

ILR Report

Guidance for Cashiers in Retail Establishments : Work and the Corona Virus

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Grocery stores and supermarkets have been designated as essential businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many cashiers saw little in the way of job or workstation redesign to protect them from the virus. The Western New York Council on Occupational Safety and Health (WNYCOSH) released the following guidelines to improve working conditions for frontline workers while, at the same time, reduce the risk of community spread. WNYCOSH would like to recognize that Wegmans' has already implemented our first recommendation for businesses across all of their stores. It is incumbent that these changes be made to reduce the risks of community spread and worker exposure.

For Businesses

1. Install floor markings to require customers to stand behind until it's time to complete the transaction.
2. Schedule handwashing breaks. Assign a relief person to step in for cashiers so they can wash their hands with soap for a full 20 seconds. Provide hand lotion so workers' skin doesn't crack.
3. Schedule cashier station sanitation breaks. Assign a relief person to rotate through the store and sanitize all frequently touched surfaces.
4. Relax all existing production standards and productivity monitoring systems.
5. Explore ways to reduce handling of paper coupons, including substitutes that will not present a hardship to customers.
6. Explore scheduling adaptations to accommodate childcare arrangements.
7. For employers working overtime and shiftworkers, make sure that there are at least 12 hours from the end of one shift to the beginning of the next shift so that workers working extra hours have plenty of time to travel to and from home and get eight hours of sleep.
8. Find out which members are at increased risk - older workers, immune-compromised workers, people with respiratory or heart disease, people with asthma.
9. Stores waive pick-up fees to avoid in-store crowds.
10. Encourage the use of credit cards over cash.
11. Post CDC guidelines in breakrooms.
12. Be alert for racism or discrimination against workers of Asian descent.
13. Understand the difference between cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing.

For Businesses Outside of NYS

1. Paid leave time to cover quarantine, isolation and COVID-19 related illnesses.
2. Waive any waiting or accrual period outlined in leave time policy or union contract.

For Workers

1. Retail workers are among the heroes of the COVID-19 pandemic response. We need to protect the health of retail workers throughout the duration of the pandemic.
2. Many workers are feeling the pressure of trying to keep shelves stocked. They are working faster, skipping breaks, and working more hours. Stress, fatigue, and constant exposure to the public can make retail workers more vulnerable.
3. Take your breaks! Other people's urgency is real, but it cannot come at the expense of your health.
4. Take extra handwashing breaks. Hand sanitizer is helpful, but it is not a substitute for handwashing, especially if hands are dirty. Keep in mind that everything you scan at the cash register was handled by multiple people including customer; also you handle money, coupons, and credit cards or store cards. Use the hand scanner, if possible, for store cards.
5. Secure your hair, to avoid having to touch your face to adjust stray hairs.
6. If you use a cellphone, remember that you touch it with your hands and hold it against your face. Use a disinfecting wipe on it regularly and before you take it home where family members might use it.
7. Get plenty of sleep.
8. Get the flu shot, keep all your other vaccinations up-to-date, including tetanus.
9. Please understand gloves don't offer significant additional protection. If you touch your face while wearing gloves there is the same risk of infection as bare skin. If using gloves, they must not be reused and must be removed properly to avoid infection.