



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
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Interim Guidance for Agriculture and Food

April 6, 2020

Updated July 16, 2020

This guidance is provided for essential job functions in the area of food and agriculture. Note that the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry has put out additional guidance regarding essential services particular to [Horticulture](#) and [Pesticides](#). All guidance may be updated.

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 coronaviruses.

On March 24, 2020, Governor Mills signed [Executive Order 19 FY 19/20](#) with a new directive mandating that all non-essential businesses and operations in Maine close their physical locations that are public facing, meaning those that allow customer, vendor or other in-person contact. The Executive Order excludes businesses that provide essential services including, but not limited to: food processing, agriculture, industrial manufacturing, construction, trash collection, grocery and household goods (including convenience stores), home repair and hardware and auto repair, pharmacy and other medical facilities, biomedical, behavioral health and health care providers, child care, post offices and shipping outlets, insurance, banks, gas stations, laundromats, veterinary clinics and animal feed and supply stores, shipping stores, public transportation, and hotel and commercial lodging.

Note that the proclamation does not compel any business designated as essential to continue to operate. The Department recognizes that the practicalities of and risks posed by staying open as a business can be difficult during these unprecedented times. It is ultimately the business owner's decision to continue to stay open, adjust schedules and routines, or to shut down.

On March 31, 2020, Governor Mills signed [Executive Order 28 FY 19/20](#) that restricts the number of people allowed at essential businesses at any one time. The number of people who may enter essential business' retail space is as follows:

- Less than 7,500 square feet limit the number of customers in the store at one time to 5.

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- More than 7,500 and less than 25,000 square feet limit the number of customers in the store at one time to 15.
- More than 25,000 and less than 50,000 square feet limit the number of customers in the store at one time to 50.
- More than 50,000 and less than 75,000 square feet limit the number of customers in the store at one time to 75.
- More than 75,000 square feet limit the number of customers in the store at one time to 100 and install protective shields between customers and checkout clerks as soon as practicable.

The staged state reopening [plan](#) announced by the Governor on April 28, 2020 does not change how agricultural businesses operate other than to require that [cloth face](#) masks be worn where physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain. The Department's guidance regarding implementing sanitation and physical distancing measures available on its COVID-19 [website](#) remain appropriate for farms, food producers and other ag businesses to utilize in their daily operations.

Essential Agriculture and Food Operations:

- Workers supporting groceries, pharmacies and other retail that sells food and beverage products, including farmers' markets, CSAs, and farm stands. [See additional guidance here](#)
- Restaurant carry-out, delivery, and quick serve food operations and employees.
- Food manufacturer employees and their supplier employees—to include those employed in food processing (e.g., packers, meat processing, milk plants, produce, cheese making, etc.) facilities; livestock, poultry, seafood slaughter facilities; pet and animal feed processing facilities; human food facilities producing by-products for animal food; beverage production facilities; and the production of food packaging.
- Farm workers to include those employed in animal food, feed, and ingredient production, packaging, and distribution; manufacturing, packaging, and distribution of veterinary drugs; truck delivery and transport; farm and fishery labor needed to produce our food supply domestically.
- Farm workers and support service workers to include those who field crops; commodity inspection; storage facilities; and other agricultural inputs.
- Beekeepers, beekeeping supply businesses, and related transportation and delivery personnel.
- Workers supporting the seafood and fishing industry.
- Employees and firms supporting agricultural commodity buying and brokering.
- Employees and firms supporting food, feed, and beverage distribution, including warehouse workers, vendor-managed inventory controllers and blockchain managers.
- Workers supporting the sanitation of all food manufacturing processes and operations from wholesale to retail.

- Company cafeterias - in-plant cafeterias used to feed employees; food service workers in residential schools with students who are unable to leave campus
- Workers in food testing labs in private industries and in institutions of higher education.
- Employees of companies engaged in the production of chemicals, medicines, vaccines, and other substances used by the food and agriculture industry, including pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, minerals, enrichments, and other agricultural production aids.
- Animal agriculture workers to include those employed in veterinary health; manufacturing and distribution of animal medical materials, animal vaccines, animal drugs, feed ingredients, feed, and bedding, etc.; transportation of live animals, animal medical materials; transportation of deceased animals for disposal; raising of animals for food; animal production operations; slaughter and packing plants and associated regulatory and government workforce. [See additional DACF guidance here.](#)
- Workers who support the manufacture and distribution of forest products, including, but not limited to timber, paper, and other wood products.
- Employees engaged in the manufacture and maintenance of equipment and other infrastructure necessary to agricultural production and distribution.
- Personnel and volunteers who support food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency food aggregation and distribution sites, including delivery.
- Agriculture workers supporting the horticulture industry to include nursery operations, garden centers, landscape and maintenance companies critical to the environmental and physical living conditions necessary in our communities. [See additional DACF guidance.](#)

If a business does not fall within this guidance, but you believe that it is essential or it is an entity providing essential services or functions, you may request designation as an essential business. [Request designation as an essential business.](#)

For Employees

Cleaning/Disinfecting and Social Distancing:

All facilities must practice social distancing, and proper cleaning and sanitizing of those facilities. This includes:

- Regular hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This should be done:
 - ✓ Before and after eating.
 - ✓ After sneezing, coughing, or nose blowing.
 - ✓ After touching face, hair, cellphone, 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.
- Covering coughs and sneezes with tissues or the corner of elbow.
- Disposing of soiled tissues immediately after use.

It is encouraged that businesses post [signage](#) with handwashing procedures in prominent locations to promote hand hygiene. Clean and disinfect buildings and equipment as outlined in the [CDC guidance](#). See also [DACF Interim Guidance for Food Manufacturing Facilities and/or Retail Food Stores](#).

If you need more information about the State of Maine response to Covid-19 please follow the links below.

Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF)

<https://www.maine.gov/dacf/covid19/index.shtml>

Maine CDC

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus.shtml>

Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)

<https://www.maine.gov/mema/response-recovery/incident-management/covid-19-response>