March 25, 2020

Interim Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection of Food Manufacturing Facilities and/or Retail Food Stores for COVID-19

To help prevent spread of COVID-19, procedures and supplies should be in place to encourage proper hand and respiratory hygiene as well as routine cleaning and disinfection of high-risk locations. This guidance is provided for any food manufacturing facilities, food distribution centers or retail food stores so that owners, operators and other individuals can in corporate these procedures into their facility protocols.

**Background:** In December 2019, a new respiratory disease called Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) was detected in China. COVID-19 is caused by a virus (SARS-CoV-2) that is part of a large family of viruses called corona viruses.

**What steps should be taken to clean and disinfect against COVID-19?**

- All facilities should continue performing routine cleaning and sanitization of their facilities. Additionally, high-risk locations warrant cleaning and disinfection on a regular schedule. Examples of high-risk locations include:
  - Restrooms – clean and disinfect all restroom surfaces, fixtures, door knobs, push plates, and switches at least once daily
  - Dining areas/break rooms – clean and disinfect counters, tables, and chairs at least once daily
- If an individual with laboratory confirmed COVID-19 was symptomatic while in your facility, you should immediately contact your local health department and clean and disinfect throughout the area.

Food processors should follow the sanitation/employee hygiene practices and procedures already in place with increased observance of employee health condition.

**Social Distancing:** Both retail food establishments and food processors must ensure 6’ between employees. In many processing facilities this may not be possible without a reduction in the number of employees allowed to work. Lunch and breaks should be staggered to allow for adequate distancing. Retail stores should determine strategies to keep customers safely distanced at areas where customer lines typically form, such as deli counters, meat and seafood counters, and at registers.

**Hand Hygiene:** Signage with handwashing procedures should be posted in prominent locations promoting hand hygiene.
- Regular handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds should be done:
  - Before and after eating
  - After sneezing, coughing, or nose blowing
  - After touching face, hair, cell phone, and/or clothing
  - After using the restroom
Before handling food
- After touching or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated
- After using shared equipment and supplies

Additional Retail handwashing considerations:
- After handling boxes/cases delivered by vendor
- After working in the retail area
- After providing signature to delivery/vendor personnel
- Gloves recommended at register or hand sanitizer between transaction. Hand washing immediately upon leaving register for other duties or end of shift
- Glove use recommended in all retail areas as reminder to staff not to touch their face
- Wash hands before going on break or lunch

Respiratory Hygiene:
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or the corner of elbow
- Dispose of soiled tissues immediately after use
- Employees who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home.

Routine Cleaning:

Standard Infection Control Practices

As part of standard infection control practices, routine cleaning should be rigorous and ongoing. Time should be allocated for individuals to routinely clean. Surfaces touched most frequently must be prioritized for routine cleaning because these surfaces can be reservoirs for germs and an exposure pathway for transmission to people through contact with these surfaces.

Examples of priority areas for routine cleaning include:
- High contact surfaces that are touched by many different people, such as light switches, handrails, cart handles, equipment buttons, shared equipment and door knobs/handles
- Floors and walls
- Trash containers
- Restrooms
- Heat and air conditioner vents
- Horizontal surfaces and light fixtures
- Frequently used equipment
- Uniform, protective equipment and/or linens

Examples of frequently touched surfaces:
- Shared equipment, telephones, computers, keyboards, mice
- Counters, tables, chairs
- Door handles and push plates
- Handrails
- Kitchen and bathroom faucets
- Equipment surfaces and buttons
- Light switches
- Remote controls

Retail Specific:
- Areas where customers have access to beverage dispensers, self-serve coffee, grab and go warmers. These areas should be wiped down with a sanitizing solution every 30 minutes.
- Register touch pad, scanner, phone and counter should be wiped down with sanitizing solution every 30 minutes
Some surfaces or equipment are difficult to clean and/or are sensitive to liquids. When shared, they may contribute to indirect transmission. Locations with shared-use equipment should provide posted signs regarding proper hand hygiene before and after using such equipment to minimize disease transmission. Also consider using removable washable covers to protect hard to clean equipment hardware against spills and facilitate cleaning.

Cleaning and Disinfection:

Cleaning removes germs, dirt and impurities from surfaces or objects. Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces or objects. Individuals should use any protective equipment (i.e. gloves) as recommended on product labels. Carefully read and follow all label instructions for safe and effective use.

Step 1 – Cleaning: Always clean surfaces prior to use of disinfectants in order to reduce soil and remove germs. Dirt and other materials on surfaces can reduce the effectiveness of disinfectants. Wash surfaces using soap/detergent and water to reduce soil and remove germs.

Step 2 – Disinfection: Cleaning/washing of soiled areas must be completed prior to disinfection to ensure effectiveness.

Step 3 – Disposal: Place all used gloves and other disposable items in a bag that can be tied closed before disposing of them with other waste. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds immediately after removing gloves or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. Soap and water should be used if hands are visibly soiled.

For more information:

Latest information about Maine’s response to COVID-19 and available resources:  

Center for Disease Control COVID-19 webpage:  