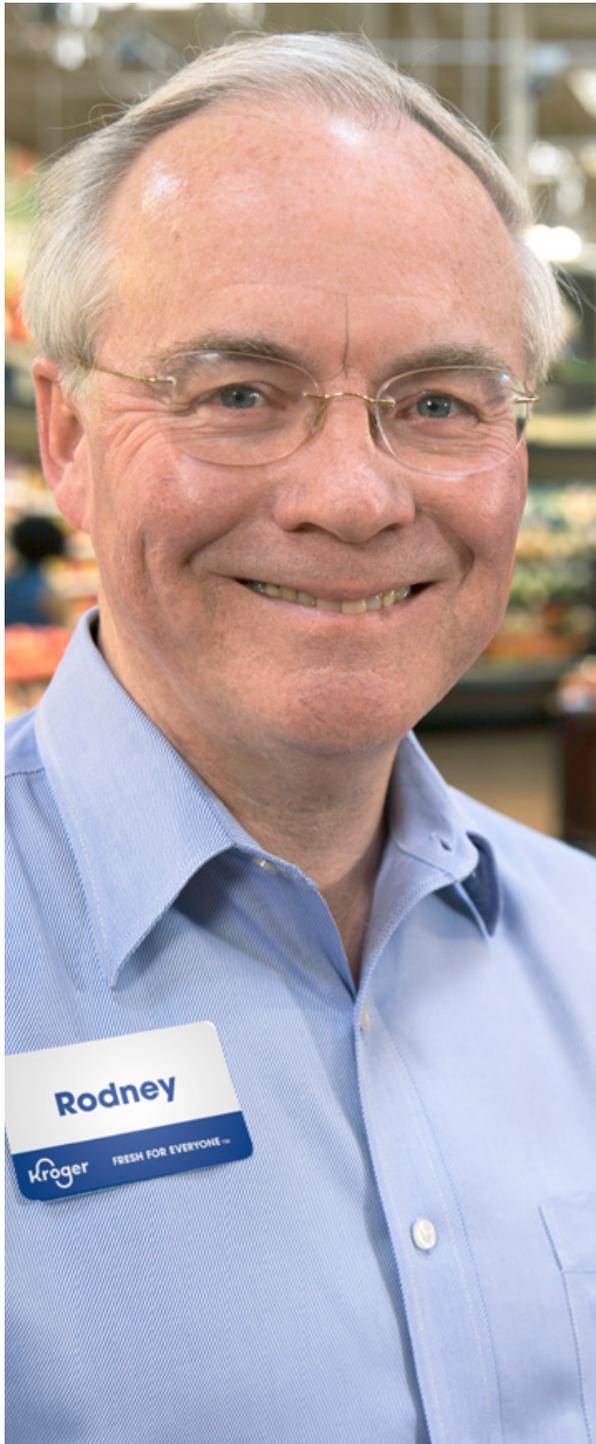




Sharing What We've Learned: A Blueprint for Businesses

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KrogerBlueprint.com





A Note from Rodney

As America's grocer, we have taken extensive measures across our business to safeguard our associates and customers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our stores are at the center of our communities and face a higher rate of exposure than most Americans. But as an essential business, we've learned how to operate safe and open environments in retail stores, food production facilities, and distribution centers.

Our Purpose is to Feed the Human Spirit, which means we are driven to do more and help make the lives of those around us better.

During this time, we have also held true to Our Values of integrity, honesty, diversity, inclusion, safety and respect. To live Our Values means we lead by example even when it's hard, encourage collaboration and active involvement with everyone, and ensure our associates and customers feel valued and safe.

As an extension of Our Values, we decided early on to be transparent – share what we've learned, what went well and where we could improve.

We learned a lot from others as well – many companies and government officials have partnered with us to share valuable insights. And we learned that being proactive in our decision making helped us keep our business open safely and continue to do our part to flatten the curve.

In the same spirit, we want to share what we've learned and best practices with other businesses, so they can take steps now to develop protocols and procedures to reopen safely and continue to flatten the curve.

This first installment of *Sharing What We've Learned: A Blueprint for Businesses* includes recommendations, insights, best practices and [downloadable creative assets](#) to help businesses navigate the next phase of this unprecedented pandemic. We will continue to update the Blueprint in the coming days and weeks, providing additional resources, tools and templates for other industries to leverage.

We recognize that not all businesses are the same. What worked for us may not work for you. And while there is no “one thing” that makes all the difference, taking a holistic approach to safety will lead to better outcomes.

And importantly, working together, we can all support our communities and help reopen businesses safely.

Rodney McMullen
Chairman and CEO Kroger



Section 1

Retail Operations



Flattening the Curve in Retail Stores

As America's grocer, we've spent the past six weeks focused on actions to help slow the spread across our footprint of nearly 2,800 retail stores in 35 states.

In every decision we make, we strive to balance our most urgent mission—to provide a safe environment for our associates and customers—with being here for our communities when they need us most. This often meant being flexible to quickly adapt to new ways of working. At other times, it meant slowing down to provide a refresher on basic best practices, including proper handwashing techniques and steps to promote physical distancing.

Whether you operate one store or thousands of locations across the country, we recommend these initial steps to ensure a safe retail environment:

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Promote Healthy Habits
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Encourage Physical Distancing
- 

Enhance Cleaning Procedures
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Adjust Operating Hours
- 

Encourage Employee Use of Personal Protective Equipment
- 

Establish Vendor Guidelines
- 

Embrace Contact-Free Checkout

Promote Healthy Habits

As the crisis evolved, so did our methods. However, the safety of our employees and customers has remained the number one priority when making business decisions throughout the pandemic. This often meant being flexible to quickly adapt to new ways of working. At other times, it meant a refresher on the basics, including proper hand-washing techniques and other hygiene practices. You can follow the tips below to promote healthy habits in your facilities:

Educating Employees

We all know we should wash our hands often throughout the day, but when we get busy at work, a quick reminder is always helpful. Regularly encourage employees to practice hygiene recommendations from the CDC and other government agencies through your communication channels. Here are few options to consider:

- Post signage at time clocks, in breakrooms and employee restrooms about the importance of following healthy habits.
- Prepare huddle guides or talking points for leaders to use that encourage employees to follow recommended hygiene practices.
- Also, don't underestimate the power of your external messages to reach your employees as well.

