
Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I find resources on COVID-19?

A wide variety of places! You can find most resources for grocery and convenience store industries on our website. The following is a list of general resources available for you.

- For Washington specific resources, [click here for the Washington State COVID-19 Response page.](#)
- For the President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America, [click here to view the report.](#)
- For the CDC Resource Page, [click here.](#)
- For WA Department of Health Resource Page, [click here.](#)
- For U.S. Department of Labor Resource page, [click here.](#) Be sure to post current required posters identified on their site, including for tele-work employees.

What are common practices that WFIA members are doing to combat COVID-19?

WFIA members are quite innovative! We have a list of best practices at the bottom of our COVID-19 page which includes flyers, pictures and more. [Click here to view WFIA members best practices.](#)

One of my employees tested positive for COVID-19. What do I do?

If an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19:

- 1) Physicians, state or local health departments, and public health personnel will follow up with the employee to interview and assess the individual. They will also follow up with other employees to see if anyone else is sick.
- 2) A store should work with its local health department to determine the best course of action since there will be variability depending on the level of community spread in the given area.
- 3) The associate should be asked to stay home and not return to work until they are asymptomatic for at least 72 hours and meet the CDC guidelines along with any state/local health department requirements for returning to work.

For specific protocols that a company in the food industry should take if an employee or customer tests positive for COVID-19, [visit this page for the recommended protocols.](#)

Washington is currently under a shelter-at-home order. Is my business considered essential?

All parts of the supply chain of the grocery and convenience industries are considered essential. This includes warehouses that provide supplies, vendors who supply products to the stores, transportation, and retailers. [Click here for Washington's Essential Businesses List to see if you qualify if you are unsure.](#)

What types of benefits are available for my employees during COVID-19?

There are a wide variety of resources for employees. Employment Security Department adopted a series of emergency rules to relieve the burden of temporary layoffs, isolation and quarantine for workers and businesses. [Click here to see the scenarios and benefits available for the employees during the COVID-19 crisis under Employment Security Department.](#) Additionally, the federal government passed the federal stimulus to expand unemployment insurance, and we are still reviewing how this will impact you. Check back for more details.

I want to hire minors to work in my stores while they are on break. Can I do that?

Yes, you can! While schools are closed as a result of the Coronavirus and to prevent from spreading, L&I is considering these weeks with no school, as non-school weeks (school vacation). Please ensure when hiring young workers that they are trained properly, young workers need specific training on how to stay safe in the workplace relative to virus protection.

- Employer must apply for a minor work permit endorsement on their business license, have a completed [Parent Summer Authorization form](#) and keep proof of age on file.
- [Click here](#) for the hours a young worker can work by age group.

What jurisdictions in Washington have a plastic bag ban? Are they still being enforced?

There are over 36 jurisdictions with plastic bag bans. Many local jurisdictions have suspended plastic bag bans until the COVID-19 crisis is over, but many are not at this point in time. [Click here to see if what cities and counties are doing in regards to plastic bag bans.](#)

Can reusable bags transmit coronavirus?

While there is a lack of evidence that reusable bags can be a vehicle for transmitting the coronavirus, reusable bags and totes can become unsanitary and a vehicle for cross contamination if not properly cared for. The [CDC recommends](#) cleaning and disinfection as a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 other viral respiratory illnesses. In addition, cleaning and disinfecting reusable bags is essential for food safety.

Some retailers are choosing not to allow reusable bags in their stores during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you choose to allow reusable bags, we recommend letting customers bag their own groceries as a precaution.

Who should I call if I have a question or need help?

If you have general questions or comments about COVID-19 and our industry, [click here to submit your questions and comments to WFIA staff.](#)

- Jan Gee is the main point of contact during this time. Contact Jan Gee at jangee@wa-food-ind.org or 253-209-5079.
- For any concerns with paid sick leave or unemployment issues, please contact Tammie Hetrick at tammie@wa-food-ind.org or 360-870-0486.
- For price gouging reports, environmental issues or local jurisdictional issues, please contact Cat Holm at catherine@wa-food-ind.org or 360-867-8721.