

COVID-19 Guidelines for Farmers Markets

Interim notice On November 16, Governor Inslee issued [proclamation 20-25.8](#) “Stay Safe-Stay Healthy” statewide restrictions to help slow the rapid spread of COVID-19 cases in our state. Unless extended, the restrictions will be in place until January 4, 2021.

There is **no restriction on the type of vendors that may sell at the market during this time**. Farmers markets may continue operations as long as they follow the current health guidance below.

On May 4, Governor Inslee announced “[Safe Start Washington](#)” a phased approach to recovery during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Phase 1, farmers market vendors that provide food are essential businesses that have remained open if they make changes to ensure customer and worker safety. No onsite dining is allowed during Phase 1. Once a county moves into Phase 2, farmers markets must meet the governor’s [Phase 2 Limited In-Store Retail Requirements](#). At this time, Phase 3 and Phase 4 industry specific information is not available. We will update our guidance when it becomes available.

Use the guidance below to help comply with the [governor’s requirements](#) for each phase and ensure employee and customer safety while operating during this pandemic. [Washington State Retail Food Code](#) and the governor’s requirements are listed below. Recommendations are included under the heading “recommendations.” Consult with your [local health department](#) for county specific requirements or restrictions.

Market Organizers

Operating during a pandemic is not business as usual. The market season may be dynamic and subject to change. Prior to making major changes, communicate with your [local health department](#) for county specific requirements or restrictions. The operational guidance below may help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure for the vendors and visitors at your market.

Recommendations

- Keep a log with notes on what works well and what needs to change before the next market event (such as providing more handwashing sinks).
- Use social media, email, or other methods to share updates on operating standards and expectations at the market. For example, encourage pre-ordering and “single shoppers” (one member of a family shops the market while others stay home) if possible.

Market Vendors & Occupancy

Farmer’s market vendors should use the following guidance depending on their style of service:

- Vendors that provide grocery-type items should follow the [COVID-19 Guidelines for Grocery Stores](#).
- Vendors that provide ready to eat food items should follow the [COVID-19 Guidelines for Restaurants](#).

Phase 1

- Only allow vendors that provide **essential services**. This includes vendors that provide food and supplies needed to maintain health, safety, and sanitation. Check the [Washington essential business list](#) for more information.
- Onsite dining is not allowed.

Recommendations

- Remove, block-off, or stack tables and chairs in customer seating areas.
- Discontinue product sampling and demonstration stations, except for single portions offered in response to a consumer's request from the service counter.

Phase 2

- Do not exceed 30% of the maximum occupancy determined by the fire code. Occupancy limit does not include employees.
- All vendors allowed to operate at this time if each prepares and follows a COVID-19 Safety Plan.
- Any onsite dining must follow the [COVID-19 Guidelines for Restaurants](#).

Phase 3 & Phase 4: Information posted when available.

Public Health Investigations

- Notify your local health department within 24 hours if you suspect COVID-19 is spreading in your market, or if you are aware of 2 or more employees who develop confirmed or suspected COVID-19 within a 14-day period.
- Cooperate with public health authorities in the investigation of cases, suspected cases, outbreaks, and suspected outbreaks of COVID-19; cooperate with the implementation of infection control measures, including but not limited to isolation and quarantine and environmental cleaning; and comply with all public health authority orders and directives.

COVID-19 Safety Plan

- Develop a written plan that addresses physical distancing, protective equipment, hygiene, cleaning, communication, screening, and disinfection of contaminated areas. Use the [Phase 3 Safe Start Plan Template](#). This plan must be retained onsite and made available to regulatory agencies upon request.

Customer Log

Phase 1, Phase 2, & Phase 3

Maintain a daily log of all guests that **voluntarily** provide contact information, including customer names, phone/email, and time/date they were at the market. Maintain the log for 30 days to help with contact tracing. For more information see:

- [Governor's Customer Log Memo](#)
- [Customer Log Template](#)

Phase 4: Information posted when available.