Consider this...

- What internal and external channels do you have to reach employees and customers?
- What tools do leaders need to reinforce these behaviors with their teams?





Educating Customers and Visitors

Employees often aren't the only ones in your locations. You may have customers, vendors or other guests who should take steps to protect others. Here are some ways you can reinforce healthy habits for anyone - including employees - who enter your facilities:

- If you have **in-store audio messaging** capability, consider using it to remind employees and customers to follow physical distancing and hygiene guidance published by the CDC.

Adapt along the way: We originally had messaging played every 30 minutes, but as customers reduced their time spent in stores, we moved to every 15 minutes to ensure we could reach all of our customers during their shopping trip.

- Post signs at entrances notifying customers to STOP if they are sick and ask them not to enter our stores.
- Increase the availability of hand sanitizer, wipes and cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (including carts) for both customers and employees.

Create a plan for how you will acquire and distribute these items. Sourcing of supplies can be a challenge in the current environment. If supplies are in short supply, consider adding an employee to sanitize cart or frequent touch points during all hours of operation.

Consider this...

- **Do you have proper signage to ensure employees and customers know what's expected?**



Educating Customers and Visitors continued...

- Add labor to cover additional breaks for employees to wash hands and sanitize stations regularly, including registers, hand-held devices, credit card terminals, food service counters, door handles, conveyor belts, restrooms, shelves and other surfaces.
- Consider suspending or modifying your return policy.
 - Kroger has temporarily halted returns. We continue to make it right for customers if a product is defective or falls under our Fresh Guarantee.
- Encourage customers to clean their reusable bags frequently through in-store signage
 - Guided by evidence suggesting likelihood of disease transmission through reusable bags is low, and also by our Zero Hunger | Zero Waste social impact plan principles, we decided to continue permitting reusable bags.
 - However, to keep employees safe, we ask customers to bag their own purchases if they choose to use reusable bags and encourage frequent cleaning of bags.



Encouraging Physical Distancing

Beyond good hygiene, all of us – employees, customers and leaders – are encouraged to maintain a six-foot physical distance from others to reduce the spread of illness. Being open to the public can make it hard for customers and employees to keep a safe distance. These actions can help:

- Install protective plexiglass screens at service counters, including checkouts.
- Display signage at entrances, check lanes and registers to remind customers of physical distancing at every opportunity.
- Promote physical distancing where customers may linger by adding floor decals at registers and service counters, placing signage on patio and furniture displays, and limiting waiting areas.
- Close in-store bars or public sitting areas.

- Discontinue sampling.
- Close self-serve bars (salad, olive, bakery, candy bars, etc.) and bulk-bin options.
- Close fitting rooms or limit capacity.
- Adopt capacity limits based on the size of your facility, and be prepared to queue customers outside while still maintaining physical distance.

Consider this...

- **Do you have available technology to help with monitoring capacity limits? If not, prepare for labor to physically monitor traffic in and out of stores.**
- **Are there spaces in your store or facility where people tend to congregate? What steps can be taken to reduce the number of people in those areas?**



Step Up Cleaning Procedures

Maintaining a clean work environment will help control the exposure and spread of COVID-19. Consider how these practices can help keep your business sanitized and clean:

- Enhance your daily sanitation practices, including registers, hand-held devices, credit card terminals, food service counters, door handles, conveyor belts, restrooms, shelves and other surfaces.
- Assign dedicated employee to wipe down carts with sanitizer and paper towels in the lobby during store hours.
- Assign extra staff to allow for frequent hand-washing rotation for front-end employees.
- Clean and stock bathrooms more frequently.
- Instruct employees to wipe down equipment, including pallet jacks, ladders and supply carts, between every use.
- Procure options for third-party cleaning companies to assist with the increased cleaning demand as needed.

Consider this...

- **Are extra staff or outside vendors needed to meet the new cleaning demands?**
- **What steps can you take now to procure supplies, including masks, wipes, sanitizer and cleaning supplies?**



Adjust Hours to Support Healthy Habits

Long hours serving customers along with heightened cleaning guidelines can lead to exhausted teams. Consider adjusting your operating hours, balancing the needs of your employees and your customers. We adjusted our hours and here are benefits we realized:

- Employees had more time to rest, clean and replenish inventory.
- We were able to offer exclusive early hours for seniors (60+) and other higher-risk individuals.

- We were able to increase Pickup hours to serve more online customers, promote physical distancing and reduce the size of crowds in store.

Consider this...

- **Would altering your hours of operation create benefits for your teams?**



Employee Safety

Keeping your teams safe and healthy is a critical priority to ensure your business remains open. Without a healthy, trained staff, you'll struggle to meet the needs of your customers. In addition to supporting physical distancing and heightened sanitation, which protect everyone in your facilities, here are few tips focused specifically on keeping your employees safe while working.

Encourage Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including facial coverings, masks and gloves, can be useful in reducing the spread of illnesses. Our “new normal” likely means that these items will become a common, even expected, sight in public places for some time to come. Here are a few recommendations related to PPE:

- Encourage employees to use masks or approved facial coverings and gloves while working and provide them if you can. If you allow employees to bring their own, be clear about what is appropriate.
- Make sure team members know how to properly use and safely dispose of these items.
- Knowing that these items alone are not enough, educate employees on good personal hygiene and other healthy habits like hand-washing that can make PPE more effective. Review the Healthy Habits section for more details.

Consider this...

