

COVID-19 UPDATE – MARCH 16, 2020

Recommendations for Businesses and Workplaces

On March 16, 2020, Santa Clara County along with the five other most populous counties in the Bay Area and the City of Berkeley announced shelter in place orders effective at **12:01am on March 17, 2020 until 11:59pm on April 7, 2020**. This order requires that most people stay home unless they are engaged in certain “Essential Activities,” which are defined in the official order and can be found on our website www.sccphd.org/coronavirus.

Guidance for Essential Businesses

Employers of essential businesses in Santa Clara County are **responsible** for taking steps to protect the health of their employees and maximize ways to work that prevent close contact with other people. This guidance is designed to both protect employees and all members of the public with whom they come into contact at work.

Employers in essential business sectors should immediately:

- Ensure employees who are sick do not come to work
- Employees engaging in essential activities must adhere to social distancing requirements (see Enhanced hygiene below)
- Minimize the number of employees working within arm's length of one another
- Cancel all in-person meetings and conferences, or hold them via telephone or video conference
- Maximize flexibility in granting sick leave so that sick employees can stay home
- For essential service/retail industries, employers should ensure updated procedures and protocols for frequent hand washing/sanitizing; enhance cleaning of high-touch surfaces and items with disinfecting wipes and other standard cleaners; ensure adequate supply of soap and paper towels; ensure frequent emptying of waste bins; and post signage regarding these procedures for staff and patrons
- Stop requiring a doctor's note for sick employees, as healthcare offices may be unable to provide that documentation right away
- Implement telecommuting options
- Stagger days of the week and start and end times in order to prevent the gathering of people
- Business owners and employees still engaging in minimum basic operations must follow all the above requirements as well

Many essential employees will have similar exposure risks as the general public, however exposure risk may be elevated for workers who interact with potentially infected individuals. This includes the following industries:

- Healthcare (including pre-hospital and medical transport workers, healthcare providers, clinical laboratory personnel, and support staff).
- Grocery/food services.
- Childcare services
- Airline operations.
- Waste management.
- Any other industry that involves high numbers of close contacts.

It is the responsibility of employers in these industries to take extra precautions to ensure they minimize the risk of exposure for their employees as much as possible.

Stay home if sick

All staff working in essential businesses should stay home if they feel sick. Sick leave policies should be flexible and consistent with public health guidance and employees should be made aware of these policies. Employees in non-essential services should be working from home or not working at all as part of the shelter in place Order that went into effect March 17.

Regular Cleaning

Exposure to the novel coronavirus is thought to mostly occur through respiratory droplets but surfaces can still transfer the virus from person to person. Frequently touched surfaces should be regularly cleaned. Areas such as doorknobs, tabletops, counters, phones, keyboards and fixtures should be disinfected several times throughout the day.

Enhanced Hygiene

Everyone, regardless if they work in essential services or not, needs to follow increased hygiene measures that include:

- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- Avoid close contact with other people
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue
- Refrain from shaking hands
- Stay at least six feet from other individuals

Reporting to Work

Unless your place of work is exempted in the Order, you cannot go to work at a physical location in Santa Clara County. You may work from home for any business if your employer allows it. If you **do not** work for an "essential business" (defined below), and remote work is not an option, you **are not** permitted to go to work and your employer is not permitted to require you to attend except to complete "minimum basic operations" (defined below).

If you do work for an essential business, as described in the Order, you can and should continue to work.

Essential Businesses

The March 17 Order requires all businesses with a facility in Santa Clara County, except essential businesses, to cease all activities at facilities located within the county except "minimum basic operations." Employees may leave home to go to these jobs.

Non-essential businesses may also continue operations consisting exclusively of employees or contractors performing activities at their own residences (i.e., working from home). All essential businesses are strongly encouraged to remain open.

You do not need to carry official documentation demonstrating that you are exempt under the Order. But be prepared to explain if requested by law enforcement why your travel is authorized under the Order.

