

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Guidance: Requirements for Retail Businesses

1/10/21

Executive Order 21-01 will go into effect Sunday, Jan. 10 at 11:59 p.m. and does not have an end date. Retail businesses must comply with the requirements set forth in EO 21-01 and the requirements provided in this document, to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Frequently asked Questions about all Executive Orders may have additional clarifications about requirements and recommendations. See [Frequently Asked Questions about Stay Safe MN \(https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/faq.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/faq.jsp) or [Stay Safe Guidance for Businesses and Organizations \(https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp)

Executive Order (EO) 21-01

The full executive order (EO) with all requirements can be found at [Executive Orders from Governor Walz \(https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp).

- Social gatherings limited. Social gatherings are limited as described on the [Social Gatherings webpage \(https://staysafe.mn.gov/individuals-families/social-gatherings.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/individuals-families/social-gatherings.jsp). Most commercial activities are not considered social gatherings, so this change will not impact most industries.
- Masks and face coverings required. EO 20-81, requiring face coverings in certain settings, remains in full force and effect. See [Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations under Executive Order 20-81 \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html).
- People at higher risk. All people currently living within the State of Minnesota who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, as defined by Executive Order 20-55, are strongly urged to stay at home or in their place of residence and follow the provisions of Executive Order 20-55.
- Work from home. All people who can work from home must continue to do so.
- Business and activities are affected differently. For a full listing of all business and activity requirements and limitations, see the full executive order at [Executive Orders from Governor Walz \(https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp). Please review the guidance below for industry-specific requirements and applicable COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Requirements Guidance.

EO 21-01 requirements and COVID-19 Preparedness Plans for retail businesses

For the duration of Executive Order 21-01, industry sectors must operate under the following provisions:

- ✓ Retail establishments should take steps to ensure that retail transactions are limited to brief, transient interactions that pose a lower risk of transmission and limit the amount of time the customer is in the store. Customers should not be encouraged to stay any longer than necessary to complete their transactions.
- ✓ Workers who can work from home must do so.
- ✓ Meetings and training sessions must be held virtually whenever possible.
- ✓ In-person meetings and training sessions must be limited to workers only and must involve as few workers as possible. In-person meetings and training sessions held indoors must not exceed 25 workers at one time. If workers can attend meeting while working from home, they must do so.
- ✓ Food and beverages may be offered for on-site consumption if the establishment complies with all requirements found in [Guidance for Restaurants and Bars](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safedining.pdf) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safedining.pdf>).
- ✓ Businesses that provide recreational and amusement services or offer recreational or entertainment facilities, activities, events, attractions, must follow the requirements set forth in the Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues (<https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp>).
- ✓ Businesses are encouraged to advise customers on all options for shopping including virtual options, contactless delivery, pre-order or curbside pick-up or drop-off.
- ✓ To the extent activities are not paused by EO 21-01, the provisions in the “Preparedness Plan Requirements Guidelines for Retail Businesses” below, continue to be applicable to those activities, unless revised by the above provisions and agriculture businesses must continue to comply with them.

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Guidance: Requirements for Retail Businesses

Retail stores include but are not limited to department stores, shopping malls, auto parts stores, sporting goods stores, home improvement and hardware stores, computer and electronics stores, clothing stores, furniture stores, auto dealerships, book stores, toy and hobby stores, flower and gift shops, rental equipment businesses, and other outlet stores.

Your health and COVID-19

Any time individuals are gathering with other people, they are at risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. People with symptoms and without symptoms can spread the virus.

COVID-19 can lead to serious medical conditions and even death for people of all ages. We cannot predict who will become severely ill, although we know that older people and people with underlying health conditions are at higher risk. We do not yet know what the long-term effects of infection from COVID-19 are; even people with mild cases may experience long-term complications.

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. The masking, social distancing, and other safety precautions included in these requirements reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19, but do not eliminate the risk entirely. We can all take these actions to protect ourselves, our families, and others throughout our communities. This applies to people who have already been vaccinated, too.

- Stay home when sick.
- Stay at least 6 feet apart from other people.
- Wear face coverings in indoor businesses and public indoor spaces and outdoors when 6 feet of social distancing cannot be consistently maintained.
- Wash your hands often.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.

COVID-19 Preparedness Plans

As required by the Executive Orders (also referred to as “EOs”) issued by Governor Tim Walz under the Peacetime Emergency, all businesses, both critical or non-critical, and other entities identified in the EOs, are legally required to develop and implement COVID-19 Preparedness Plans (also referred to as “Plan” or “Plans”). Under the EOs, a “business” and “businesses” include entities that employ or engage workers, including private-sector entities, public-sector entities, non-profit entities, and state, county, and local governments. “Worker” and “workers” are broadly defined by the EOs to include owners, proprietors, employees, contractors, vendors, volunteers, and interns.

For purposes of this Plan Guidance, “other entities” includes those entities identified in the EOs that are not covered by the definition of a “business” but are also required by an EO to develop and implement Plans. Other entities include places of public accommodation, establishments, institutions, facilities, venues, and organizers identified in the EOs. Plan Guidance is designed to protect workers, customers, and other members of the public from the transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19.