- **Are you able to provide PPE on a consistent basis? If not, will you allow employees to wear their own?**

Monitor and Support Employee Health

Employees should only be working if they are healthy and symptom free. There are steps you can take to encourage employees to protect others by taking care of themselves, including:

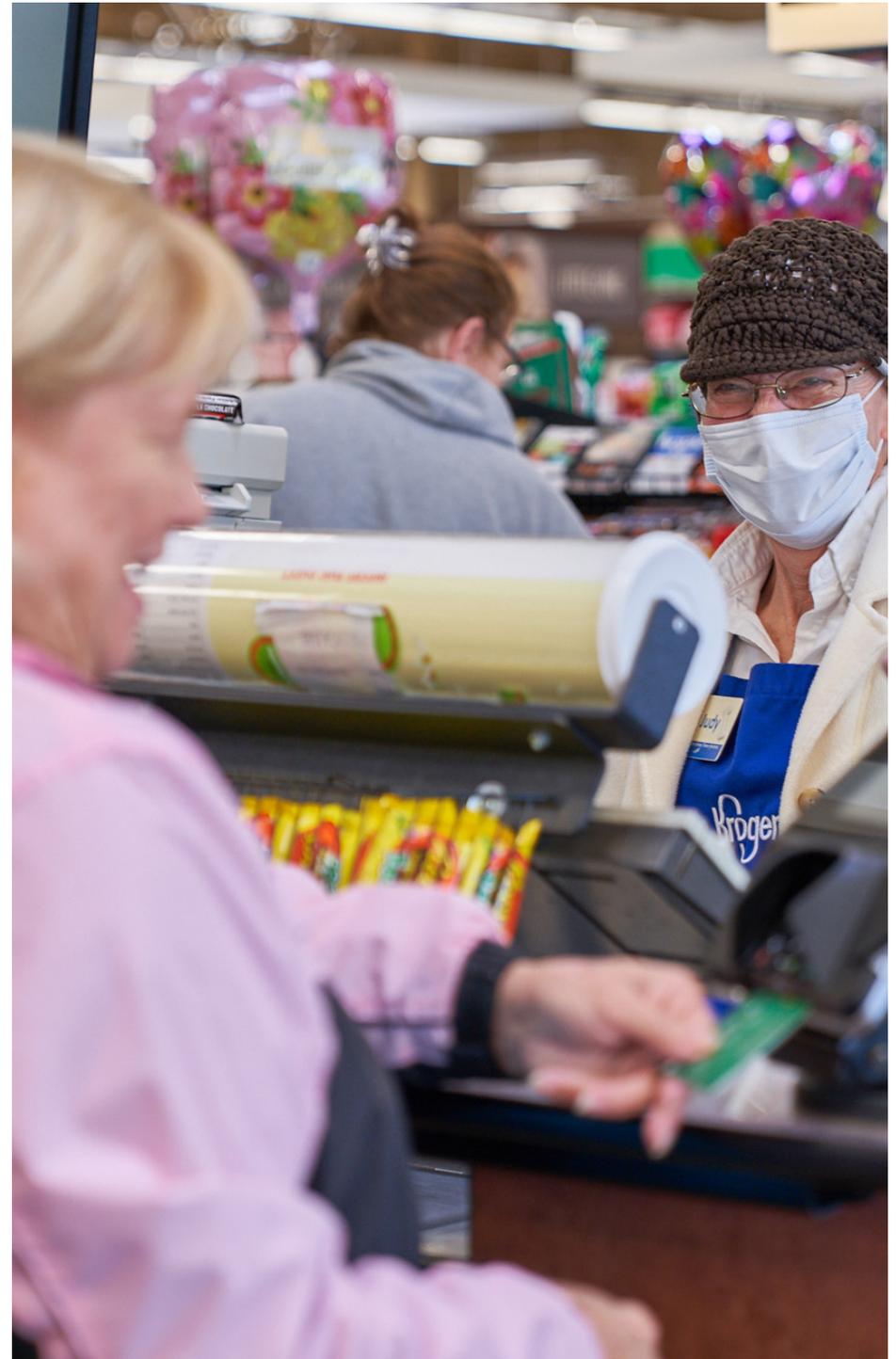
- Checking temperature at the beginning of each shift requires a fair amount of coordination so be sure to have a fully thought out protocol before beginning this process. Make sure to consider the equipment needed, role and safety of staff performing the checks, employee privacy and protocol for when elevated temperatures are discovered.
- Encourage employees who feel sick to stay home. Consider revising paid time off options to support this behavior.

While Kroger was quick to offer Emergency Leave Guidelines to affected employees at the start of the pandemic, we learned early on that extending the same coverage to employees experiencing symptoms was necessary to ensure they felt supported in prioritizing their health and updated our policy as such.

- Have a well-defined protocol for employees who may be ill or who have been exposed.

Consider this...

- Can you cross-train employees to work in different areas if needed due to illness or to meet demands in other areas?
- What steps can you take now to be able to perform temperature checks on site?





