## Managing and Helping your Associates

- Critical Infrastructure: Workers in the food supply chain are [considered essential workers](#) even in the many states that are now issuing “shelter-in-place” orders. The U.S. has limited travel across the [Canadian](#) and [Mexican](#) borders for non-essential purposes, but workers who need to travel across these borders to go to and from work are not affected. FMI counsel has provided sample template letters for critical industry employees to carry with them to avoid any travel issues:
  - [Sample Letter Template for Food/Agriculture Employee](#)
  - [Sample Letter Template for Transportation Employee](#)
  - [Sample Letter Template for Pharmacy Employee](#)
- FMI and our food industry trade association partners worked with FDA to compile [recommended protocols](#) for use when employees or customers test positive for COVID- 19.
  - Steps to be taken when an employee tests positive for COVID-19:
    - Send the employee home.
    - Investigate the nature and scope of exposure.
    - Inform appropriate personnel, third parties, and authorities.
    - Take steps to protect the workplace.
    - Do not reveal the name of the sick employee.
  - Steps to be taken when an employee/facility visitor is exposed (in close contact) with an individual who is positive for COVID-19:
    - Identify potentially exposed individuals (e.g., those in close contact). Unless advised by local authorities, other individuals in the facility should not be considered high risk for infection, do not require special treatment, and may continue working as normal.
    - Because transmission occurs from person to person, a facility/ location does not need to shut down as a result of an employee, visitor, or other individual testing positive for COVID-19 if the steps above are followed and if the ill and potentially exposed individuals are appropriately addressed.
  - [Cleaning and Disinfection Guidelines](#): The goal is to resume business operations as quickly as possible after cleaning and sanitizing according to CDC guidance.
- Companies may wish to contemplate offering childcare options for employees to support the workforce. Some states and localities are opening emergency childcare facilities (as most schools and day care centers are closed).
- Employee transportation: Offer rideshare availability for employees to avoid the need to take public transportation (higher-risk and not operating on normal

schedule in many areas). Consider providing employees with an ID card and car decal identifying them as essential employees. See [FMI template](#).

- Activate remote work for as many employees as feasible.
- Alternatives to hand sanitizers: FMI worked with FDA to provide [guidance](#) to communicate its policy for the temporary manufacture of certain alcohol-based hand sanitizer products to alleviate the shortage and expand the available supply for store associates and health care workers.
- Anticipate potential new regulatory requirements as stores increase hiring (e.g. health care coverage requirements).
- Communicate proactively and transparently with all stakeholders. Foster a sense of community despite the physical distance.
- Plan for backup workforce if existing store employees get sick, exposed or another scenario occurs that could lead to a widespread labor shortage; substitute workers from restaurants and other industries in addition to other workforce alternatives.
- Utilize industry resources for staffing and other support such as those available at FMI.

### **Assisting your Customers**

- Offer or **enhance your alternative shopping methods**: Online shopping, curbside pickup and delivery options will be paramount.
  - Utilize [FMI's Business Resources](#).
- Address in-store capacity and social distancing:
  - Post [signage](#) in retail stores that encourage appropriate social distancing. FMI has developed [customizable signage](#) to promote distancing.
  - Consider using floor stickers to highlight appropriate distancing.
  - Communicate the busiest times to customers.
- Reduce payments made on delivery. Contactless payment cards, ensure only customer handles card.
- Provide disinfecting wipes or other means for customers to use on carts, handles, touch pads and any other human contact points

## Addressing the Supply Chain

- Driver absenteeism or issues accessing facilities/warehouses/restaurant drive-throughs and other highway services will limit or delay trucks for the supply of product. Be resourceful in sourcing additional drivers. Utilize the [FMI partnership with International Foodservice Distributors Association](#) to request assistance.
- Simplify procedures to allow distancing (digital signatures, text acknowledgment of delivery, etc.).
- Increase security for warehouses, vehicles and stores. Contact state emergency operations center for assistance or to report issues.
- Increase the size of the replenishment orders (by placing larger orders, but avoiding unnecessary stockpiling). For example, if you double the size of your orders, you reduce the shipping frequency by half and ultimately the risk of COVID-19 spreading.

## Additional Resources

In addition to the short-term best practices, we have additional resources that companies are using to stay informed.

- **FMI Coronavirus Resources:** [www.fmi.org/coronavirus](http://www.fmi.org/coronavirus)
- **Daily Calls:** FMI's government affairs team is holding daily calls at 4:30 p.m. EDT to provide the latest updates on the government response to the outbreak and to provide a forum for members to ask questions.
- **FMI Crisis Management Email:** For general questions on the ongoing outbreak, contact [crisismanagement@fmi.org](mailto:crisismanagement@fmi.org) to get in touch with an interdisciplinary group of experts at FMI.
- **FMI State Coronavirus Resources Page:** Including resources for:
  - State Emergency Declarations Relative to Mass Gatherings
  - States Declarations Addressing Truck Weight Limits and Hours of Service
- **Food Safety Resources:** FMI has a team of food safety experts that are providing members with answers to a broad range of questions related to COVID-19 and the safety of our food supply. Please contact FMI with any questions.
- **Workforce Resources:**
  - [Littler Coronavirus Resources for Employees](#)
  - [Fisher Phillips Comprehensive FAQs For Employers on COVID-19](#)
  - [CDC Resources for Businesses and Employers](#)
- **CDC Coronavirus Site:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- **Governors' Office Contacts:** <https://www.nga.org/governors/addresses/>
- **State and local public health contacts:** The state and local public health departments are the points of contact for many areas during the ongoing coronavirus outbreak.