

Secretary of Agriculture: We're all in this Together, Remember the Risk Essential Workers are Taking to Serve

Harrisburg, PA – Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding today reminded Pennsylvanians the importance of mutual respect when patronizing Pennsylvania's essential businesses – whether it be a grocery store, farmers market, restaurant, or hardware store. Business operators and their employees are working hard to protect each other and their consumers in a safe, clean environment.

"During these unusual times, there should be an unspoken covenant of mutual respect; just as we as consumers expect stores to be open and there for us when we need them, the workforce expects and deserves their customers to do their part to reduce risk," said Secretary Redding. "Don't put employees in the uncomfortable position of asking you to wear a mask. Be prepared with a mask before you enter a store. Remember, my mask protects you; your mask protects me. Using a mask and social distancing during this temporary time not only helps mitigate the spread of his highly contagious virus, but it's also a way to show we care for one another."

Governor Tom Wolf has recommended that all Pennsylvanians [wear a mask](#) any time they leave their homes for life-sustaining reasons. The Department of Health offers guidance on [universal masking](#). Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine's [worker safety order](#) establishes protocols on protecting worker safety, including masking guidelines for employers, employees and customers.

The secretary's order asks that businesses require customers to wear masks on premises in order to help protect workers in life-sustaining businesses. Customers at supermarkets and pharmacies must wear masks to enter the store, unless they have a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a mask. If the customer does not wish to wear a mask, these stores must provide an alternate means of delivering goods.

"Essential workers see many people each day. We can minimize their risk if we all work together to follow this simple guidance: wear a mask and stay 6 feet away from one another," Redding said. "Privately owned stores have both followed guidance and orders from the state, and voluntarily implemented their own policies to keep everyone safe and as comfortable as possible. We applaud businesses that early in this crisis, committed to staying open, and offered special hours for vulnerable shoppers, outdoor shelter for those waiting in line to get into the store, and other extra measures. It shows how thoughtful businesses have been about public health."

"Our dedicated grocery, convenience store workers and distributors have been working tirelessly around the clock to provide food, beverages and essential household items for millions of Pennsylvanians," Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association President and CEO Alex Baloga said. "We encourage customers to help do their part for essential workers by following the proper safety and social distancing guidelines from the Pennsylvania Department of Health and CDC."

While so many shoppers have been respectful, some have ignored simple actions businesses have requested of customers, such as wearing a mask, following one-way arrows through the store, and keeping 6 feet apart from other shoppers and workers.

“Please be respectful to workers and fellow shoppers who may not be comfortable in public yet,” Redding said. “The best thing to do when you do go out in public is to be kind to one another, and continue to follow the simple public health rules that can literally save lives.”

For a complete list of guidance documents and information as it relates to agriculture during COVID-19 mitigation in Pennsylvania visit agriculture.pa.gov/COVID. For the most accurate, timely information related to Health in Pennsylvania, visit on.pa.gov/coronavirus.