Screen & Exclude People with Symptoms of Illness

Develop COVID-19 specific employee illness policies and procedures for your market:

- Screen market staff and vendors for COVID-19 symptoms before they enter the market by following the [Daily COVID-19 Screening of Staff and Visitors guidance](#). We recommend that people take their own temperature at home and report to the person in charge (PIC) and stay home if they are experiencing a fever (100.4° or higher).
- Visitors should self-screen for symptoms before they enter the market.
- Exclude ill market staff and vendors for the required time and make sure that they are safe to return to work by following [DOH Employee Health & Decision Strategies guidance](#).
- Follow current guidelines when responding to reported COVID-19 positive employee including reporting and contact tracing. Close off any areas where an employee with probable or confirmed COVID-19 worked, touched surfaces, etc. until the area and equipment is cleaned and disinfected. Follow the [cleaning guidelines](#) set by the CDC to deep clean and disinfect.

Physical Distancing

- Modify the market layout to prevent visitors from gathering in groups.
- Define and limit entrances and exits by posting signs at entrance. Assign market staff to assist and monitor visitors waiting to enter the market.
- Space vendor booths at least 6 feet apart. Keep the empty spaces unoccupied. Ensure 6 foot separation is maintained between customers and vendors except for unavoidable, short-term exposures such as when taking orders, collecting payments and/or exchanging goods.
- Provide signs or spacing markers to promote 6 feet of distance between visitors.
- Arrange flow of customers to eliminate bottlenecks and reduce crowding.

Recommendations

- When possible, provide shopping hours for people at [higher risk](#) for severe COVID-19 illness.
- Allow visitors to enter the market early if lines develop before you open.
- Arrange booths and tables in a single line, rather than a U shape.

- Prohibit pets (except for service animals) to help minimize congestion.
- Encourage customers to shop at less popular times to avoid congestion.
- Create a plan for how to respond when people aren't in compliance with physical distancing measures.
- Ask your vendors to help ensure physical distancing plans are followed.
- To ensure physical distancing in the booth and speed transaction time:
 - Provide "Display Only" items for customers to view or handle, when possible.
 - Pre-bag/pre-package/pre-weigh food, when possible.

Customer Face Coverings

- Beginning June 26, everyone in an indoor public space, or in an outside public space when unable to physically distance from others, is legally required to wear a face covering.
- Beginning July 7, businesses will not be able to serve customers or visitors who aren't wearing face coverings. Individuals with certain health or medical conditions or disabilities are exempt from the requirement to wear a face covering. Businesses can offer to provide accommodations such as curbside pick-up, delivery, scheduling of visits during non-peak hours. No one is required to carry proof or documentation of their health condition or disability.
- Customers must wear a face covering anytime they are not seated (such as while arriving, leaving, or going to the restroom) and while they are talking at tables and not eating.
- For additional information see:
 - [Overview of COVID-19 Statewide Face Covering Requirements](#)
 - [Public Health Order 20-03](#) – Washington State Department of Health
 - [Proclamation 20-25.6](#) – Office of the Governor
 - [Guidance on Cloth Face Coverings](#) – Washington State Department of Health

Worker Safety & PPE

- Limit the sharing of objects and discourage touching of shared surfaces; or when in contact with shared objects or frequently touched areas, wear gloves; use alcohol-based hand gel or wash hands before and after contact.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, goggles, face shields, and face masks as appropriate or required to employees for the activity being performed.
- Employers must provide cloth facial coverings to employees, unless their exposure dictates a higher level of protection under the Department of Labor and Industries' safety and health rules. This is not a substitute for 6 foot physical distancing.
 - Reusable cloth face coverings may be used when risk for transmission is low, such as for waiters at restaurants or cafes with curbside pick-up services only.
 - Disposable masks are required when risk for transmission is medium, such as for grocery-store produce stockers who work during store hours around customers or kitchen workers in restaurants.

- Face coverings must be cleaned or replaced after use or when damaged or soiled, may not be shared, and must be properly stored or discarded.
- Employees with medical or disability issues preventing mask use may provide their medical professional's accommodation statement specifying that facial covering or masks should not be worn due to their condition to their employer for consideration of an accommodation.
- For additional information see the following from Department of Labor & Industries:
 - [Which Mask for Which Task?](#)
 - [Coronavirus Facial Covering and Mask Requirements](#)
 - [Coronavirus Common Questions Regarding Worker Face Covering and Mask Requirements](#)

Gloves

Food vendors must use a barrier such as tongs, gloves, or other utensils to prevent hand contact with ready to eat food. The [Reducing Consumables in Food Establishments](#) document provides tips to prevent bare hand contact by changing procedures and other alternatives to discarding gloves. Use disposable gloves when safe and applicable to prevent virus transmission on tools or other items that are shared.