Prepare Employees for Difficult Situations

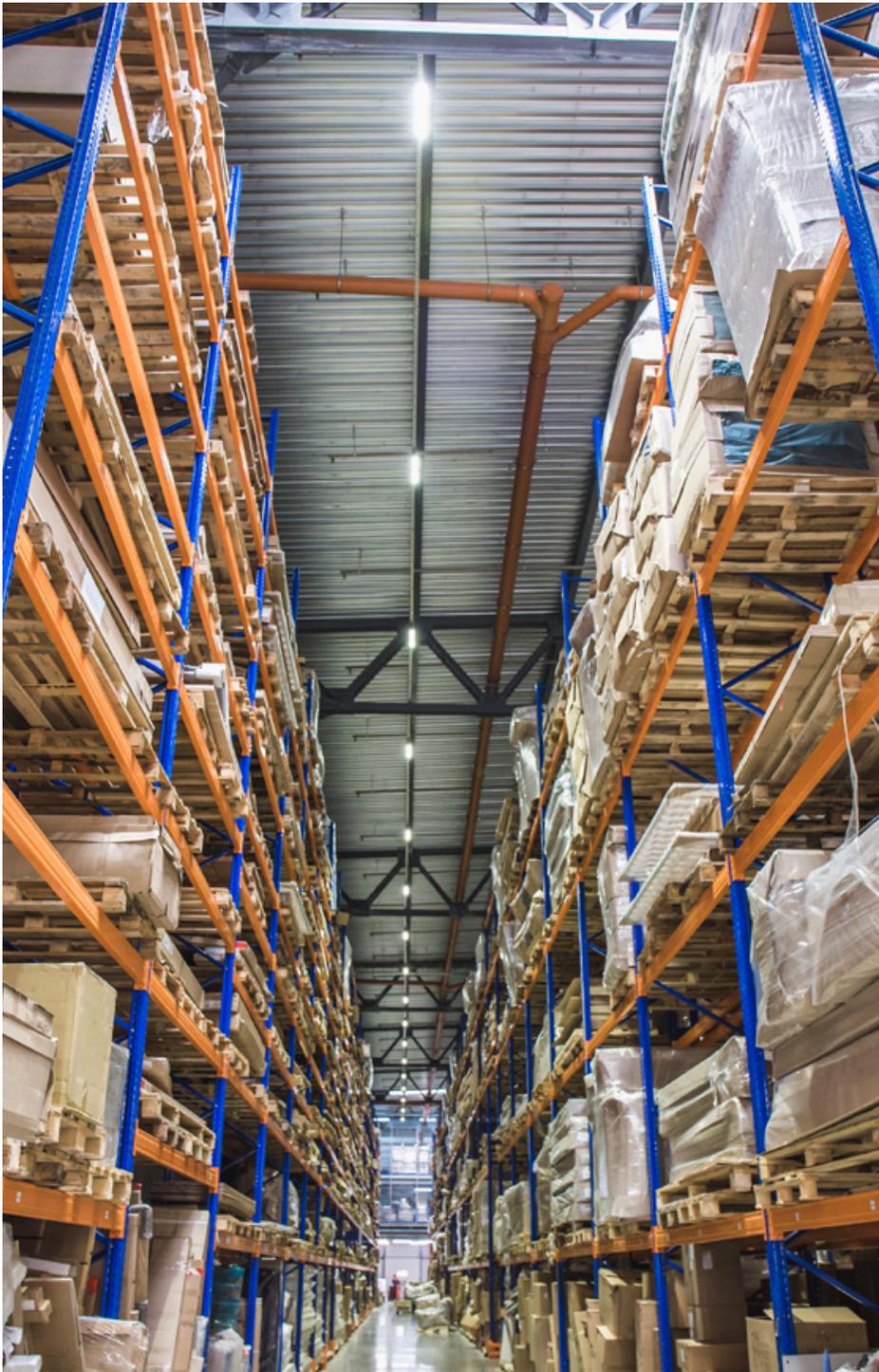
In many ways, the pandemic has brought out the best in people, but the stress and fear can lead some to be confrontational. Prepare your employees to respond to these situations carefully to help ensure their safety. We prepared de-escalation tips for our employees and our store leaders, as well as ensured our leaders had talking points to use when communicating COVID-19 information to their teams, vendors and customers.

Ensure Easy Access to Information

Employees must be aware of the latest safety protocol in order to follow it. Regular communications and easy-to-access resource documents will help ensure your guidelines are understood and followed.

Consider this...

- What steps can you take now to communicate and train employees and leaders on new safety procedures?



Vendor and Visitor Safety

Managing the safety of non-employees in your workplace presents a different set of challenges. In addition to the education and cleaning actions explained previously, here are a few steps to help protect your employees and others who may enter your facilities.

Office Locations

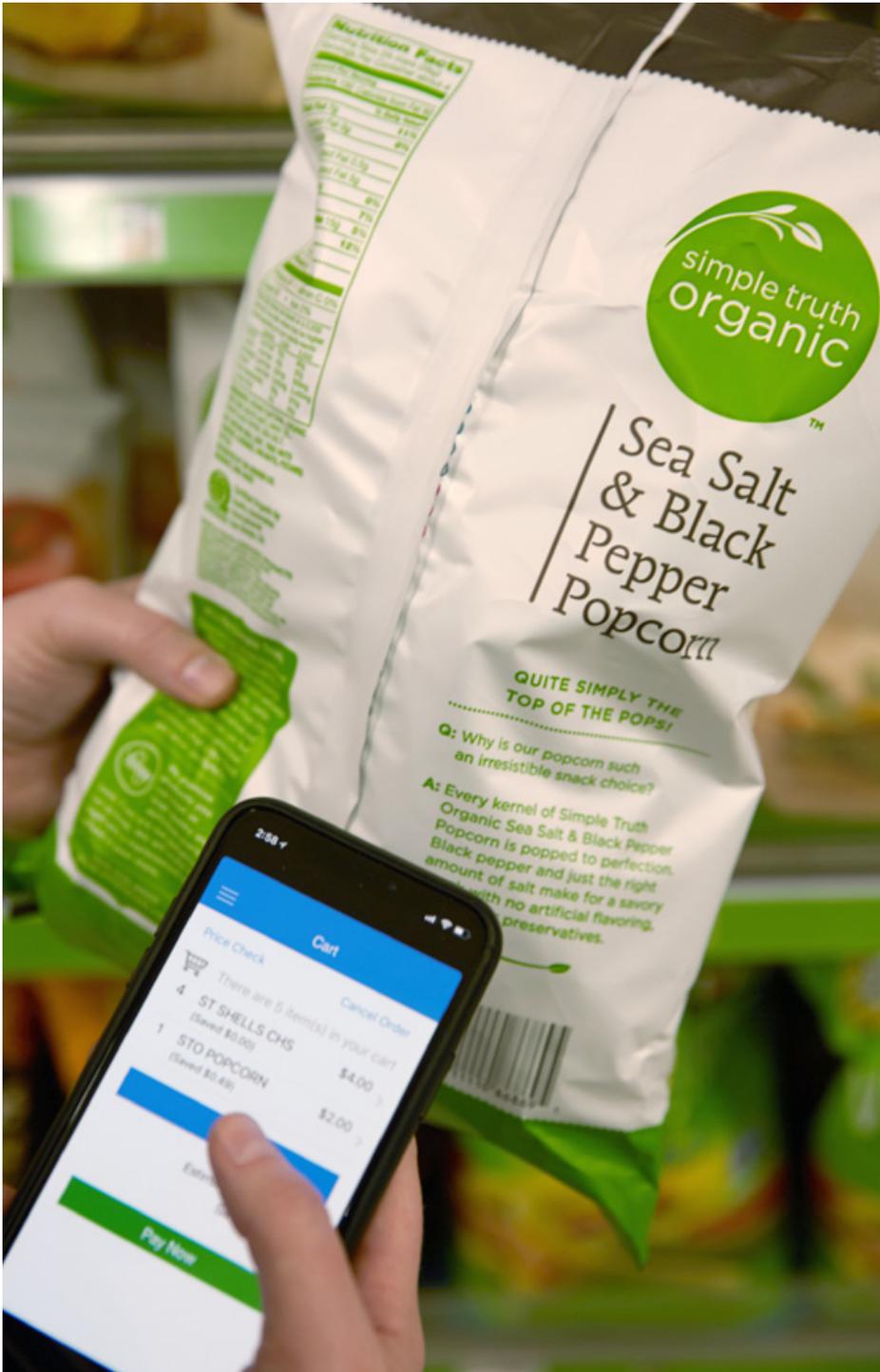
- Temporarily suspend visitors from all office locations unless business critical.
- Suspend business travel and encourage the use of digital meetings where possible.
- Encourage those who can successfully perform their work from home to do so until further notice.

