



**INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR RETAIL GROCERY STORES  
DURING THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY  
April 10, 2020**

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**Purpose**

This guidance was created to provide owners/operators of retail grocery stores and customers with precautions to help protect New York’s vulnerable populations during this public health emergency and to clarify social distancing in retail grocery store settings.

For the purpose of this guidance, retail grocery stores shall include but are not limited to supermarkets, bodegas, bakeries, specialty markets, superstores offering groceries, and warehouse clubs.

**Background**

On March 7, 2020, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo issued [Executive Order 202](#), declaring a state of emergency in response to COVID-19. Community transmission of COVID-19 has occurred throughout New York. To minimize further spread, social distancing of at least 6 feet must be maintained between individuals, where possible.

On March 20, 2020, Governor Cuomo also announced “Matilda’s Law,” which is a series of recommendations to protect New York’s most vulnerable populations, including individuals who are 70 years of age or older, those with compromised immune systems, and those with underlying illnesses, from contracting COVID-19. These New Yorkers should stay home and limit visitation to immediate family members or close friends who are in need of assistance.

**Guidance Impacting the General Public**

Retail grocery stores should allow only seniors and people with compromised immune systems to shop between the hours of 6:00 am and 8:00 am, during the first hour when the store opens, or prior to opening the store to the general public, if possible.

Additionally, retail grocery stores should follow and use the guidance set forth by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, the Department of Agriculture and Markets, and the Department of Health (DOH), including [“Interim Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection of Food Manufacturing Facilities or Food Retail Stores for COVID-19”](#), and the [“STOP THE SPREAD”](#) poster.

Retail grocery stores should post the following, or similar, at the entrances of each of their retail stores:

\*\*\* NOTICE TO ALL CUSTOMERS \*\*\*  
IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY  
SENIORS AND IMMUNOCOMPROMISED PEOPLE ARE ADVISED TO SHOP  
BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 6:00AM AND 8:00AM,  
DURING THE FIRST HOUR OF OPERATION, OR  
PRIOR TO THE STORE OPENING TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

To help prevent spread of COVID-19, procedures and supplies should be in place and available to encourage proper hand and respiratory hygiene, as well as routine cleaning and disinfection of high-risk locations (e.g., restrooms, entrances, exits, point of sale terminals, etc.), at all retail grocery stores. Procedures should be in place to sanitize frequent touchpoints throughout the day, including point of sale terminals at registers.

Signage promoting social distancing and good hygiene should be posted in a conspicuous place and all employees should be reminded of the protocols set forth in the State's Retail Food Store Guidance.

### **Guidance Impacting the Owners/Operators of Retail Grocery Stores**

Retail grocery stores should also implement the following in-store safety measures:

- Promote a 6-foot social distance for employees and customers, wherever possible. Retail grocery stores should consider using an indicator, such as a floor marker, in the check-out line or in any location where customers may congregate (e.g. the deli line, the meat or fish counter, etc.), to depict where customers should stand to maintain a 6 foot distance between one another.
- Retail grocery stores should strive to minimize the touch points on retail products and customers should be encouraged to bag their own purchases, if possible.
- Seek to limit the number of customers in the store, at any given time, to 50% of the store's capacity, inclusive of employees.
- Provide disinfecting wipes at points of entrance for customers to disinfect carts, at cash registers, and/or other appropriate locations, as practicable.
- Ensure hot or cold pre-prepared food is available for delivery or take-out only.
- Eliminate any free open samples or tasting, including deli slices or prepared food.
- Clearly post signs outside and inside the store to remind people to:
  - Have one family member shop at a time, if possible.
  - Properly discard personal protective equipment. Do not leave it in the stores or shopping carts.
  - Adhere to limitations placed on the number of people allowed in the store.
  - Adhere to special shopping times for seniors and immunocompromised people.
- Do not discriminate against individuals wearing a face covering.
- Provide access to handwashing facilities, including public restrooms, as well as alcohol-based hand sanitizer, as practicable.

Retail grocery stores should also implement the following safety measures for their employees:

- Allow workers to wear personal protective equipment, including facemasks and gloves. These may be provided to employees, if available.
- As possible, allow workers considered vulnerable to COVID-19 (e.g. the people considered under Matilda's Law) to alternate assignments with less exposure to customers, or, as able, allow them to stay home.
- Close the store for a period of time each day to allow for proper cleaning and/or disinfecting, as practicable.

- Allow employees sufficient break time to wash their hands, when necessary.
- Adhere to the cleaning guidance set forth by DOH and the CDC:
  - DOH –  
<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/03/cleaningfoodstorescovid-19.pdf>
  - CDC –  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/essential-goods-services.html>

**For additional information on New York State's respond to COVID-19, please visit:**

New York State Department of Health's COVID-19 Webpage  
<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 Webpage  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>