



Division of Food and Recreational Safety

March 26, 2020

Guidance for Grocery, Retail Food Operations Following 'Safer at Home' Order

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) wants to provide you additional guidance after the Department of Health Services (DHS) issued an emergency order closing all nonessential businesses and operations.

We've received several questions about Emergency Order No. 12, also known as the [Safer at Home order](#). The declaration exempts grocery stores from mandatory closure with the following requirements:

- Close all seating intended for use by customers consuming food.
- Cease self-service operation of salad bars, beverage station and buffets.

What does the order mean for my grocery store?

- Grocery stores are permitted to keep open areas where customers self-dispense unpackaged foods, such as fresh produce.
- Self-dispensing that requires the use of tongs or scoops, like bulk bins and bakery displays, are *encouraged to close* but not required to do so.
- Grocery stores are required to sanitize the tongs and scoops frequently, and close the self-dispensing area if they are not able to accomplish this sanitizing.

What does this mean for my non-grocery store retail food establishment?

Nothing has changed from the [first public health emergency order](#). Here's a reminder of the requirements:

- Customers may not self-serve items including, but not limited to, coffee and fountain soda from beverage stations. They may not refill water jugs or handle unwrapped bakery items.

- Employees may serve a customer items including, but not limited to: coffee, fountain soda or a requested bakery item.
- Employees may package bulk food per a customer request.
- Employees may prepare/reheat food in the kitchen area, package it, and place it in a case for customer self-service. For example, hot dog rollers may be placed in the kitchen to reheat hot dogs for packaging by employees and placement in a customer self-serve hot case.
- Food items may not be reheated in the customer area. All equipment used for reheating (e.g., hot dog or tornado rollers) must be moved into the kitchen for use.
- Packaging operations are limited to facility-provided containers only.

Helpful resources

The [State of Wisconsin created a webpage](#) that offers resources from various agencies and answers to critical questions. Here are a few other resources from DHS that might be helpful during this challenging time:

- [COVID-19 Information](#)
- [COVID-19 Facts: Why Social Distancing](#)
- [COVID-19 Facts: Protect Your Family](#)
- [WEDC: Essential Business Declaration](#)

Thank you for your role in reducing the spread of COVID-19. If you have questions for DATCP, please send them to datcpdfsrretail@wisconsin.gov.