Essential Businesses as defined by the Order

Healthcare operations and essential infrastructure;

- Grocery stores, certified farmers' markets, farm and produce stands, supermarkets, food banks, convenience stores, and other establishments engaged in the retail sale of canned food, dry goods, fresh fruits and vegetables, pet supply, fresh meats, fish, and poultry, and any other household consumer products (such as cleaning and personal

care products). This includes stores that sell groceries and also sell other non-grocery products, and products necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences;

- Food cultivation, including farming, livestock, and fishing;
- Businesses that provide food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals;
- Newspapers, television, radio, and other media services;
- Gas stations and auto-supply, auto-repair, bicycle repair and related facilities;
- Banks and related financial institutions;
- Hardware stores;
- Plumbers, electricians, exterminators, and other service providers who provide services that are necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences, essential activities, and essential businesses;
- Businesses providing mailing and shipping services, including post office boxes;
- Educational institutions-including public and private K-12 schools, colleges, and universities-for purposes of **facilitating distance learning or performing essential functions**, provided that social distancing of six-feet per person is maintained to the greatest extent possible;
- Laundromats, drycleaners, and laundry service providers;
- Home service workers may provide their services if necessary for health and sanitation ;
- Restaurants and other facilities that prepare and serve food, but only for delivery or carry out. Schools and other entities that typically provide free food services to students or members of the public may continue to do so under this Order on the condition that the food is provided to students or members of the public on a pick-up and take-away basis only. Schools and other entities that provide food services under this exemption shall not permit the food to be eaten at the site where it is provided, or at any other gathering site;
- Businesses that supply products needed for people to work from home;
- Businesses that supply other essential businesses with the support or supplies necessary to operate;
- Businesses that ship or deliver groceries, food, goods or services directly to residences;
- Airlines, taxis, and other private transportation providers offering transportation services necessary for essential activities
- Home-based care for seniors, adults, or children;
- Residential facilities and shelters for seniors, adults, and children;

- Professional services, such as legal or accounting services, when necessary to assist in compliance with legally mandated activities;
- Childcare facilities in accordance with the Order
- Cemeteries
- Supply or repair of cell phones or other telecommunications devices
- All suppliers of essential businesses are allowed (and encouraged) to continue operating. This includes businesses that supply food goods and prepared meals to grocery stores and other food retailers
- Government offices. Employees can go to work if they are designated as essential employees by their employer. Each government entity is responsible for determining which of its workers are essential workers.
- Employees and contractors of any governmental entity may continue to provide services and products if the governmental entity determines that they are necessary to carry out an essential governmental function

Minimum Basic Operations

The Order identifies “minimum basic operations” for non-essential services as the minimum necessary activities to maintain the value of the business's inventory, ensure security, process payroll and employee benefits, or for related functions. This definition includes the minimum necessary activities to facilitate employees of the business being able to continue to work remotely. Other than to maintain minimum basic operations, employees can only work remotely from their residences.

More Resources for Businesses and Workplaces

- [CA Labor and Workforce Development Agency COVID-19 Resources for Employers and Workers](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Businesses & Employers](#)
- [CDC Workplace Flu Prevention](#)
- [CDC Planning Guide- Get Ready for Pandemic Flu: Workplace Settings](#)
- [OSHA Coronavirus Information](#)

County of Santa Clara Department of Environmental Health

- [Notice to Food Facilities COVID-19](#) - March 13, 2020
- [Letter to Food Facilities Permit Holders](#) - March 13, 2020

Office of Labor Standards Enforcement

- [Workers Pay Impacted by COVID-19](#) - March 16, 2020

Assistance Due to Missing Work

Resources may be available for workers affected by COVID-19. Please call the Santa Clara County Office of Labor Standards Enforcement for more information at 1-866-879-7725 if any of the following situations apply to you:

- If your work hours are reduced or your employer needs to close operations temporarily because of the March 17 Order
- If you cannot work because you have been diagnosed or quarantined
- If you cannot work because your child is out of school and needs care
- If you cannot work because you need to take care of someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19

Stay Informed

- Information is changing frequently. Check and subscribe to Public Health's website and social media pages.
- Public Health Website: <http://www.sccphd.org/coronavirus>
- Public Health Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sccpublichealth/>
- Public Health Instagram: @scc_publichealth
- Public Health Twitter: @HealthySCC

