CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PREVENTION GUIDELINES FOR FOOD FACILITIES

Is the Coronavirus, or COVID-19, an issue in food facilities?
The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is easily transmissible by droplet contamination. It is likely to be transmissible in foods, drinks, and from most surfaces. These preventive guidelines can be applied to all levels of food facilities, from temporary to mobile to fixed. Fortunately, the virus is easy to destroy. The California Retail Food Code (CRFC) regarding cleaning and sanitizing of equipment and utensils, as well as employee health and hygiene, are effective measures against the spread of COVID-19. Unlike bacteria and fungi, viruses are not alive and can persist on surfaces or in food products for up to a few hours. Once in a human host they quickly multiply and cause illness or disease.

Managers/Supervisors/PICs
It is important that diligent screening of employees for illness symptoms by supervisors continues. CRFC 113949 requires the person in charge (PIC) to prevent food employees suffering from symptoms of a food communicable disease, from engaging in food handling until recovered. Employees expressing COVID-19 symptoms including fever, shortness of breath and coughing should be sent home. If an employee is medically excluded from working by the County Health Officer or a medical doctor, they require clearance to return to work. If not medically excluded, do not require clearance since medical facilities may not have extra resources for non-emergencies.

For Food Employees
Food workers are the frontline defenders against food related illness. It is their daily dedication to safety that consumers depend on. Food workers are obligated to comply with restrictions or exclusions related to public health. If you are sick, stay home. If you feel ill at work, report it to your PIC. Wear clean clothing each day to work and practice frequent handwashing to protect yourself, coworkers, and customers. Chemical sanitizer concentrations are important to follow and are different for manual and mechanical sanitizing. Make sure to test these concentrations and replace weak or dirty solutions before use.

For Everyone
You should avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are sick you should stay home except to get medical care. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Everyone should cover their mouth when they cough or sneeze. Because the virus is spread by droplet contamination, face masks are most useful for preventing disease spread when they are worn by symptomatic people. Frequent handwashing, for at least 20 seconds, is key to reducing transfer of any virus. Hand sanitizing lotions are good for intermittent use between handwashing but do not replace handwashing. Make sure EPA approved disinfectants and wipes (List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2) are used for environmental cleaning of remote controls, door knobs and handles, light switches and other frequently touched surfaces.