

Coronavirus Best Practice Checklist for Independent Retailers

Nationwide Marketing Group is providing this guide as a resource to help independent dealers mobilize resources to protect their team members and businesses.

Note: The Coronavirus outbreak is a rapidly developing situation, and local health agencies and authorities should be consulted for the latest news and directives. This guide should not serve as medical guidance, and any directives or advisements from local health authorities supersede any information found in this document. Further, this document is meant as a best practices guide, and each business owner should use this and other available resources to make the best-informed decision possible.

The Coronavirus pandemic has seen confirmed cases of COVID-19 in all 50 states, and many communities are currently impacted. You, as an employer, need to stay as informed as possible as you make operational decisions. The [Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Dashboard](#) allows you to track and visualize active U.S. cases, as well as cases worldwide. It can be effective to assign someone to track national, state and local public health sites for updates. You can find many of the national and state resources on the [Coronavirus Resources](#) page of Nationwide MemberNet. For help identifying your local health authority, the CDC's [public health gateway map](#) is a useful resource.

Your team members are likely worried and will look to you for guidance. A great leadership practice is to instill confidence through facts, and you should avoid instilling fear. As an employer, you should be careful not to provide medical opinions or misinformation and should rely on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's](#) facts about the virus.

The United States, like many countries around the world, is taking unprecedented steps to prevent the spread of the virus. Why are these actions happening now, as they never have before? The primary reason, under advisement of health professionals, is to slow the spread of the virus and flatten the infection rate curve. A surge in infections would overwhelm our healthcare system, potentially causing an increase in indirect deaths, such as a person having a heart attack not receiving timely treatment.

Best Practice Checklist:

- Follow the [CDC's Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#).
- Consider **checking the temperature of team members** as they begin their shift to make sure they aren't running a fever. The EEOC has greenlighted this practice, but please see their [guidelines](#) to make sure you're compliant.
- Communicate with your team proactively** to make sure they understand your plans, as these develop.
- Consider **special projects** or tasks around the store that team members can take ownership of if traffic slows. Considerations can include merchandising, cleaning, inventory, contacting their customers with updates and opportunities and etc.
- Follow the CDC's [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#) to maintain a **clean store environment**.
- Create a clear **plan for communicating with customers**. Some points to consider include:
 - Plans around store operational hours. (Maintaining normal hours, opening late or closing early, only being open by appointment, etc.)
 - Insight into what your team is doing to keep customers safe (following the CDC cleaning recommendations, cleaning more frequently, making hand sanitizers available, plenty of soap on hand to for handwashing, etc.)
 - Any modifications to delivery or service calls, that can include suspension of delivery and service calls, modifications to delivery and service calls, extra precautions when on delivery or service calls, etc.)
 - Availability of alternatives to a store visit, including purchasing online, by phone, etc.
 - Availability of alternate methods of picking up product or having it delivered (touchless pickup, curbside delivery, etc.)
- Create **clear expectations** for your team. These could include:
 - Expectation to stay home if sick.
 - Expectations of in-store behavior modifiers (participation in cleaning duties, frequent hand washing, etc.)
- Consider creation of **"shift teams"**, with the same teams working the same days and off on the same days. For example, the red team works on Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday Saturday, while the blue team works on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for one week, and then the teams switch days. This creates an opportunity to continue operations if either team is exposed to COVID-19 or a team member becomes sick by having two separate teams that don't cross over. Please refer to CDC guidance if contamination of either team occurs to ensure that the store isn't compromised or can be sanitized before resuming operations.

- Leverage all options to **communicate your current status to customers**. This can include:
 - Signage on the front door regarding your current activities on cleaning and disinfecting.
 - Signage designating the store a “handshake-free” zone, but with a friendly tone.
 - Facebook posts sharing relevant opportunities and paths to purchase with shoppers.
 - An email to current customers updating them on your operations and any modifications to hours, procedures, and alternative paths to purchase.
 - A banner or header on your website to communicate to customers your current status and offerings.

- **Review your website** to make sure you’re hitting on the things customers are looking for. Make sure your website messaging doesn’t come across as “tone deaf” with the current situation. (For example, it might not be the best time to have a “Spring into Savings” style event. Also examine your website to make sure you have customer-friendly features, which can include:

- Clear Pricing
- Inventory and product availability
- Delivery and Pickup Time frames
- Financing Availability
- Store Hours
- E-Commerce Enablement
- Live Chat (with as much monitoring as possible)
- A mechanism to allow for virtual sales presentation from your team (Facetime, Facebook Video Messenger, Zoom, etc.)

- Consider your **delivery procedures** and any needed modifications. These can include:
 - Call ahead to customers to make sure there are no sick persons in the home.
 - Empowerment of delivery teams to leave any uncomfortable situations.
 - Use of hand sanitizer, gloves, shoe covers, etc. on an increased interval.
 - Implementation of curbside delivery procedure with corresponding messaging to consumers.

- Consider any measures you can implement to **preserve cash**.

- **If your store is closed** or in the event your store is forced to close for a period of time, consider if continuation of business is possible via your website.

- Consider connecting with your **landlord** (provided you rent space) to explore a temporary suspension or decrease related to rent during closure periods.

- Examine any possible **business insurance** that you have in place that could apply if you see an interruption in business.

- Connect with your peer **businesses in your area**. Look for opportunities to collaborate with other independents related to staffing, demand, delivery, service, inventory, etc.