Handwashing

Ensure all market staff and visitors have the means to clean their hands:

- Install temporary, portable handwashing stations or alcohol-based hand antiseptic dispensers for market staff, volunteers, and visitors.
- Handwashing stations must have soap; running, potable warm water; and single-use towels.
- Antiseptic hand rubs must have at least 60% ethyl alcohol or 70% isopropyl alcohol.

Recommendations

- Designate staff to check and replenish hygiene supplies.
- Use posters, flags, and announcements to ensure market vendors and visitors are aware of handwashing stations.
- Require vendors to provide their own individual handwashing stations or antiseptic hand rubs for their individual use.

Sanitation

- Cleaning is a necessary first step for sanitizing and disinfecting chemicals to work effectively. Use soap and water to clean food and non-food contact surfaces.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize food contact surfaces following routine procedures. Use an EPA registered product (such as chlorine, quaternary ammonia or iodine) at a concentration appropriate for sanitizing food contact surfaces.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch non-food contact surfaces frequently, such as customer restrooms, doors, check-out counters, and payment touchpads.

- Use an [EPA registered product](#) at a concentration that has been shown to be effective against COVID-19. Follow label directions.
- If disinfectants are in short supply, use alternative disinfectants (for example, 1/3 cup of household bleach added to 1 gallon of water, or 70% alcohol solutions). Follow label instructions for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Bleach solutions are effective for disinfection up to 24 hours.

Recommendations

- Each shift, designate a market worker to ensure that cleaning and sanitization procedures are completed.
- Disinfect non-food contact surfaces at least every hour when in Phase 1 and Phase 2, and every 2 hours when in Phase 3.
- See the NC State Extension Factsheets on COVID-19 Preventative Measures for more information:
 - [What is the Difference between Cleaning, Sanitizing, Disinfecting and Sterilizing?](#)
 - [Cleaning and Disinfection](#)

Payment Handling

Money has not been linked to the spread of coronavirus, but it is still important to reduce direct hand contact with shoppers.

- When possible, allow mobile, credit card, or other cash-free payment options.
- Encourage customers to pre-order/pre-pay when possible.

Recommendations

- Disinfect check-out counters and payment touchpads at least every hour when in Phase 1 and Phase 2, and every 2 hours when in Phase 3.
- Provide handwashing or hand gel for employees handling payment.
- When handling cash, tokens, checks, or change:
 - Designate a money handler separate from the worker handling products.
 - Ask for exact change to help limit additional handling.
 - Collect payment in a container rather than directly into hands.
- To disinfect wooden tokens, consider the following:
 - “Quarantine” tokens by holding in a container until the next week. Tokens held should not need additional disinfection for COVID-19.
 - Use a cloth wetted with disinfectant to clean wooden tokens or laminated paper, then air dry. Wash hands after disinfecting objects.

Market Signage

- Post signs at entrances and throughout the market to inform customers to:
 - Stay home if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
 - Use cloth face coverings when visiting the market.
 - Practice proper physical distancing while at the market.

Recommendations

- Post signs to ensure market vendors and visitors are aware of handwashing stations.
- Find COVID-19 specific posters and materials here:
 - [DOH Printable Signs for Farmers Markets](#)
 - [Wear a Face Covering Sign](#)
 - [King County Signs to Print and Post](#)
 - [CDC's COVID-19 Print Resources](#)

Live Entertainment

- Live entertainment is prohibited. For more information see the [Governor's Memo Clarifying Restaurant and Tavern Rules](#).

Employee Training

Train appropriate market staff in the language they understand best to:

- Monitor staff and vendor status for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) prior to each market, in addition to the employee health requirements in the Food Code.
- Identify symptoms of COVID illness, how to prevent transmission, required hand hygiene, and illness reporting requirements. Reinforce general employee health and safety. For additional information see [Basic Employee Training on COVID-19 Infection Prevention](#) from Washington State Department of Labor & Industries.
- Clean, sanitize, and disinfect properly.
- Implement the COVID-19 specific written procedures including physical distancing and service change requirements.

More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee's proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

A person's race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19- this is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share accurate information with others to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)



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Have more questions about COVID-19? Call our hotline: **1-800-525-0127**, Monday – Friday, 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Weekends: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact a health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.