



**SECTOR SPECIFIC WORKPLACE SAFETY STANDARDS FOR  
RETAIL BUSINESSES TO ADDRESS COVID-19  
Updated as of May 7, 2021**

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**Purpose**

**These updated workplace safety standards for Retail Businesses are posted in advance of their effective date to allow Retail Businesses time to prepare to operate in compliance with these mandatory health and safety standards. Retail Businesses remain subject to the previously issued March 18, 2021 safety standards until these revised workplace safety standards go into effect on May 10, 2021.**

These sector specific COVID-19 workplace safety standards for Retail Businesses are issued to provide owners and operators of Retail Businesses and workers and customers with instructions to help protect against the spread of COVID-19.

These standards are minimum requirements only and are not exclusive or exhaustive. The public health data and matrix upon which these guidelines are based can and does change frequently, and the owner or operator for each retail business is accountable for staying abreast of any updates to these requirements.

Violation of these standards may result in civil fines of up to \$500 per violation; provided that each individual instance of non-compliance and each day of a continuing violation may be fined as a separate violation. Each person present over any capacity limit specified below may likewise be fined as a separate violation.

**Standards for Responsible Retail Businesses in Massachusetts:**

No activity in Retail Businesses can occur without meeting these sector specific COVID-19 workplace safety standards for Retail Businesses. These standards apply, until rescinded or amended by the State, to all Retail Businesses except for Farmers' Markets, which shall continue to be governed by Department of Public Health Guidance. These standards supersede and replace earlier issued Department of Public Health guidance governing grocery stores and pharmacies.

The following workplace specific guidance is organized around four distinct categories covering Social Distancing, Hygiene Protocols, Staffing and Operations, and Cleaning and Disinfecting.

**I. Social Distancing and Capacity Limits**

- Require face coverings at all times for all workers and customers, except where unsafe due to medical condition or disability
- Each business must monitor customer entries and exits and limit occupancy at all times to the greater of the following:
  - 50% of the building's maximum permitted occupancy as documented in its occupancy permit on record with the municipal building department or other municipal record holder

- Buildings for which no permitted occupancy limitation is on record may allow up to 10 persons per 1,000 square feet of accessible space
- In any case, no enclosed space within the building shall exceed occupancy of 10 persons per 1,000 square feet
- All occupancy counts and calculations shall include customers but may exclude staff, and other workers
- Operators of enclosed shopping malls and other indoor, multi-tenant retail spaces must monitor customer and worker entries and exits to common areas and limit occupancy of common areas at all times to 50% of maximum permitted occupancy levels
- Within enclosed shopping malls and other indoor multi-tenant retail spaces:
  - Retailers or restaurants serving food must adhere to the latest restaurant protocols
  - Food court seating must adhere to the latest restaurant protocols including but not limited to the following requirements:
    - Tables must be positioned so to maintain at least a 6 foot distance from all other tables and any high foot traffic areas
    - Tables and chairs must be cleaned and sanitized thoroughly between each seating
    - Use of tables must be limited to 90 minutes or less for each party
  - Any additional seating areas must remain closed
  - Any children's play areas must be closed
  - All arcades must follow the standards for Arcades and Other Indoor and Outdoor Game and Recreation Businesses
- Retail stores are encouraged to offer exclusive hours or other accommodations for those in high-risk populations as defined by the CDC
- Ensure separation of 6 feet or more between individuals where possible:
  - Close or reconfigure worker common spaces and high density areas where workers are likely to congregate to allow social distancing. Employers are encouraged to close break rooms or limit their use
  - Physical partitions must separate workstations that cannot be spaced out (partitions must be at least 6 feet in height)
  - Install physical barriers for checkout stations where possible, otherwise maintain 6 feet distance where not possible
  - Install visual social distancing markers to encourage customers to remain 6 feet apart (e.g., lines outside of the stores if applicable, lines to make payments, lines to use the restroom)
  - Mark rooms and hallways to indicate 6 feet separation
- Establish directional aisles to manage customer flow for foot traffic, if possible, to minimize contact (e.g., one-way entrance and exit to the store, one-way aisles). Post clearly visible signage regarding these policies
- Contactless payment methods are encouraged
- Self-serve, unattended buffets, topping bars, and other communal serving areas (such as salad bars) must remain closed. Retailers must eliminate any open free samples or tastings. Self-serve beverage stations must comply with the following guidelines:
  - Hand sanitizer must be made available next to beverage stations and operators must instruct customers to use before pouring beverages
  - Only straws and stirrers individually wrapped in cellophane or paper are allowed
  - Cups and lids must be from single pull dispenser or other method to minimize contact
  - Sweeteners, sugars and creamers must be individual packets
  - Floor markers must be installed to achieve social distancing