Retail or Other Locations

- Temporarily suspend all non-employee truck drivers from entering stores, warehouses and manufacturing plants.
- Move to contactless signatures for deliveries.
- Expand direct store delivery window to spread out deliveries and prevent overcrowding.
- Ask vendors who are required to enter your locations to have their employees follow the guidance of local, state and federal governments in regard to wearing masks and other PPE equipment.

Consider this...

- **Who are regular visitors or vendors in our locations?**
- **How can we adjust our business to limit direct contact with them?**



Embrace Digital Options

Digital capabilities allow us to maximize physical distancing practices, utilize contactless transactions and continue to provide an excellent shopping experience. Evaluate your business model and available technology to see where you can increase your digital presence and increase contactless payment options. Here are some options to consider:

Contactless Payments

Technology solutions are available to minimize the contact your customers have when completing purchases. Consider leveraging your own technology like Kroger Pay or third-party services, to allow customers to shop and pay without touching a pin pad or handling cash. Also, if you have self-checkout at your locations already, consider increasing availability or support staff to allow more customers to check out independently.

Consider this...

- If you don't already have this capability, are there third-party vendors who can quickly provide virtual services for your business?



Alternative Ways to Get Purchases

Along the same lines as contactless payments, consider options for customers to do their shopping and get their purchases with minimal contact, including pickup and delivery. If available, these suggestions can help support digital options:

- Offer free or reduced fees on pickup or delivery services.
- Encourage employees to practice physical distancing during pickup and delivery by talking with the customer through a passenger window, loading items directly into the customer's trunk without contact, or leaving items at their door.

- Be prepared for demand and adjust online availability if items become unavailable or place limits if appropriate.
- Make some locations pickup or delivery only to minimize employee/customer contact.

Consider this...

- **How will your staffing need to change based on virtual offerings?**
- **Is there additional training that employees or leaders will need to support these options?**
- **How will you respond to long wait times or product availability issues?**



Section 2

Manufacturing



Manufacturing Quality Products, Safely

Manufacturing facilities are critical to our food supply and economy. While production is necessary, the safety of employees and suppliers matters most.

As an essential food supplier, we've spent the first phase of the pandemic helping to flatten the curve by focusing on our most urgent priority – providing a safe environment for everyone in our facilities – while maintaining our commitment to remain open and available and even responsibly increasing output to meet the changing demands of our customers.

To help you prepare to reopen safely, we're sharing some of the steps we've taken to safeguard our employees, while supporting a demanding production schedule and promoting a safe environment for all. In each of these sections, you'll find some of the steps we've taken in our facilities as well as additional questions to consider for your business before reopening.



Enhance Safety Procedures



Monitor & Support Employee Health



Establish Vendor & Visitor Guidelines



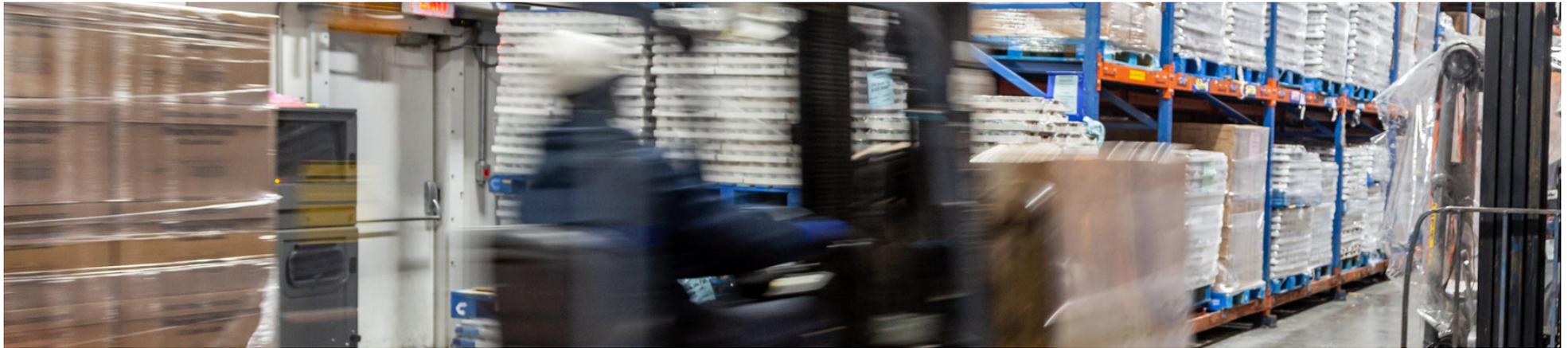
Encourage Physical Distancing



Adjust Hours to Support Healthy Habits



Follow Expert Guidance on Food Safety



Enhanced Safety Procedures

As the crisis evolved, so did our methods. However, the safety of our employees has remained a top priority when making business decisions throughout the pandemic. This often meant being flexible to quickly adapt to new ways of working. At other times, it meant a refresher on the basics, including proper handwashing techniques and other hygiene practices. Follow the tips below to promote healthy habits in your facilities:

