

The following are a list of the most commonly asked questions, and corresponding answers, from the members of the SAVE Lives Santa Cruz County Economic Recovery Council (ERC). These questions were answered during the weekly meetings of the ERC by the County Health Officer, Dr. Gail Newel, though the answers provided below are restated for clarity. You can find more industry specific guidance on the [State of California's "Resiliency Roadmap" here](#), and in [Appendix A](#) of the most recent County Health Order, located here in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Q: What are the highest risk activities for transmission:

A: The highest risk activity is sustained contact (greater than 2 minutes) with an infected person, that is unprotected by a mask/shield/barrier, closer than 6' ft, and in enclosed spaces.

We cannot eliminate transmission via touching surfaces, however, we have few recorded cases of transmission occurring through contact with a surface alone. Surfaces are now considered lower risk by the CDC.

The lowest risk activity for transmission is outdoor contact, at more than 6' distance, that is protected by a mask/shield/barrier.

Q: The state guidance documents are extensive, what are the most important risks to minimize?

A: Since every business is unique in some fashion, and the guidance cited is extensive, the ERC recommends that following health safety precautions be prioritized based on the science of how transmission has occurred:

1. **All employees and customers should be required to wear facial protection when indoors and should keep at least 6' distance from others during short contacts.** . If an employee or customer declines the use of a mask citing a medical condition, then alternative facial protection that focuses on the mouth and nose should be used.
2. **Limit contact between people (over limiting contact with surfaces).** While it may be possible to contract COVID-19 via contact with surfaces that have the live virus, it is significantly more likely to contract the virus through contact with people.
3. **Make sure that any facilities in operation have effective means of ventilation where possible.** The virus is most likely to spread when people experience sustained exposure to others in close proximity with each other. Open windows and doors!
4. **Provide adequate supplies for continuous handwashing and surface disinfection.** While the risk is low, the virus can persist for 24-72 hours.

Q: Will there be enforcement of the guidance issued by the State and County?

A: There will be no additional enforcement beyond regular health and safety protocols that are normally in place and enforced by the County Health Department, however, businesses are encouraged to follow the industry specific guidelines outlined in the [State's Resiliency Roadmap](#) to the best of their ability.

Q: What should I do if one of my employees tests positive for COVID-19?

A: Contact the County Communicable Disease Unit immediately who can provide further guidance to the employee, which includes testing, contact tracing, and other precautionary measures to avoid further spreading of the virus. Employers do not have any responsibility to implement their own test/trace protocols and should defer to the County. Furthermore, employees should be notified immediately that they should experience any symptoms or be contacted by the Communicable Disease Unit in relation to a confirmed case, that they should work with this unit on next steps and that they have no obligation to disclose their personal medical information.

[For a more in depth FAQ on this subject click here.](#)

[A comprehensive guide to how to respond if an employee tests positive can be found here.](#)

Q: Are employees who have been exposed to COVID-19 allowed to continue working?

A: Essential workers are allowed to work even if they've been exposed, provided that they have tested negative within 48 hours of exposure, that they wear facial protection while working, do not share anything that comes into close contact with the body –such as telephones or shared computers, maintain at least 6 feet of social distance, and go home immediately if they are experiencing any symptoms.

Q: In what ways do our local orders vary from the State and other Counties?

A: All of our public health orders must *at least* adhere to those issued by the State of California, though we can issue more stringent orders where appropriate. The State has allowed for regional variances for some of guidelines with regard to specific industries and social gatherings, such as dining within restaurants, the reopening of salons, and limited religious services. Our County has applied to receive a similar regional variance as of May 29th, 2020.

Santa Cruz County has 3 restrictions that are more restrictive than the state:

- Beaches within Santa Cruz County will remain closed to the public from the hours of 11am to 5pm daily, until the statewide shelter in place restrictions have been rescinded.
- Masks are required for everyone over 12 years old (without a precluding health condition) when entering businesses, and

- Hotels are required to document that guests are here for essential travel.

Q: What would cause us to adopt stricter guidelines or revert to a prior phase of shelter in place?

A: The criteria being used to evaluate the severity of shelter in place guidelines broadly are focused on the testing and tracing capacity of local jurisdictions, the capacity of local care providers to handle surges in caseload, the availability of PPE supplies, and the transmission rate of the virus.

Q: Can I refuse service to customers who are not willing to follow proper health and safety protocols, such as the use of facial protection?

A: Yes, and you can contact local law enforcement should they refuse to comply and remain hostile. If a customer claims to have a valid medical reason for refusing to follow health and safety protocols then do your best to limit their exposure by keeping them at least 6 feet away from other people.

Q: Will the County provide employee training for businesses:

A: No, however, Appendix A is designed to work as a training checklist and the state's [CAL OSHA trainings and documents are also good resources.](#)

Q: How do I preserve employee privacy if s/he becomes infected?

A: [The County's communicable disease team](#) and contact tracers are well trained to protect privacy. Once you let the County know of an exposure or they learn of a positive test, the team will do the work to inform and notify. This is not the employer's responsibility.

Q: Can I take steps to move segments of my business outdoors?

A: Yes, and the County Health Officer is meeting weekly with representatives of each City and the County to allow for greater outdoor uses. Please contact your City government if you are within an incorporated City, or call the County's hotline if your business is located in the unincorporated area at (831) 454-4242.

For any other specific questions, or to contact the County about alternative business practices, please call the County COVID-19 hotline at (831) 454-4242, or visit the County's COVID-19

response website:

<https://www.santacruzhealth.org/HSAHome/HSADivisions/PublicHealth/CommunicableDiseaseControl/CoronavirusHome.aspx>