

**TRI-TOWN HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
**Lee - Lenox – Stockbridge**

**DATE:** March 13, 2020

**TO:** TTBoH Food Establishments

**FROM:** James J. Wilusz, RS, Executive Director

**CC:** Boards of Health

**RE: COVID-19 Best Practices in Food Establishments**

Dear Permit Holders,

As you are aware, confirmed cases of COVID-19 are in MA and in the region. This is a friendly reminder of some best practices to follow to aid in the suppression of transmission of disease.

**1. Food Employee Illness Reporting Requirements**

- Employee illness reporting is required in accordance of 105 CMR 590.00.
- The Person in Charge is required to notify the Board of Health of specific conditions listed in Chapter 2 of the Food Code.
- As always, encourage ill employees to stay home.

**2. Proper Handwashing By All Employees**

- Correct procedure – wet hands with warm running water, lather with soap and scrub between fingers, on the back of your hands and under nails. Wash for at least 20 seconds. Dry hands using a paper towel.
- Food handlers are required to wash their hands before and after completing a task. All employees in a food establishment should be reminded to wash their hands as often as possible, especially after handling menus, money, customer plates, phones, etc.
- All employees are required to wash their hands before leaving the restroom.
- Proper handwashing may only be completed when the hand sink is fully stocked – hot water 100-110 degrees F, soap and paper towel dispensers fully stocked as needed.

**3. Proper Glove Use**

- Glove use is only affective if used properly and if the gloves fit correctly. Hands must be washed before putting gloves on and before changing to a fresh pair. Gloves should be changed as soon as they become soiled or torn, before starting a new or different task, at least every four hours during

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continual use (or more often as necessary), after handling raw meat, seafood, or poultry and before handling ready-to-eat food. Gloves must be removed properly and never reuse or wash them.

#### **4. Dishwashers**

- Must be at the correct temperature in order to clean and sanitizer properly. High Temperature Dishwashers should have a Wash temp of 160 degrees F and a Rinse temp of 180 degrees F. Establishments should be using their internal max registering thermometer to check the wash temperature.
- Low temperature or chemical dishwashers dispense a sanitizing solution that must be checked using a test strip.

#### **5. 3-Compartment Sinks**

- Scrape or rinse away any leftover food on the dishes. In the first bay, scrub all surfaces of the dishes in warm, soapy water. Sanitizing will not kill pathogens if grime is in the way
- In the second bay, rinse the dishes you previously cleaned in clear warm water. Soap residue can prevent sanitizer from killing germs. Good rinsing makes sanitizing more effective.
- In the third bay, soak rinsed dishes in a chemical sanitizing solution or hot water. Dishes should be completely submerged. If using a chemical sanitizer, read the directions on the container to know how long the dishes must stay in the solution (contact time).
- The final step is to air-dry the dishes. This is very important, as towel-drying cleaned and sanitized dishes may contaminate them.
- It is very important you follow the product manufacturer instructions. Directions should be posted above the 3-bay sink for employees to refer to.

#### **6. Sanitizer**

- Test strips are required to check the sanitizer concentration. You must use the correct strip for the correct sanitizer.
- Chlorine should be at 50-100 ppm and Quaternary Ammonium should be 150-300 ppm (or according to manufacture specifications)
- Always follow directions for chemicals exactly as written on the bottle. MSDS sheets must be available onsite. Never mix chemicals.

#### **7. Clean and Disinfect Non-Food Contact Surfaces**

- Keep non-food contact surfaces clean and use diluted bleach solution or alcohol solution with at least 70% alcohol to disinfect those surfaces. (Cleaning and disinfecting are both important.)
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that customers touch often such as tables, door handles, serving utensils, tables, chair, menus, etc.
- Items directly touched by customers must be cleaned and sanitized after use and before use by a new customer. Specifically, tables, menus, condiments, chairs, etc.

## 8. **Food Contact Surfaces**

- Must be cleaned with a food approved cleaning solution, such as chlorine or quaternary ammonium mentioned above.
- Sanitizer solutions/buckets should be tested when first mixed and changed at least every four hours. Sanitizing clothes should be stored in the solution in between use.
- It is important to clean and sanitize surfaces in the kitchen frequently such as door handles, sink handles, refrigerator door handles, etc. Dampness can cause remaining viruses on surfaces to survive and multiply, avoid this by cleaning, disinfecting and drying frequently. Additional recommendations that may help your establishment, customers and employees: Sign at the front door reminding customers to wash hands frequently; use hand sanitizer while in public places; reminders of how to stop the spread of germs; hand wash signage in the restrooms to remind all of the proper steps to wash hands; various signs throughout the kitchen for food employees; logs in the kitchen for employees to track sanitizer concentrations and when tested; dedicated employee to wipe down menus with sanitizer after use with a disinfectant; check list for a designated employee to clean and disinfect various surfaces throughout the establishment at specific times and frequently during the day; using disposable containers and cloths to limit the handling by customers or employees; more frequent cleaning procedures for utensils used by customers for self-service and/or limiting when possible; consider closing customer self-service food options for the time being; designating an employee to be responsible for wiping down shopping carts with disinfectant before handing off the shopping cart to new customer; hand sanitizer available at all check out registers/ counters

## 9. **Food Donations/Pantries**

- We are strongly recommending that any establishment that participates in food donations that you implement a best practices system on thoroughly washing produce if being offered for donations. We would prefer to only offer packed donations until this COVID-19 issue goes away. However, we understand the challenges food access needs are in the Berkshires and we need to carefully weight the risks associated with the possibility of fresh produce being exposed and handled by a variety of people prior to end use of donations. Please take this into consideration.