Educating Employees

We all know we should wash our hands often throughout the day, but when we get busy at work, a quick reminder is always helpful. Regularly encourage employees to practice hygiene recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other government agencies through your communication channels. Here are few options to consider:

- Post signage at timeclocks, in breakrooms and employee restrooms about the importance of following healthy habits.

- Prepare discussion guides or talking points for leaders to use that encourage employees to follow recommended hygiene practices.
- Also, don't underestimate the power of your external messages to reach your employees.
- Regular communications and easy-to-access resource documents will help ensure your guidelines are understood and followed.

Consider this...

- **Do you have proper signage reminding employees of enhanced safety protocols?**
- **Have you provided leaders with talking points and easy-to-access guidelines to reinforce in your facilities?**
- **What internal and external channels do you have to reach employees?**

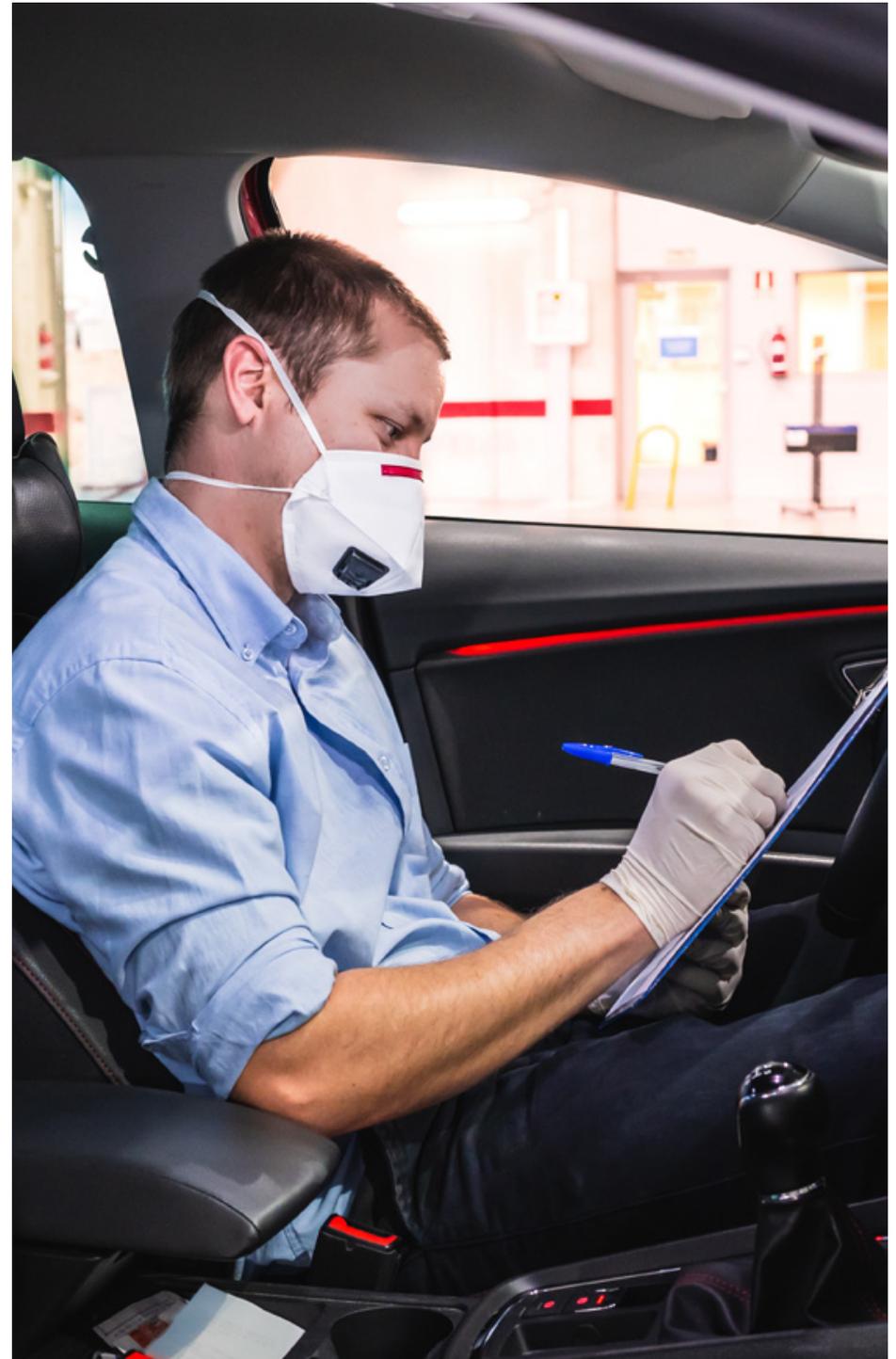
Educating Suppliers and Visitors

Employees often aren't the only ones in your facilities. You may have truck drivers, vendors or other guests who should take steps to protect others. Here are some ways you can reinforce healthy habits for anyone – including employees – who enter your facilities:

- Post signs at entrances and checkpoints notifying visitors to STOP if they are sick and ask them not to enter your facility.
- Increase the cleaning of frequently touched surfaces and availability of hand sanitizer and wipes for vendors, suppliers and employees.

Create a plan for how you will acquire and distribute these sanitation supplies. Sourcing of supplies can be a challenge in the current environment. If items are in short supply, consider adding an employee to sanitize frequent touch points during all hours of operation.

