

Mitigating Risk with Social Distancing for Restaurants during COVID-19

There is publicly available information on government websites with suggestions on how to help keep employees and customers safe when providing services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these tips are provided below for the convenience of Farmers® insurance customers. In addition, business owners are encouraged to refer to, understand and educate their staffs on the current guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA), and Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA)*. It is also important to know and follow all state or local requirements regarding your operation and social distancing. While none of these agencies can offer any assurances that following these steps will prevent the spread of COVID-19, these are some of their recommendations:

- Update and rearrange floor plans for dining areas to help ensure proper distancing of tables and allow for walkways
- Limit party sizes of customers at tables to no more than the maximums approved by the CDC, or approved by local and state authorities
- Confirm if any guidelines imposed for square footage include front and back of the house
- Provide hand sanitizer/wipes for customers to use, and post signs reminding customers about social distancing
- Remind delivery drivers and suppliers that you are practicing social distancing requirements
- Consider a reservations-only or call-ahead reservation to better accommodate seating
- Post signage at the entrance to indicate that no one with cold symptoms should enter the restaurant
- Try to limit contact between all employees and customers
- Servers and other customer facing workers should follow guidelines for face coverings (using guidance for the type and cleaning by the CDC)
- If practical, consider using physical barriers such as partitions or solid, non-porous barriers at registers or booth seating
- Use technological tools to help reduce in-person contact such as mobile ordering, menu tablets, texting on arrival for seating, and payment options with limited contact
- Use floor markings, outdoor distancing, waiting in cars, paging or intercom systems to help with social distancing and limiting customers from congregating in lobbies
- Consider having separate doors for customers (or employees and delivery people) to enter and exit the restaurant
- Determine access to and from restrooms or signs to help establish availability to avoid close interaction
- Where possible, work and ordering stations should be staggered so servers avoid standing side-by-side
- Limit the number of employees allowed in the break rooms or locker rooms. Staggering shift start/end times can be helpful
- Use on-site communication boards, employee websites or digital messaging to convey pre-shift meeting information
- Display your hours, services and guidelines conspicuously at your restaurant; use websites or other communications to let customers know how you are operating

These tips as well as others regularly updated by states and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), can assist in operating your establishment more safely and efficiently.

* <https://www.fda.gov/food>, <https://www.cdc.gov>, <https://www.osha.gov> April 27, 2020)

This bulletin is intended for informational purposes only and is offered solely as a guide to assist management in its responsibility of providing a safer working environment. This bulletin is not intended to cover all possible hazardous conditions or unsafe acts that may exist, especially during a pandemic. Other unsafe acts or hazardous conditions should also be noted and corrective action taken. In addition, federal, state or local laws, regulations, standards or codes, as applicable, can change and the user should refer to the most current requirements.