This Plan Guidance constitutes the “Plan Guidance” referred to in EO 21-01 and applies to all identified businesses and other entities. **Businesses and other entities must develop and implement COVID-19 Preparedness Plans that address the following:**

The requirements of EO 21-01,

The requirements included in the Universal Plan Guidance for COVID-19 Preparedness Plans found at [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp), and

The requirements included in this Plan Guidance that are applicable to their business or entity.

Unless clearly indicated that an action is recommended and included under “Recommendations,” **businesses and other entities should understand that the Plan Guidance imposes legally enforceable requirements.** In instances where a requirement uses language “to the extent possible,” the action is required, to the extent it is possible for the business or entity to implement the requirement.

Depending on the activities engaged in by a business or other entity, it may be required to comply with additional industry or activity specific plan guidance, such as plan guidance applicable to bars and restaurants, if the facility serves food and beverages or plan guidance applicable to businesses that provide personal services, if the facility has a hair salon..

Frequently Asked Questions have been posted to respond to questions about provisions of Executive Orders and Plan Guidance. The following is a link to current [Frequently Asked Questions about Stay Safe MN \(https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/faq.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/faq.jsp).

Required Plan Sections

Follow the requirements included in the Universal Plan Guidance for COVID-19 Preparedness Plans found at [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp):

1. [Use of face coverings](#)
2. [Maintain social distance between people](#)
3. [For customers using drop-off, pick-up, and delivery services](#)
4. [For customers who shop inside stores](#)
5. [For retail shopping malls and large retail stores](#)

Requirements and Recommendations

1. Use of face coverings

Requirements

- ✓ Require workers to wear face coverings indoors and wear face coverings outdoors when social distancing of 6 feet cannot be maintained and establish procedures for overseeing their compliance.

2. Maintain social distance of at least 6 feet between people or household groups

Requirements

- ✓ Reduce the number of people in the store if needed to ensure proper social distancing between people.
- ✓ Interactions in the retail setting must be limited to brief, transient interactions that pose a lower risk of transmission. To accomplish this retail establishments must:
 - Retail workers who are engaged in a consultative role are required to do so in a virtual manner whenever possible to limit contact with customers.
- ✓ Set up the space, configuration, and flow throughout the establishment to allow for 6 feet of social distancing by all workers, customers, clients, and visitors.
- ✓ Retail establishments must establish methods to decrease worker/customer contact and the duration of customers stay in the establishment by offering and encouraging the use of:
 - Use virtual services or contactless delivery as much as possible;
 - Use curb-side or pre-order pick-up;
 - If you have to go in-person, go during off-peak hours – avoid going during crowds;
 - When possible, limit to one person per household (avoid going in groups).
- ✓ Mark all check-out areas and other areas of congestion to provide for social distancing of at least 6 feet, including on the floor, lane lines, and areas where customers may be waiting to enter a business.

Recommendations

- Encourage advanced reservations/registration/purchases for customers, clients, and visitors (e.g., online, app-based, email, will-call).
- Limit the number of children allowed within the business at one time.
- Limit and/or restrict areas within the business that are accessible by clients, customers, or visitors.
- Post signage so that current and potential customers, clients, and visitors are aware of service changes due to COVID-19.

3. For customers using drop-off, pick-up, and delivery services

Requirements

- ✓ Ensure that drop-off, pick-up, or delivery services allow for at least 6 feet of distance between the worker and customer.

Recommendations

- Allow customers to pre-order goods or pre-arrange the maintenance or repair of goods or pet grooming services before traveling to the business.
- Schedule timing of outdoor drop-off, pick-up, and delivery and communicate arrival at the drop-off, pick-up, or delivery location through voice, text, or email messaging.

4. For customers who shop inside stores

Requirements

- ✓ If appointments or consultations are necessary to be completed in person, the duration of the appointment must be limited to the minimum amount of time to complete the required interaction. All attempts should be made to limit in person interaction. Physical distancing and masking must be maintained at all times while interacting.
- ✓ Provide hand sanitizer at the entrance, point of purchase, and prominent locations for customers/clients.
- ✓ Customers are strongly encouraged to limit their time in establishments and to minimize contact time with workers.
- ✓ Post instructions for customers or clients at entrances, and inform customers/clients:
 - Not to enter if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
 - About the facility's occupancy limits.
 - About hygiene, physical distancing requirements, face covering requirements.
- ✓ Adjust merchandise return policies to accommodate cleaning and/or delay of product return to shelves.
- ✓ Disinfect changing rooms after each customer.

Recommendation

- Post screening questions at the entrances and access points of the business. If shopping by appointment, email or text customers a health screening survey in advance. See the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)'s [Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf).

5. For retail shopping malls and large retail stores

Requirements

- ✓ Control occupancy based on vehicle counts, digital tracking and/or by monitoring entrances and exits.
- ✓ Monitor and manage traffic flow inside and outside of the facility.

COVID-19 RETAIL BUSINESSES

- ✓ Ensure 6 feet of social distancing for customer lines that extend outside of store entrances.
- ✓ Provide for social distancing in restrooms or limit restroom capacity, closing stalls and including marking areas outside of bathroom for customer waiting.
- ✓ Post instructions in elevators that limit occupancy to one person or one household group.