- Consider modifying your receiving process.
- Encourage delivery drivers and other visitors to practice good hygiene through signage and offer hand sanitizer or hand-washing stations where available.



Encourage the Use of Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including facial coverings, masks and gloves, can in some instances be useful in reducing the spread of illnesses. These items may become common, even expected, for some time to come. Here are a few recommendations related to PPE:

- For employees not wearing them as part of their already required PPE, encourage the use of masks or approved facial coverings and gloves while working and provide them if you can. If you allow employees to bring their own, be clear about what is appropriate.
- Remind employees that preexisting safety rules and regulations must continue to be observed and be flexible in your routine to mitigate COVID-19 risks while continuing to follow all health and safety regulations currently in place.
- Make sure team members know how to properly use and safely dispose of these items and have proper receptacles and procedures to dispose of used PPE.

- Knowing that these items alone are not enough, educate employees on good personal hygiene and other healthy habits like hand washing that can make PPE more effective.

Consider this...

- **Are you able to provide PPE on a consistent basis? If not, will you allow employees to wear their own?**
- **What steps can you take now to communicate and train employees and leaders on new safety procedures?**
- **When performing duties that require associates to be in close proximity to each other, what additional PPE should be provided? E.g., face shields, portable plexiglass barriers, etc.**
- **What tools do leaders need to reinforce these behaviors with their teams?**



Enhanced Sanitation Protocol

Maintaining a clean work environment will help minimize the exposure and spread of the novel coronavirus. Consider how these practices can help keep your business sanitized and clean:

- Enhance your daily sanitation practices, including hand-held devices, machinery, breakrooms, receiving counters, door handles, conveyor belts, restrooms, vending machines, timeclocks and other surfaces.
- Assign a dedicated employee to wipe down frequently touched surfaces during all hours of operation.
- Assign extra staff to allow for frequent hand-washing rotation for employees.
- Provide sanitizer and tissues in breakrooms, near commonly touched surfaces, in meeting rooms and lobbies.
- Clean and stock bathrooms more frequently.
- Instruct employees to wipe down equipment, including pallet jacks, ladders and supply carts, between every use.
- Procure options for third-party party cleaning companies to assist with the increased sanitation demand as needed.

Consider this...

- **What additional, deep cleaning can you consider and would it affect operations?**
- **Are extra staff or outside vendors needed to meet the new sanitation demands?**



Monitor and Support Employee Health

Employees should only be working if they are healthy and symptom free. While you'll need to be mindful of certain privacy restrictions, there are steps you can take to encourage employees protect others by taking care of themselves, including:

- Requiring temperature checks at the beginning of each shift. This requires a fair amount of coordination so be sure to have a fully thought out protocol before beginning this process. Make sure to consider the equipment needed, role and safety of staff performing the checks, employee privacy and protocol for when elevated temperatures are discovered.
- Encourage employees who feel sick to stay home. Consider revising paid time off options to support this behavior.

While the Kroger Family of Companies was quick to offer Emergency Leave Guidelines to affected employees at the start of the pandemic, we learned early on that extending the same coverage to employees experiencing symptoms was necessary to ensure they felt supported in prioritizing their health and updated our policy as such.

- Have well-defined and easily accessible protocols for employees who may be ill or who have been exposed.

Consider this...

- **What steps can you take now to be able to perform temperature checks on site?**
- **Are you able to stagger shifts to avoid crowds as employees wait to clock in and be monitored to ensure proper physical distancing is taking place?**
- **Can you crosstrain employees or hire temporary labor to meet business demands and address possible employee attendance issues due to illness?**
- **Should adjustments be made to your attendance policy to help your employees feel supported if they experience symptoms?**
- **What emotional health benefits can you offer? The pandemic continues to affect employees' mental health. Consider increasing your support in this area.**



Establish Vendor & Visitor Guidelines

Managing the safety of non-employees in your workplace presents a different set of challenges. In addition to the education and cleaning actions explained previously, here are a few steps to help protect your employees and others who may enter your facilities:

Office Locations

- Temporarily suspend visitors from all office locations unless business critical.
- Suspend business travel and encourage the use of virtual meetings where possible.
- Encourage those who can successfully perform their work from home to do so until further notice.

Manufacturing Facilities

- Temporarily suspend all non-employee delivery drivers from entering facilities.
- Move to contactless signatures for deliveries.

- Expand hours your delivery window is open to spread out deliveries and prevent overcrowding.
- Ask vendors who are required to enter your locations to have their employees follow the guidance of local, state and federal governments in regard to wearing masks and other PPE.

Consider this...

- **Who are regular visitors or vendors in your locations?**
- **How can you adjust your business to limit direct contact with them?**
- **What PPE and safety protocol will be in place for business-critical visitors or contractors?**
- **Conducting interviews? Consider virtual interviews to limit contact with non-employees.**

Encouraging Physical Distancing

Beyond good hygiene, all of us are encouraged to maintain a six-foot physical distance from others to reduce the spread of illness. Working in sometimes close quarters and maintaining safe operation of machinery can make it hard for employees in manufacturing to keep distance. These actions can help:

- Install protective plexiglass screens at counters, receiving stations and between work areas where a six-foot distance is not practical.
- Display signage at entrances, near timeclocks, in breakrooms and other communal areas to promote physical distancing at every reasonable opportunity.
- Promote physical distancing where employees or vendors may linger by adding floor decals in places like timeclocks and receiving desks.
- Close communal areas like breakrooms and outdoor patios to non-employees.
- Discontinue cafeteria self-serve bars and buffets and instead move to boxed or prepacked options.
- Reduce the number of chairs in breakrooms and cafeterias to allow for proper physical distancing.
- Consider staggering shifts to allow for proper distancing where possible.

Consider this...