- Use of personal mugs and cups are not allowed
- Frequent disinfecting of the beverage station must take place, even during busy times
- Individual retailers must not allow sampling or application of personal goods (makeup, perfume, lotion) unless they provide single-use applicators or have a no-touch option.
- Fitting rooms may be open
- Stagger staff lunch and break times, regulating max number of people in one place and ensuring at least 6 feet of physical distancing

## **II. Hygiene Protocols**

- Ensure access to handwashing facilities on site, including soap and running water, wherever possible and encourage frequent handwashing; alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol may be used as an alternative
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol shall be made readily available
- Avoid sharing equipment and supplies between workers
- Post visible signage throughout the site to remind workers of hygiene and safety protocols

## **III. Staffing and Operations**

- Provide training to workers on up-to-date safety information and precautions including hygiene and other measures aimed at reducing disease transmission, including:
  - Social distancing, hand-washing, proper use of face coverings
  - Self-screening at home, including temperature and symptom checks
  - Importance of not coming to work if ill
  - When to seek medical attention if symptoms become severe
  - Which underlying health conditions may make individuals more susceptible to contracting and suffering from a severe case of the virus
- Facilities must screen workers at each shift by ensuring the following:
  - Worker is not experiencing any symptoms such as fever (100.0 and above) or chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, headache, muscle/body aches, runny nose/congestion, new loss of taste or smell, or nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
  - Worker has not had “close contact” with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19. “Close contact” means living in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, caring for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, being within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more, or coming in direct contact with secretions (e.g., sharing utensils, being coughed on) from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19
  - Worker has not been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by their doctor or a local public health official
  - Workers who fail to meet the above criteria must be sent home
- Workers shall not appear for work or complete a shift if feeling ill
- Workers who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 according to the Centers for Disease Control (e.g., due to age or underlying conditions) are encouraged to stay home
- Workers are strongly encouraged to self-identify symptoms or any close contact to a known or suspected COVID-19 case to the employer
- Encourage workers who test positive for COVID-19 to disclose to the employer for purposes of cleaning / disinfecting and contact tracing. If the employer is notified of any positive case at the workplace, the employer must immediately notify the local Board of Health (LBOH) in the city or

town where the workplace is located. Employers must assist the LBOH with contact tracing efforts, including advising likely contacts to isolate and self-quarantine. Testing of other workers may be recommended consistent with guidance and / or at the request of the LBOH

- Post notice to workers and customers of important health information and relevant safety measures as outlined in the Commonwealth's [Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplace](#)
- For in-home delivery of products, such as furniture and appliances, screen customers for symptoms prior to workers entering the house. Delay delivery if customer indicates potential COVID-19 positive person in the household

#### **IV. Cleaning and Disinfecting**

- Clean commonly touched surfaces in restrooms (e.g., toilet seats, doorknobs, stall handles, sinks, paper towel dispensers, soap dispensers) frequently and in accordance with CDC guidelines
- In event of a positive case, follow current CDC guidance on cleaning and disinfecting areas when someone has a COVID-19 diagnosis
- Open windows and doors to increase airflow where possible

**Additional worker safety guidelines and resources (with hyperlinks to web pages) are available below:**

U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA):

[OSHA – COVID-19 Webpage](#)

[OSHA – Enforcement Guidelines Webpage](#)

[OSHA Fact Sheet – Protecting Workers During a Pandemic](#)

U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

[CDC – Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#)

[CDC – Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease \(Updated 3/21/20\)](#)

#### **Additional Information:**

Massachusetts State Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website  
[mass.gov/covid19](https://mass.gov/covid19)

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>