- **What steps can you take now to adjust your business to create a six-foot physical distance in areas that don't permit this today?**
- **Can you add additional communal space to allow employees to spread out when on breaks?**
- **Is it possible to split your workforce into teams that work separate shifts, sanitizing in between, to limit possible exposure?**
- **Are there spaces in your facility where people tend to congregate? What steps can be taken to reduce the number of people in those areas?**
- **Can you eliminate non-critical work that involves the use of contractors?**

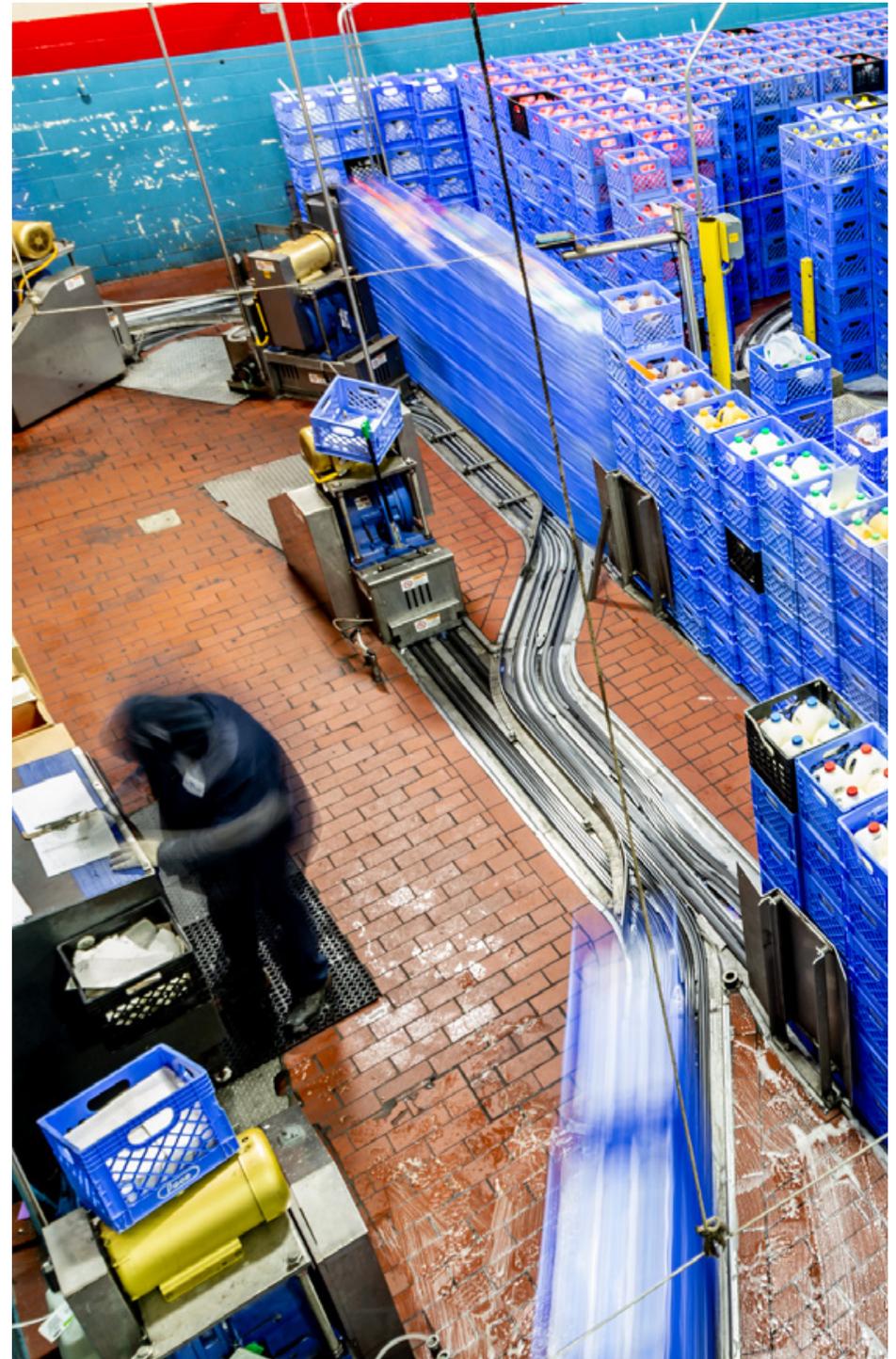
Adjust Hours to Support Healthy Habits

Long hours meeting increased demands along with heightened cleaning guidelines can lead to exhausted teams. Consider adjusting your operating hours, respecting the needs of your employees and maintaining your production commitments. Benefits to adjusting hours where possible are:

- Employees have more time to rest, clean and replenish.
- Provides the ability to stagger shifts and limit exposure between teams.

Consider this...

- Would altering your hours of operation create benefits for your teams?





Food Safety Guidance

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there is no current evidence that shows transmission of the novel coronavirus associated with food. Even though there is very low risk of spreading a respiratory illness from food products or packaging that is shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient, refrigerated or frozen temperatures, it's always good to review your safety procedures to ensure you're following all guidelines.

Food Safety Plan

As Food & Drug Administration (FDA) regulated manufacturing facilities, we continue to maintain clean and sanitized plant locations following our standardized protocol, along with a regulatory-required Food Safety Plan. Consider how these practices can help keep your location safe for employees and sanitized, clean and compliant with your food safety regulations:

- Follow recommendations by the CDC for more frequent cleaning and disinfection of all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace.
- Encourage the use of masks or approved facial coverings and gloves while working for employees not already wearing PPE and provide them if you can.

- Conduct a hazard analysis and risk-based preventive controls assessment, including procedures for maintaining clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces.
- Ensure your cleaning and disinfecting solutions meet the EPA's criteria.
- Contact your Food Safety vendor if you're having trouble finding FDA-approved cleaning and disinfecting solutions.
- Create a decision tree that enables your facility to quickly assess and respond to risks.

Consider this...

- **Have you conducted an annual review of your Food Safety Plan to ensure your cleaning and sanitation practices are compliant?**
- **Do you have the most recent list of FDA-approved cleaning and disinfecting solutions?**
- **Is a third-party or outside sanitation vendor needed to perform a deep cleaning or disinfection of your facility?**



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